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2016, oh my!

My New Year's resolution this year is to spend more time helping others. Whenever I have volunteered to do anything in my life, it has left me with the very best feeling and I've been researching why.



We all know people who exercise and talk about feeling "high" during or after a workout — a happy feeling of warmth, a sense of calmness and a release of stress. Those who help others can also feel these same feelings.

This "helper's high" is believed to be caused by the release of endorphins, the body's natural pain-reducing chemicals. In addition to

relieving pain, endorphins apparently also produce good feelings.

Any kind of volunteer activity can help improve your health, but studies have shown that some types are better than others. Activities that involve personal contact, such

as mentoring a child or visiting the elderly, seem to be more beneficial. Volunteers who have an ongoing, one-on-one relationship with the person they are helping are more likely to experience the "helper's high."

There was a study done a few years ago of a group of people from varied locals who had passed the 100 year mark in their lives. They

had a few things in common and one of them was that they were all very vital and engaged as helpers to others. They all also smiled and laughed a lot. It makes sense.

Involving our children early on in life in being a helper is a great piece of their education and setting the example for them personally is the ideal. It's so terrific to be a joiner, to have your hand held up, to be the volunteer in the room. It's also great for your kids to see that you're someone who others can depend on. It will make them all the more stable in their own relationship with you and ultimately with others.

It's been a wonderful year for New York Parenting. We've developed all kinds of new initiatives. If you're not signed on to

get our newsletters and e-blasts, please go to our homepage on www.NYParenting.com and sign up. Quality information for you as a parent is coming in these e-blasts. Not only that, but you can enter to win tickets and prizes of all kinds. We give things away all the time! Like us on social media and send us your comments. We always welcome them.

Wishing you all a very happy New Year. Thanks for reading.

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New York Parenting has been recognized for editorial and design excellence by PMA.

New York Parenting is published monthly by New York Parenting Media/CNG. Subscription rate is \$35 annually. Reproduction of New York Parenting Media in whole or part without written permission from the publisher is prohibited. All rights reserved. Copyright©2016 Readership: 185,000. 2015 circulation audits by CVC.



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Girls, sports and the city



NYC kids
have lots
of options
for athletic
pursuits

BY ALLISON PLITT

When I attended college in Vermont in 1988, I remember all the kids at the school who grew up in New York City. They had the starring roles in the plays, performed in dance recitals, played some type of instrument, or majored in art history. I never saw any student who was raised in New York City participate in sports.

What I've been observing in the city today contradicts my pre-conceived notion. For example, my 9-year-old daughter, who is growing up in Queens, takes weekly swimming and skating classes, plays tennis once a month, and in the winter, goes skiing for at least a week.

I am not the only parent with a child active in sports. Her friends at school participate in soccer, basketball, baseball, swimming, karate, ice skating, and tennis. It's like this new generation of athletes coming out of one of the most unlikely of places.

Another interesting trend I'm seeing in the city is the participation of more girls in sports. One of my daughter's classmates, who is also a 9-year-old girl, has a brown-belt in karate. Her mother told me that the next step for her daughter would be to get her black belt, but she must be 18 years old to obtain it, so she most likely will be getting a junior black belt next year. Then, at my daughter's school last year, I met a 10-year-old girl who told me she plays ice hockey. I was astonished to hear these girls playing sports long-considered to be male-only activities.

Who would have imagined such things could have happened since 1972, when the federal government enacted Title IX? In defining Title

IX, the Women's Sports Foundation states, "Title IX gives women athletes the right to equal opportunity in sports in educational institutions that receive federal funds, from elementary schools to colleges and universities."

The major sports events of last year are inspiration enough for me — the United States' women's soccer team won the 2015 World Cup, Ser-



ena Williams won three major grand slam events in tennis, and American swimmer Katie Ledecky broke her own world record in the 1,500-meter freestyle at the 2015 World Championships.

Soccer, swimming, and tennis were the sports I played as a child, so these are the statistics that stand out in my mind. My love of playing and watching sports comes from my father, who got into a bit of mischief when he was in school growing up in Connecticut. Because of it, the school told his parents that my father should divert his extra energy into sports, which his parents encouraged him to do. By my father's senior year of high school, he was

playing varsity football, hockey, and baseball.

Growing up in suburban New Jersey in the 1980s, I had a lot of opportunities to play sports. My classmates and I were the first generation of kids whose parents both had to work full-time, so after-school activities became a necessity for many of us. Instead of walking back from school to an empty home until our parents returned from work, we could now walk over to an after-school practice of any seasonal sport or to an indoor gym in town that had gymnastics equipment, a swimming pool, and a volleyball court.

Between my brother and myself, we each played at least one season of field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, hockey, basketball, swimming, tennis, and softball by the time we were ready to go to college. Not that I played all of those sports very well, but I at least had the opportunity to participate in some of them. My father even coached my town's first all-girls soccer team in 1982, on which I played.

Sports, to my father, wasn't just about the importance of learning a physical skill. For my father, the game was about learning to work with others as a team, practicing hard until you achieved your own goals, and never giving up.

Nowadays, my father plays golf five days a week and constantly reminds me that as science has discovered, physical exercise releases "endorphins," according to www.webmd.com, that "trigger a positive feeling in the body ... which can be accompanied by a positive and energizing outlook on life." In other words, when we exercise, we are taking care of both our bodies and our minds.

Allison Plitt lives in Queens and is the mother to a 9-year-old daughter.





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CURRENTLY ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR FALL 2016

Decode your child's cough

That hack is making them miserable, but just how serious is it?

BY SANDRA GORDON

It's always distressing to hear your little one cough, especially in the middle of the night. Still, as common as this wintertime symptom is, it's helpful to know that it often sounds worse than it really is.

"Coughing is the body's way of clearing and protecting the airways from irritating mucous and other secretions," says Dr. Charles Shubin. Coughs also provide valuable clues about your child's illness.

Follow our guide to figure out what's worrisome and what's not — and how to help your child feel better — fast.

Croup

A contagious wintertime viral infection that causes the throat and windpipe to swell and narrow. It typically affects kids between 6 months and 3 years. (Adults and older children have wider windpipes, so swelling is less likely to affect breathing.)

Cough clues: A distinctive, shrill, dry, seal-like bark, which frequently starts in the middle of the night.

"The sound is unlike any cough you've ever heard before," says Dr. Mark Widome, a pediatrician and author of "Ask Dr. Mark."

Other symptoms: Your child's illness follows a circadian rhythm: better during the day, worse at night. She may have a slight fever. In severe cases, your child may develop stridor, a harsh, high-pitched sound every time she inhales, similar to the noise kids make after a long crying jag.

What to do: Sit with your child in a steamy bathroom for five minutes; the humidity will help move mucus from her lungs and calm her cough.

"After that, bundle her up in warm pajamas and take her out into the cool night air for a few minutes or open the freezer in the kitchen and have your child breathe in the frigid

air," says Dr. Bonnie Kvistad, a pediatrician.

The combination of steam then cool air can help reduce airway inflammation. At bedtime, run a cool-mist humidifier in the room; the cold, moist air may reduce airway swelling as well.

Call your doctor right away if your child is less than 2 to 3 months old, her cough worsens, or she's having trouble breathing. She may need medicine to reduce inflammation. Otherwise, croup often runs its course in three to four days.

Common cold

A viral infection of the nose, sinuses, throat, and large airways of the lungs. Coughing usually lasts the entire length of the cold (about seven to 10 days), but can linger twice as long, with mild improvement each day.

Cough clues: A wet or dry, hacking cough without wheezing or fast breathing, day or night.

Other symptoms: Sneezing, a runny nose, watery eyes, and a mild fever (usually less than 101.5 degrees F).

What to do: Keep nasal passages as clear as possible; congestion and postnasal drip worsen this cough. Using a cool-mist humidifier in your child's bedroom will help moisten airways to reduce the coughing caused by post-nasal drip.

For babies and toddlers who can't blow their nose yet, use nasal saline drops and a nasal aspirator to suction a runny nose.

Children's Tylenol or Ibuprofen can keep him comfortable if he has a fever, but check with your doctor for the right dose if your child is under age 2.

If your child's cough and stuffy nose persist for more than 10 days without improving, see your doctor. Your little one could have asthma,

allergies, or even enlarged adenoids, which inhibit breathing. Older kids could have sinusitis, a bacterial infection often brought on by a cold.

Whooping cough

Also known as pertussis, it's a highly contagious bacterial infection of the throat, windpipe, and lungs. Babies routinely get their shots at 2, 4, and 6 months of age, and additional booster at 15 months and again between 4 and 6 years. Children who haven't received their full immunizations are most vulnerable. All adults, especially those in close contact with infants younger than 12 months, get the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine and a booster every 10 years. Immunity wanes as we get older. Therefore, adults may carry pertussis but get only a mild cough.

Cough clues: Dry, hacking coughing fits — as many as 25 coughs in a single breath. When your child inhales sharply to catch her breath, she makes a high-pitched whooping sound.

Other symptoms: Before the cough starts, your child has a week of cold-like symptoms but no fever. In infants, the illness can be severe and cause mucus to bubble from the nostrils. It can also lead to convulsions and make a baby stop breathing if she gets tired.

What to do: Call your doctor if your child's cough worsens — instead of improving — after a week. Babies usually need to be hospitalized to control the cough and have mucus suctioned from their throat. The illness is treated with antibiotics, although the cough can last for many weeks or even months.

Whooping cough is very contagious, so children who are not fully immunized who have been in contact with somebody with whooping cough should see their pediatrician. "They may be given prophylactic antibiotics," Dr. Kvistad says.

Gastroesophageal reflux disease

Caused by a weak or immature band of muscle between the esophagus and stomach that allows acid to flow back up. Sometimes the irritating juices can enter the lungs, causing a chronic cough.

Cough clues: A wheezy, crackly, persistent cough after your child eats. Coughing episodes typically worsen when she's lying down.

Other symptoms: She may feel a burning sensation or may vomit or belch when swallowing. A baby



might be fussy or have been labeled as colicky. Toddlers may develop wheezing and picky eating habits.

What to do: See your pediatrician if your child's wheezy cough lasts longer than two weeks. He may recommend keeping your baby upright for at least 30 minutes after feedings and elevating the head of her mattress while she sleeps. Prescription medicine can also control symptoms.

Asthma

A chronic condition in which small airways in the lungs swell, narrow, become clogged with mucous, and spasm, making breathing difficult. Common asthma triggers include environmental irritants, viral infections, and exercise.

"Children with asthma, in essence, have sensitive lungs," says Dr. Widome.

Cough clues: A persistent cough that's often whistling or wheezy, lasts longer than 10 days, and worsens at night or after your child exercises or is exposed to pollen, cold air, animal dander, dust mites, or smoke.

Other symptoms: Your child is wheezing or has labored, rapid breathing.

What to do: In mild asthma cases, a chronic cough may be the only symptom, Dr. Widome says. See your doctor for an accurate diagnosis. Mention any family history of allergy, asthma, or eczema, which can increase your child's likelihood of the disease.

Flu

A viral respiratory illness that's most common from November through April.

Cough clues: A mildly hoarse, throaty cough that comes in frequent spells and can be either wet or dry.

Other symptoms: Your child feels listless and complains that his throat is scratchy and sore, his head hurts, and the muscles in his back and legs ache. He may also have a runny nose, fever, and nausea.

What to do: Call your doctor if your child has a fever above 101.5 degrees F, is throwing up, has diarrhea, or is uninterested in eating or drinking. (Your doctor will recommend steps to prevent dehydration.)

Give your child plenty of fluids,

and use a humidifier to clear congestion in his airways. Also, to ward off future bouts of the flu, ask your pediatrician about getting your child an annual flu shot; it's recommended for children 6 months of age and older. It's not expected to protect against the swine flu (H1N1), which has similar symptoms to seasonal flu. But a separate swine flu vaccine is currently being developed. Ask your pediatrician for more information.

Bronchiolitis

An infection of the tiny lower airways in the lungs called bronchioles. It's usually caused by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and most often occurs from late fall to early spring.

Not to be confused with bronchitis (a frequent upper-respiratory infection in older kids and adults), bronchiolitis is common among babies and toddlers.

"Respiratory syncytial virus is different than the common cold, but it's not pneumonia. Almost all kids will get a bout of it by age 2," says Dr. Paul Checchia, a respiratory syncytial virus specialist. It typically runs its course in five to seven days.

Cough clues: A phlegmy or wheezy cough that's often accompanied by fast, shallow, or difficult breathing.

Other symptoms: Your child starts out with cold symptoms, such as sneezing or a stuffy or runny nose, that last about a week, and may develop a fever up to 103 degrees F. He's lethargic and makes a wheezing sound when he exhales.

What to do: Call your pediatrician right away if your little one seems to be struggling to breathe or is too irritable to eat or drink. Infants with bronchiolitis sometimes need to be hospitalized to receive oxygen treatment.

If your child's symptoms are mild (a wheezy cough without breathing trouble), blow his nose for him with a nasal aspirator or help him blow his nose, put a cool-mist humidifier in his room to help loosen mucus in his lungs, and make sure he drinks plenty of fluids. Kids can get respiratory syncytial virus year after year, because the body doesn't build immunity to the virus. The virus can stay alive on surfaces for hours.

"You can't put your child in a bubble, so the best you can do to avoid infection is wash your hands often," Dr. Checchia says.

Sandra Gordon is an award-winning freelance writer who delivers expert advice and the latest developments in health, nutrition, parenting and consumer issues.



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Keep that resolution

A 'Today' anchor's secrets to being 'thinner in 30'

With the New Year comes those dreaded resolutions, and for many busy parents, they revolve around fitness and health. Experts agree that instead of resorting to unattainable goals that fizzle out by early February, the key to long-term success is to implement specific changes into

your daily eating habits and exercise routine.

We asked journalist and "Today" anchor Jenna Wolfe to share her five best tips from her new book "Thinner in 30." Wolfe is not only a fitness buff, she's also a certified personal trainer, and a very busy New York City mom to boot. Her advice is not only practical but doable:

Stop eating simple carbs after 6 pm. This means no sugar, bread, white rice, white potatoes, and nothing that comes out of a box. This is where and when we do our most damage. We're tired, hungry, lazy, and distracted, so we let our guards down. If we're out at a restaurant, we attack the bread basket and the apps before we even see our main course. If we're home, we snack, graze, eat dinner followed by more dinner fol-

lowed by a snack and maybe dessert. Follow this tip, and you'll save hundreds of calories a night.

Eat one less bite at every meal, and chew longer. Finishing every last morsel on your plate feels right, and seems ok, but studies show you can save 75 calories a day by leaving one last bite. And if you chew your food longer, you're extending the time between bites. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain it's full, and in those 20 minutes, you could do so much damage! Chewing your food 20 times before swallowing could add up to 112 fewer calories per meal.

Drink 20 sips of water first thing in the morning. Don't count ounces or glasses or cups, just swallow 20 times. That's it. When you wake up in the morning, your body is already dehydrated. Drinking 20 sips (almost nine ounces) will wake you up, kick start your metabolism, and even curb some of your hunger pangs.

Download a new workout mix and arrange your music the right way! Don't just put your music on shuffle. Instead, arrange your songs from least favorite to most, so your best songs won't play until about halfway through your workout. That way, you'll get a boost just when you need it most.

Keep a strict food diary three weeks a month. Write down every last bit of food you eat over the course of the day. It doesn't matter what you eat, just write it all down. Want to take it up a notch? E-mail that list to a friend every night. You will begin to make changes to your diet on your own. When we're held accountable for our own actions, we suddenly become responsible for them. Do this for three straight weeks, and then take a week off and compare how much you eat during both stretches.

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.





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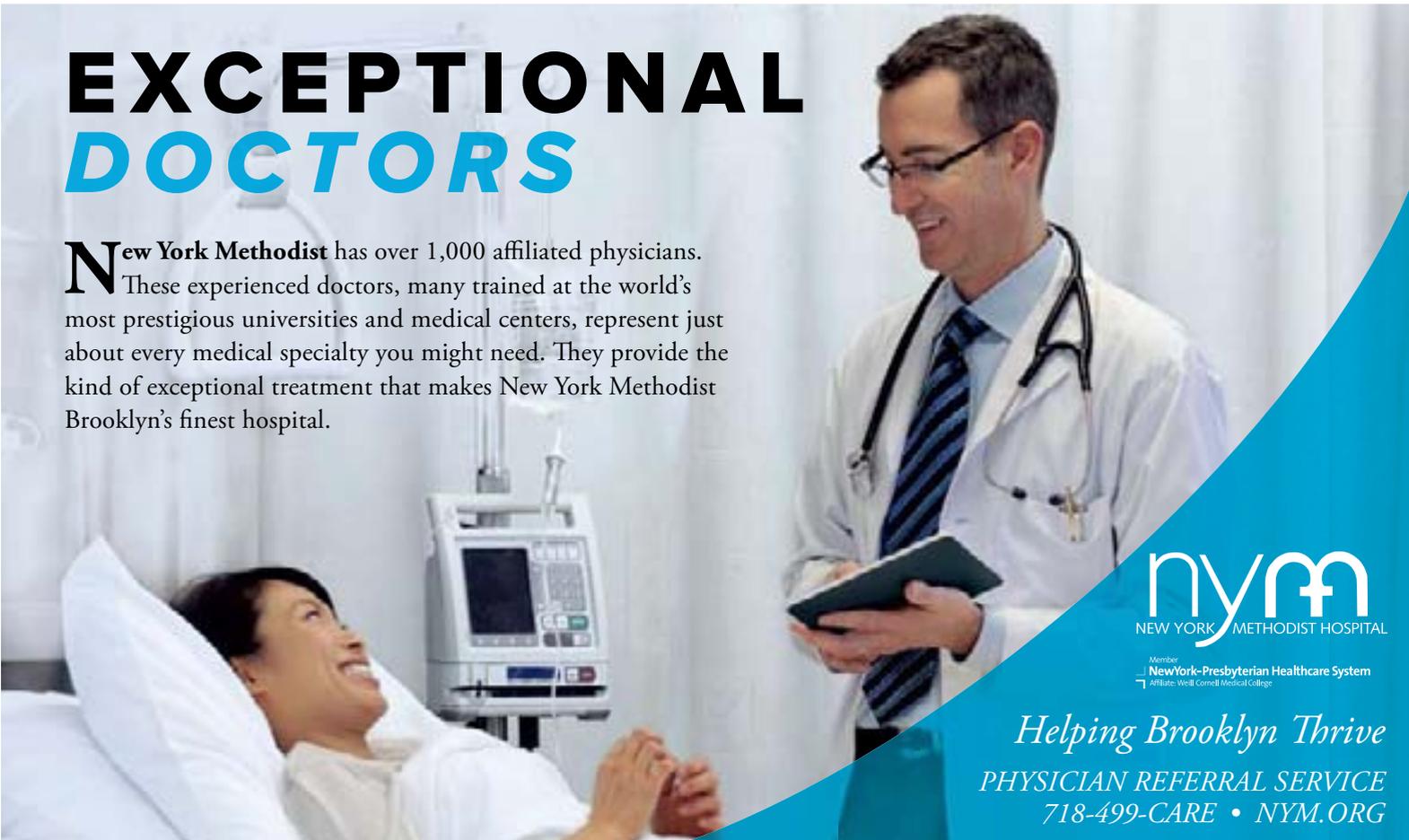


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How to talk to your teen about

eating disorders

BY HELEN STEELE

Talking with your children about eating disorders — defined as “serious disturbances to your everyday diet, such as eating extremely small amounts of food or severely overeating,” according to the National Institute of Mental Health — is very important, but it

can be a tricky business. Here’s a quick guide to help you approach the topic:

Be calm

An emotive topic such as eating disorders can quickly spiral out of control — particularly when you as a parent are aware of the potential health consequences that

anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge-eating disorder can bring with them. Early intervention can be crucial where eating disorders are concerned, but many parents avoid voicing their suspicions until it is too late, as they fear a row.

One way to bolster your sense of calm is to prepare what you’re going to say beforehand. It’s hard to

keep your cool if your child reacts badly to your words — but planning the thread of your conversation before bringing it up can help a lot in allowing you to calmly weather any such storms. You can never entirely predict how a teenager is going to react to your words, but you will by now have at least some idea of the kind of vocal and reasoning techniques which work on them, and those which are likely to provoke an argument.

Try speaking to your teen on a reasonable and adult level. Treating teens like grown-ups where serious subjects are concerned often inspires young people to act in a way which will prove themselves worthy of this respect. Anything you can do to keep the conversation on an even keel is well worth it — as the longer the lines of communication are open and working smoothly, the more information you can exchange on this crucial topic.

Don't be judgemental

Voice your concerns — but try not to do so in a manner which is judgemental or makes it seem as though you're blaming your child. If you make her feel as though you're getting at her, she may well become defensive and shut down the conversation. Some eating disorders come with patterns of behavior or ideas about food that may seem peculiar to those without an eating disorder — and it's very easy to blame the suffering individual for what seem like weird diet quirks.

In fact, these are part and parcel of the eating disorder, which is — and this is important to remember — an illness. You wouldn't blame or judge your child for having a runny nose when she has a cold, so try to extend the same sympathy and unconditional support to your child during conversations about eating disorders. Of course, this can be difficult when the very nature of eating disorders means that your child is unfortunately likely to avoid and prevaricate when the issue is addressed, which can be frustrating, so, as above, try always to stay calm. Staying calm will prevent you from acting as though you blame her.

Listen

This conversation should not be a lecture. It should be an opportunity for your child to open up to you about any issues she has with food, or body image, or any questions she has about eating disorders.

We are lucky in New York to have a range of resources available to us which aim to promote healthy body image and reduce eating disorders — but it does not matter how much you tell a child, if she does not feel like you're hearing her point of view on the subject, none of it will go in. So, have an open conversation. Listen to what she's not telling you as much as what she is, and encourage her to come to you for unconditional love, support, and an open ear if she is struggling.

Prepare for negativity
Unfortunately, eating disorders and the body-image issues with which they are often associated frequently come with a considerable degree of secretiveness and defensiveness as part of the package. And this is before you take into account the fact that you may be dealing with teenagers — a demographic which can be volatile at the best of times.

Even the calmest, most open and well-reasoned conversational approach to this topic may be met with opprobrium or sulki-ness. That's okay. Don't worry. You've breached the topic, and let your child know that you love and care for her and want to help her in the event that she does develop an eating disorder.

Hopefully, these thoughts will percolate within her mind, and when she's feeling a bit less defensive, she might bring the subject up on her own. If not, keep on trying at regular intervals, always highlighting the message that you're not cross, you just think that this is an important conversation which you wish to have because you love your child.

For information about eating disorders, visit the National Institute of Mental Health at www.nimh.nih.gov.

Helen Steele is a writer and volunteer for charities that help people who suffer from mental health problems, addictions, and eating disorders. Steele has battled anorexia, and although she is well now, and has been able to have her own family, she's keen to ensure her own daughters have a healthy attitude towards their bodies and food.

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The ultimate family adventure

How these
parents had
the vacation
of a lifetime

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

Would you be willing to trek 13,000 miles across multiple countries? Now, imagine that your kids are with you. That's exactly the journey that the Kirkby family went on recently. Adventure-seeking parents Bruce Kirkby and his wife Christine Pitkanen brought their two sons, Bodi (age 7) and Taj (age 3), along for an atypical family vacation. They traveled "surface only" — by boat, car, train, horse and on foot — en route to the Himalayas.

"Travel is so often destination oriented, but to us, the journey mattered just as much, or even more, than the destination. We could have flown to the Himalayas, but we wanted our children to experience everything in between; that great tapestry of cultures and languages and countries that would be missed from an airplane seat," said photojournalist Kirkby.

"We also wanted to show our boys that everything on the planet is connected," added Kirkby. "The world, especially for a young child, can seem infinitely large. Tracing a journey from our house to the other side of the world helps them see how the things we do at home affect others far away, and visa versa.

"Finally, Christine and I both love adventure and travel, and wanted to share that passion with our boys," he added.

As a travel writer and photographer, Kirkby was used to traveling alone, but the addition of his wife and young children posed some obstacles for the seasoned globe-trotter.

Travel Channel, www.travel-channel.com, cameras followed the Kirkby family documentary-style on their incredible journey to a remote Himalayan region. The typical travel challenges arose, like sick-



Gurmeet Sapal

ness from altitude changes, missed trains, and unfamiliar food.

Traveling light

"We prepared very carefully, as we had to be light. We took only the bare essentials — a few sets of clothes, one book each, first aid kit, etc. As parents, the primary thing we focus on each day is making sure the boys get enough food and sleep. If those are taken care of, the children can handle almost anything. But if they lag behind in either, travel quickly becomes difficult.

"There were times on the journey — when trains arrived four hours late, or every dish we were served was hot with spice — that meeting these needs was difficult, and required ingenuity.

Honing math skills

"The boys have been traveling all their life, so they were almost 'at home' on the road. There were meltdowns of course, but probably less than at home, because spending so much time with their parents tends to calm them, especially Bodi," said

Kirkby. "We rewarded them for good behavior and helping with family tasks by giving them each a small amount of change in local currency. They loved trying their hand at bargaining — and the math they learned in the process was amazing. They both returned home with a sack full of trinkets and mementos from around the world that they still play with today. Allowing them to buy their own things, with their own money, gave both of them a sense of control in the crazy journey — and brought both an immense amount of joy."

Any extended travel with children takes great preparation, and the ability to travel with only the "bare essentials" is a skill that even the average family going on a week-long vacation could appreciate.

Accommodating special needs

However, the Kirkbys are not the average family. One of the bigger challenges the Kirkby family faced during the journey was autism. The oldest child of the Kirkby family,



Bruce Kirby

Bodi, is on the autism spectrum, and that had a significant impact on the family's travel decisions and preparation.

"A child on the autism spectrum craves predictability and routine, so we showed Bodi a visual schedule of the coming day each morning," says Kirby. "There were unexpected shifts in plans at times, which were hard for him. He also needs quiet time and space, which can be difficult on crowded trains and streets. We brought ear-phones and music to help calm him in these situations. Overall, we find travel calms Bodi, which may seem counterintuitive, but the basic routine of getting up, moving, eating, then sleeping stays the same, day after day, and was something he could lean on."

Choices have to be deliberate when traveling with a child on the autism spectrum, and the unexpected nature of travel — with

delays, cancellations and constant changes — somehow have to be preempted to ensure the child remains comfortable.

The Kirkbys' experience illustrates that the key to adventure travel as a family is balance.

Mixing travel, fun, and rest

"Balancing travel with local exploration and relaxation. We need to make distance, but also wanted to ensure the boys didn't get exhausted, so we needed to make sure every few days we had the chance to play in a pool or by a lakeside, and not always be driving or in a train," says Kirby. "We were traveling for three months — aboard ships, trains, ferries, cars, jeeps, and even yaks. On a journey of that length, it becomes important to mix fun with travel. So we tried to follow every long day of moving with a day of exploring — stopping in un-

expected and unplanned places, like Gorakpur, India, where we found a hotel pool and pizza after a punishing 10-hour drive."

Adventure-seeking parents have to meet in the middle with their kids, for both safety and enjoyment. The key is to remember that it is the family's journey and not just your own.

The world as classroom

Many parents are hesitant to unplug, but to leave everything behind takes much determination. There are responsibilities with home and work, and if children are school-aged that poses another concern.

"Bodi missed three months of school, and people frequently ask if we were worried about this, but at his young age, what he experienced in that time seemed incomparable to the tiny bit of school he'd miss. We did buy a basic workbook, but

his teachers told us not to worry, that he'd be just fine."

Do it yourself

Although the Kirby family documented the trip for the purpose of the series, "Big Crazy Family Adventure", it is just as simple for the average family to plan a "mini adventure" themselves. Travel expos like the New Times Travel Show, nytravelshow.com, offer many resources for families to gather.

For more individualized assistance, travel agents that focus on adventure travel or family travel are the route to go. Start small with an adventure weekend, and then on to an adventure week. Dream together and dream big as you plan your journey together.

Shnieka Johnson is an education consultant and freelance writer. She is based in Manhattan where she resides with her husband and son. Contact her via her website: www.shniekajohnson.com.



FABULYSS FINDS

LYSS STERN



A new year — a new you

Happy New Year! I hope 2016 brings each and every one of you a FabuLyss set of 12 months filled with lots of love, happiness, and success.

I know that every year I try and make New Year's resolutions that I can accomplish. I will admit, sometimes it's harder than others. One resolution that I have committed to my boys is that I will try and spend less time on my iPhone. I need to take this time to unplug and be more present with my children. One of the best days that I spent on our holiday vacation was when my middle son

locked up my phone for the day. I was unplugged for 24-seven, and it felt amazing. As my boys remind me, work, e-mails, texts, and social media can wait. This is one resolution that I am going to try my best to stick to.

What's your biggest New Year's resolution?

Speaking of unwinding and powering down, I have also committed to taking more time for myself this new year. I found the most amazing robes for me and the kids from Kelsey Maclean, www.kelseymaclean.com. I will be wrapping myself in these soft, DeLysscious robes after taking

a bubble bath each and every day. The website "provides fine clothing and accessories for babies, children, and adults in a timeless country club style. The collection is expertly crafted in Peru of decadently soft Pima cotton and other fine textiles for superior comfort and long life." I find that items from the Kelsey Maclean line make a special gift because each piece can be personalized with a monogram, name, or logo.

I will also be exercising at least five days a week. Whether it's a Flywheel class or Core Fusion class from Exhale, I will be making that time for me for both my physical and mental well being.

Want to go bananas for New Year's Day breakfast? Try this amazing recipe from www.howsweeteats.com. I promise your kids will thank you for starting out the New Year with the most deLysscious breakfast.

Lyss Stern is the founder of DivaLysscious Moms (www.divamoms.com).

Banana bread French toast

Makes one (9- by 5-inch) loaf

INGREDIENTS:

For bread:

- 2 1/2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 large bananas, mashed (about 1 1/2 cups)

1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1/4 cup milk

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 350-degrees Fahrenheit. Spray a loaf pan (mine was 9 by 5 inches) liberally with non-stick spray or grease with butter. In a bowl, mix together flour, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and baking powder, then set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk egg and sugar together until smooth. Whisk in vanilla extract, then add bananas and milk and mix until combined. Add in dry ingredients slowly, mixing with a spoon until batter comes together. Add in melted butter and

stir until incorporated. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 50–55 minutes, or until center is set and a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Let cool completely. It's best if cooled overnight.

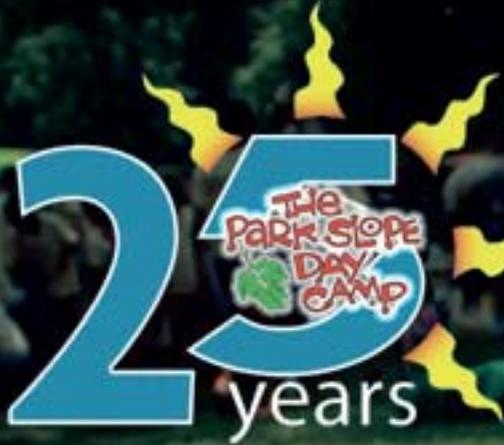
For French toast, using 1/2 loaf (about six slices):

- 3 large eggs
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- butter for the pan

DIRECTIONS: Slice banana bread to desired thickness. In a bowl, combine

eggs, vanilla, cream, and cinnamon, whisking until combined. Heat a griddle or large skillet over medium heat and brush with butter. Dip each slice into the egg mixture for about 30 seconds to coat completely, then place on the buttered surface. Cook until golden and somewhat crispy, about two minutes per side. Serve with sliced bananas, fresh whipped cream, syrup, and a sprinkle of graham cracker crumbs.

For a drizzly chocolate, combine 2 tbsp chocolate chips and 1/4 tsp coconut oil in the microwave for about 45 seconds, mixing once during cooking time, until pourable.



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The nature of human choice

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

Have you ever noticed that human nature is only used to explain undesirable behavior?

Human nature is tossed around as the explanation for nearly every example of deplorable, indecent, disrespectful, irresponsible behavior imaginable from bullying to sexual

harassment to racism to violence. Whenever people are caught participating in highly questionable, even illegal activity, the typical reaction is, “Oh well, that’s just the way people are. It’s human nature.”

Why don’t we apply the human nature explanation when people are observed performing unselfish, compassionate, humane acts? When someone risks his life to save others or provides a service without ac-

cepting payment or shares information without expecting credit, I’ve never heard anyone say, “Oh yeah, well that’s human nature.” Why isn’t human nature suggested as the reason for admirable behavior?

Now, I’m not an expert on human nature, but it seems to me that if something can be attributed to human nature then, by definition, we would all be participating in whatever behavior or activity is in question. We would be powerless to do otherwise, because it would be “our nature.”

Like the squirrels in my backyard that spend every day collecting food, stuffing their cheeks, rushing back and forth to their nests. They don’t stop to check the weather or what the other squirrels are doing. They are driven by their nature to store as much food as possible. All of them.

I find attributing only undesirable behavior to human nature to be curious since, as human beings,

Taking responsibility for our choices, especially when the consequences end up being detrimental to us or those we love, can be extremely difficult.

we are clearly capable of desirable as well as undesirable actions. Therefore, I am inclined to believe that human nature is not the explanation for either. Rather, it seems to me that it is human nature to have choice.

Everything we do, from the instant we open our eyes when we awake, until the instant we close them in sleep, is a choice. Granted, many of the choices we make are so routine that we are not even aware of them, but they are choices nevertheless.

For every choice we make, there are consequences. To choose one option means to not choose the others. Therein lies the rub. Taking responsibility for our choices, especially when the consequences end up being detrimental to us or those we love, can be extremely difficult.

Now let me make it perfectly clear that I am not suggesting that everything that happens to us is by choice. Certainly things happen that are beyond our control; however, a great deal of what happens to us is due to the choices we have made. And for everything that happens to us, we do have the freedom to choose how to deal with it.

Unfortunately, our choices are not always what we'd like. Sometimes we are faced with deciding between equally distasteful choices. But that is the nature of having choice. With choice come consequences. With the freedom to make choices comes the responsibility for their consequences.

When we play the "human nature" card, we put a stop to any conversation about the possibility for change. We are ignoring all of the examples of people who do not participate in the behavior in question. We are denying the existence of choice and personal responsibility. And like it or not, there is always a choice.

The process by which we make choices is significantly influenced by observation and experience. Factors such as age, maturity level, and intellectual capacity also play a role. The older we get, the more complicated our choices become, and the more profound the consequences. Mistakes are inevitable. But no matter how reasonable our explanations seem, they do not excuse us from responsibility for the consequences of our actions.

Dumbledore wisely told Harry Potter, "It is our choices, far more than our abilities, that show what we truly are."

Our children depend on us to model and teach how to make good choices. They need us to:

Know our choices. Familiarize ourselves with all the choices we make. Find opportunities to identify the available choices and the process for choosing between them. Verbalize our reasoning. When relevant, consider how our decision might impact other people. Avoid saying, "I didn't have a choice."

Limit choices. No one has unlimited choices. Provide our children with reasonable, limited, age-appropriate choices. Consider their preferences and interests. Too many choices can be overstimulating and overwhelming for young children. Limiting choices does not thwart creativity. Remember Steve Jobs always wore the same outfit.

Connect choices to consequences. Identify consequences in books and movies. Discuss how undesirable consequences might have been avoided if characters had made different choices. Help children explore the consequences of their choices. Recognize when they make good choices. Make the consequences for poor choices related and reasonable. Remember, the goal is to teach, not punish.

Admitting that we have made a poor choice is never easy, but perhaps a more effective use of time and energy would be to make amends rather than excuses. Better yet, resolve to make better choices! Choose to make this a happy new year!

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Kentucky. She has degrees in child development, family studies, and marriage and family therapy and has worked as a family therapist and parent educator. To contact her, please e-mail parent4life@yahoo.com.



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Focusing on **me** — and my family

This year,
I'm going to
look after
myself too

BY PATRICK HEMPFGING

My resolution for 2016: I'm going to love me. No, I'm not having self-esteem issues. I like myself, even though my pants are getting tighter, my posture isn't as straight, and flecks of silver are mixing in with my remaining brown hairs.

"If my girls are happy, I'm happy." I say this all the time, as taking care of my wife, Mattie, my tween daughter, Jessie, and our dog, Sadie, gives me joy. Of course, I'm responsible for my happiness, too ... and for taking care of myself.

A few days ago, I took time to go to the doctor. For the past several months, I've woken up with a plugged ear. Usually, it opens up quickly, so I've tolerated it. Who has time to go to the doctor? I have a wife, daughter, and dog to care for, while trying to squeeze in a writing career.

Apparently, some wax had

CHERISH THE MOMENTS

built up in my left ear. The nurse sprayed warm water into it as I held a plastic container to catch the water and ear wax that flushed out.

The nurse asked me, "Are you okay?"

I responded, "Yeah, as long as I don't see water coming out of my right ear when you're spraying it into my left one." The wax proved stubborn, so the nurse added drops to loosen it up. While we waited for the drops to take effect, she pulled a little wax out of my right ear.

As I drove home from my ear tune-up, my mind raced with thoughts. With my wax-free ears, I wouldn't need to tell Mattie or

Jessie to "please turn up the TV" as often. Yet, maybe, due to Jessie talking excessively, which happens on occasion, and Sadie barking loudly, which happens frequently, I might miss my ear wax. I felt confident that I'd still have "selective hearing." (It's a husband thing.)

But mostly, I thought, "Wow, why didn't I go to the doctor sooner?"

As I drove home, I pondered other things I should have done sooner. Before I reached my driveway, I calculated that it had been five months since I played tennis, my outlet for stress and favorite form of exercise. And, yes, more comfort foods have snuck into my diet, not just "two-doughnuts Thursdays."

If I'm going to be around to see, enjoy, and be part of my family's happiness, I need to take better care of me. I need to love me, so I can continue to love others. Sometimes I'll need to say "No," not only to ice cream and doughnuts, but also to demands on my time. I must also get more sleep, as I've been sacrificing zzzs in my attempt to steal extra minutes from my nights to pad my days.

I haven't completed my list of New Year's resolutions yet, but here's a good start:

- Adequate sleep: seven hours instead of six or less.
- Exercise: tennis once a week.
- Appropriate choices from the basic food groups. (But I can't give up "two-doughnut Thursdays" or ice cream as a bedtime snack.)

Okay, I didn't say I'd meet all my resolutions. But I'm going to try to do better, because I love me, and I love my family. A gym I drive by daily has a sign out front that says, "Strive for progress, not perfection."

In 2016, I'll schedule my annual physical. Recently, I had a colonoscopy, so I'm okay there for a few years. But whether it's getting exercise, a physical, or a colonoscopy, it's important to set aside time to care for our bodies ... so our bodies can care for (and try to keep up with) our children.

Until next month, remember to cherish the moments. Happy New Year!

Patrick Hempfing had a 20-year professional career in banking, accounting, and auditing before he became a father at age 44. He is now a full-time husband, stay-at-home dad, and writer. Follow him at www.facebook.com/patricklhempfung and on Twitter @PatrickHempfung.

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Preteen dating

Trivial terrain or time to talk?

BY DENISE YEARIAN

The age attraction begins varies tremendously from one person to another. For some, those feelings of attraction start in late elementary school. For others, it's not until high school. Although the age gap varies, experts agree that when a child that's 9 or 10 years old begins showing interest in the opposite gender, parents need to sit up and take notice.

"Kids this age may have a boy- or girlfriend, but still not know what dating means," says Shaunti Feldhahn, relationship researcher and analyst, and author of "For Young Women Only." "They are mimicking what they see played out on TV or

by teenagers, but they don't have a full grasp of how a relationship works."

Parents, she says, may have a tendency to dismiss these early relationships as trivial, but they should be taken seriously.

"It's an advanced signal of what is to come and needs to be addressed by Mom and Dad while they still have a major influence in their child's life," Feldhahn suggests.

Jane Bowen, director of a statewide parent education organization, agrees.

"Parents should take the lead in facilitating age-appropriate discussions with their preteen regarding friendships, dating, decision-mak-

ing, and sex. If your son says he has a girlfriend or is 'going out' with someone, ask what that means," she says.

But according to Bowen, talking about it shouldn't be a one-time deal.

"These conversations need to happen frequently, so parents know where their preteens are in relationships and preteens know what their parents' expectations are," she continues.

This is what Patty and David Ford did with their 9-year-old daughter Amber.



“If your preteen son says he has a girlfriend or is ‘going out’ with someone, ask what that means.”

“When she was in the fourth grade, Amber would tell me that so-and-so liked her and that other girls in the class had boyfriends,” recalls Patty. “I felt like if she came and shared it with me, it was important that we talk about it.”

Ford told her daughter she was too young to have a boyfriend, but she was careful to keep the line of communication open. Two years later, a bigger relational issue cropped up. With the parent-child dialogue already established, Ford was able to help her daughter navigate the sticky situation.

“This past fall, a boy at school gave Amber a necklace,” says Ford. “Since it was right before her 11th birthday, we told her if she wanted to keep it, it would have to be a birthday gift.”

But on her birthday, the same boy gave Amber a card with \$50 tucked inside of it. Amber didn’t know what to do, so she brought the money home and talked it over with her mother.

“I told her there was no way she could keep it, and she understood,” Ford explains. “We talked about how accepting a gift like that could make the boy think their relationship could possibly go to the next level — holding hands, giving him a kiss, that kind of thing. We agreed that I would call the boy’s parents, explain the situation, and tell them the money would be returned the next day.”

When parents talk with their children, they should communicate their values and expectations and then lay out boundaries. Equally important is to explain why the boundaries are there.

“Rather than imposing rules preteens may resent, help them understand reasons why the rules are there, so they begin to develop that internal compass,” says Feldhahn.

Parents should also try to find out what is influencing their child

— be it friends, an older sibling, or some form of media — so they can address the issue as a whole.

“When Amber and I talk about relationships, I find out what is going on not just with her, but with the entire sixth-grade class,” says Ford. “It helps me understand what’s influencing her. Is it persuasion from a new friend? Is she trying to fit in? Does she feel pressured?”

Although 10-year-old Jordan Adams isn’t yet attracted to the opposite gender, he fell prey to a peer-induced pair off that made him uncomfortable.

“This past fall, Jordan’s school organized a dance for the kids,” explains his mother Amy. “It was supposed to be a reward for good grades, but things spiraled out of control. Jordan came home one day and told me he didn’t want to go to school, because everyone had a date for the dance and he didn’t.”

Adams called the school and talked with the principal. He informed her that the administration knew nothing about the pair-offs; it had been instigated by the students.

“Up to this point, I hadn’t discussed boy-girl relationships with Jordan,” Adams says. “I didn’t think I needed to. But I’m realizing now that even if he isn’t thinking about girls, the kid sitting next to him in class may be, so I’ve got to maintain a constant dialogue with him.”

“Attractions are normal and will only increase as children grow,” Bowen concludes. “If we want to prepare our kids for healthy dating relationships later on, we need to start communicating and building a trusting relationship with them now.”

Denise Yearian is the former editor of two parenting magazines and the mother of three children and four grandchildren.

Resources

- “For Young Women Only” by Shaunti Feldhahn and Lisa Rice.
- “How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk” by Adele Faber.
- “How to Talk so Teens will Listen and Listen so Teens will Talk” by Adele Faber.
- “You and Your Adolescent Revised Edition” by Lawrence Steinberg, Ph.D.
- “Raising a Thinking Preteen: The ‘I Can Problem Solve’ Program for 8- to 12-Year-Olds” by Myrna Shure and Roberta Israeloff.
- “Roller-coaster Years” by Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese.



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It's 4:30 pm, and you say, "Let's build Legos." Your son says, "Wait, I'm finishing this."

At 5:30 pm, you call your children to the table to eat. They say, "In a minute."

Time goes on and at 7:15 pm, bath time, you call your daughter to the tub, and she says, "I'm not ready."

Now you're angry and wondering if your children will ever listen. You're frustrated they don't do what you tell them to do, and you're a bit confused since you want to give them a moment when it's needed, just not all the time!

"In a minute" is only a good answer if your child really needs more time to finish one more homework answer or put one more block in place. However, many children say "in a minute" without any intention of actually doing what you ask them to do.

Stop pulling out your hair, yelling at your kids, or having a small tantrum of your own. Instead, let's teach your kids to listen to you.

First, you need to stop asking your kids to do things, and start telling them. Switch your language from "Can you please go wash your hands?" to "Go wash your hands, please." Adding in the "please" is optional.

When you ask a question, your child can say "yes" or "no." When you give a direction, there is no choice.

Also, notice the clarity in my directions. They are action-based and objective. Anyone that is watching will know if hands were washed or not.

Sometimes your directions might not be so clear, like saying, "Please, clean up." What is being cleaned up: an entire room or just one particular



toy? The more specific you can be, the easier it becomes for your child to do what you said. This also lays the foundation for your kids to be good listeners.

What do you say now when your child says "in a minute?" Do you say, "okay?" My answer is generally, "No, now." Again, clear and direct.

Once you say that, your child might start making a move when you ask her to do so. When you do this over and over again, your child will stop asking for an extra minute and will start to do things the first time you ask.

Some children need a little more support. After you say, "no, now," walk over, take her hand, and say,

"Okay, we can do it together." Pairing your speech with the physical action gives them the physical experience of listening to you. They will feel in their body what "doing it now" means.

Swift, clear actions paired with concise language will stop your child from avoiding your directions.

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Dr. Marcie Beigel is a behavioral therapist based in Brooklyn. She has worked with thousands of families for more than 15 years and has condensed her observations into her practice and programs. For more on her, visit www.BehaviorAndBeyond.net.



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Discover the value of Catholic schools

Why parents choose this effective alternative

BY CANDI SPARKS

At a time when the New York City public school system is under much criticism and revision, working families have found an alternative in the Catholic school system, which have historically been the ones to reach out to and support communities in need.

The public schools in immigrant-filled working-class neighborhoods during the early-to-mid-20th century were largely overcrowded and not necessarily providing top-notch education. To assure that their children would be taught their values, many of the immigrants of the day opted for a parochial school system.

In the early days of the immigration wave, it was primarily Irish and Italian immigrants that sent their children to Catholic schools. As the years went by and new immigrants came from more countries and continents, the demographic shifted and one didn't necessarily have to be Catholic to choose this option. As a result, many Catholic schools have continued as an integral part of our city-wide school landscape.

Currently, Catholic schools serve more than 160 nationalities. With each wave of immigration Catholic schools offer diversity. Non-Catholics comprise about one quarter of the student body.

"Catholic schools are not just meant for the faithful. We are here to grow faith by building community and reaching out to those in need," says Tom O'Brien, of the Brooklyn Diocese, which is involved in raising scholarship funds to help families offset tuition. "But not every Catholic school family is in great economic need. Our demographic is changing.



We have seen an influx of middle income families who choose Catholic school because of the class size, excellence in education, and for a safer environment than what most parents think the neighborhood public school would offer."

Patty, a public school teacher from the Bronx, sends her son Ronald to a Catholic elementary school.

"The environment stresses academics and doing the right thing," she says. "The teachers set high standards for the children. They are expected to do well and they rise to the occasion."

Many Catholic school students are the first in their families to graduate from college. In low-income neighborhoods, this means that the school is providing the lion's share of educational support for children who do not have access to private tutoring or help at home.

There is a 99 percent graduation rate for Catholic high schools, compared to the 41 percent public high school graduation rate. And 97 percent of Catholic high-school students go on to graduate college. Overall, Catholic school seems to outperform public school and is a viable, less-

Overall, Catholic school seems to outperform public school and is a viable, less-expensive system of education in the private sector.

expensive system of education in the private sector.

In fact, the only two private schools in New York State that were designated by the U.S. Department of Education as “Blue Ribbon,” a program that honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools whose students achieve at high levels, or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap, in 2011 were both Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York — St. Ignatius Loyola School on E. 84th Street in Manhattan and St. Ignatius on Mott Street in Manhattan.

The incentives for getting a Catholic school education are different than what they used to be, and this is changing the demographics of Catholic school students.

“Families that don’t have money don’t usually have many choices. We needed to find a school with the right mix for Benny,” says Elizabeth, a Brooklyn mother of two, who chose to send her son to a Catholic school with solid academics and a baseball program. “He really wanted to play baseball. The only school that we could find to bridge the gap was a Catholic school.”

Likewise, Patty, of East Harlem, sends her daughter Amber to a bilingual Catholic school.

“My daughter goes to a school that gives her [education] in both languages,” says Patty. “Sure, they speak the same languages in the public school around the corner, but it is unofficial. The public school does not have the same structure.”

Amber’s Catholic school is also closely related to other parish activities and offers bilingual masses, events, and service projects for the community. This makes the Catholic school a great way for Patty and Amber to meet people of similar backgrounds and build a community. Parochial schools celebrate the tradition of faith, family, and community.

Unfortunately, keeping these schools open has become a challenge. The Catholic school sector is no different than any other, and closings have been publicized. In response, Catholic schools are researching and developing new educational business models. Some Catholic schools have closed their doors, only to reopen as academies. For example, in South Ozone Park, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School and St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr School closed, only to be succeeded by the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Because the school involves more than one parish, it is called an academy to differentiate it from a single-parish school. Since 2005, the Brooklyn Diocese has opened many Catholic academies in Brooklyn and Queens.

The Brooklyn Diocese has also implemented the program “Preserving the Vision.” The name means exactly what it says: preserving what has always been an integral part of Catholic life — the education of children. This vision includes developing schools that will be better able to meet the diverse and changing needs of students and parents.

The Archdiocese has also initiated the “Pathways to Excellence” program, aimed at professional development for principals, teachers and staff at schools that already do outstanding work. Because of the diverse population, there is still more than can be done to close the achievement gap. The program is aimed at raising standardized test scores and providing teachers with new classroom tools, such as the digital teaching program for fourth and fifth grade math, “Time to Know,” which provides online learning, data collection and feedback for the school.

Personally, I am proud to share that my fondest childhood memories revolve around a humble beginning, in a humble neighborhood. My siblings and I attended a Catholic elementary school, Our Lady of Victory, for eight years. I am pleased that Catholic schools are committed to remaining vibrant institutions for generations to come.

Candi Sparks is the author of children’s books about money including “Can I Have Some Money? Educating Children About Money,” “Max Gets It!” and “Nacho Money.” She is a Brooklyn mother of two and is on Facebook (Candi Sparks, author) and Twitter (Candi Sparks, author). Her website is www.candisparks.com.

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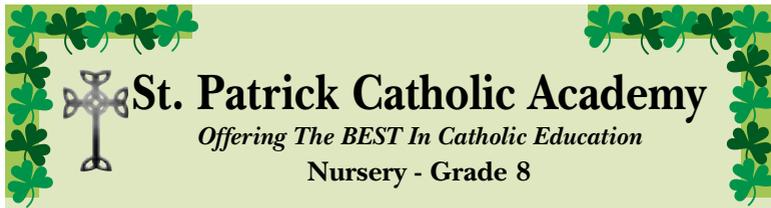
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A family's transition

Documentary explores the journey of transgender parent and her loved ones

PART TWO OF A SERIES

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

Imagine if one day, out of the blue, your dad, or your uncle, or partner came out as transgender. How would you and your family react? What would you tell your children?

Brooklyn filmmaker Sharon Shattuck is the daughter of a transgender parent. She shares her family's heartfelt story in her new film "From This Day Forward." This is the first feature-length documentary she has directed, and it's a moving portrayal of an American family coping with the most intimate of transformations.

The film premiered at the prestigious Doc NYC Film Festival on Nov. 14th at the Bowtie Cinemas in Chelsea to a packed house.

With her wedding just around

the corner, Shattuck returns home to examine the mystery at the heart of her upbringing: How her parents stayed together against all odds. In this revealing portrait of an unorthodox family, the filmmaker seeks to understand the inner workings of their special relationship.

When she was in middle school, Shattuck's father, an artist, came out as transgender (taking the name Trisha), yet, remained married to the filmmaker's straight-identified mother Marcia. With sensitivity and affection, "From This Day Forward" explores Trisha's transformation, its repercussions on her family, and the complexity and resilience of love and marriage.

Shattuck sat down to talk with New York Parenting about her revealing documentary.

Tammy Scileppi: What was it like growing up?

Sharon Shattuck: It was really tough. My dad started to transition to a woman (her name now is Trisha) when I was really young — like, 8 years old. My sister Laura was 5. We kind of forced the issue, because we found some photos of dad dressed as a woman, and we brought them to my mom and asked her about them. My parents felt that they should tell us, rather than keeping some dark family secret, so Dad said, "I have something to tell you kids." Then Dad left the room and came back dressed as a woman, and said, "This is who I am."

I should note here that my mom already knew about dad — not necessarily that Dad would want to someday BE a woman, but that



Filmmaker Sharon Shattuck explores her family's experience in her documentary "From This Day Forward." (Left) Her mother Marcia and father Trisha.

Dad had a preference for women's clothing. And she was okay with it.

TS: How did you both react to this news?

SS: At first, when we saw dad dressed up in the living room, my sister and I were pretty okay with dad's preference — before we realized that our friends and friend's parents thought it was weird. That's when we started to feel ashamed of Trisha. To make matters worse, before I started fifth grade, we moved from the suburbs of Chicago up to a very small town in Northern Michigan, where everyone knew everyone, and Trisha (and our family) stuck out like a sore thumb.

TS: What was the community's reaction like?

SS: When I was younger, there was NO media out there in the world about transgender families. I felt very isolated, and I think because people in our community didn't understand what was going on with our dad, it made it easier for them to discriminate against our family. My sister and I were lucky in that we made a lot of friends despite our "weird dad," so we didn't experience much social discrimination from our peers, but we did witness lots of discrimination from the local community, from older people.

I say in the film that at one point, my sister's high school math teacher pulled her aside after class

and said, "I don't approve of what your dad is doing." She was just trying to get extra help with her math homework, and felt completely blindsided by that. Mom and Dad went to the principal of the school, and because he was friends with the teacher, no action was ever taken. Today, my dad still experiences a lot of subtle discrimination and barely veiled contempt from neighbors and townspeople.

TS: Your film's message?

SS: So, my biggest goal with this film is to show people that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people and their families aren't different from anyone else. We deserve respect and acceptance. Other families shouldn't have to experience what my family did in the '80s and '90s, and what Trisha still experiences in her small town to this day. I'm hoping that little by little, hearts and minds will change, and hopefully my film will play a small role in that shift.

TS: How is your family doing now?

SS: My parents still live together (married and very much in love) in the same town in Northern Michigan.

Just one more note on that, since my film is all about my parents and their incredible, enduring relationship: My mom and dad have had such a profound effect on the way I think about my relationship with my husband. I still can't imagine the amount of change their relationship has endured, but I know that over time, all relationships change and morph, and I'm sure mine will experience its own challenges.

Whenever I get snippy with my husband, I try to remember Trisha's words, "if you know how to smile your way through arguments and come back, then you'll go far."

The film will be on Netflix and iTunes this year. For more, visit www.fromthisdayforward-film.com. And find the trailer at <https://vimeo.com/114131444>.

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer/journalist and parent and a regular contributor to New York Parenting.



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DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Winter weather tips for your family pets

Our pets are part of our family, and just as we make provisions to keep our children warm and cozy in the winter, the same must be done for our dogs and cats. The frigid winter temperatures are not just inconvenient; they can be incredibly dangerous for our pets. Experts say frostbite can take hold in less than 15 minutes, and animals are not exempt from this despite their furry coats.

Frostbite is bad enough, but hypothermia is the most dangerous hazard when the weather gets this cold. Signs of hypothermia include violent shivering followed by listlessness, a rectal temperature below 95-degrees Fahrenheit, weak pulse, lethargy, and coma. It can become fatal very fast.

It goes without saying that every dog and cat needs to be indoors during cold temperatures like these. I would argue, however, that dogs and cats need to be indoors during any cold temperatures. If you are cold, they are cold, simple as that. Outdoors is no place for pets.

Here are some other tips to keep your precious pups and kitties contented and protected this winter:

Pay extra attention to puppies. Puppies are more susceptible to the cold than dogs due to their tender age. They will suffer from the harsh realities of the cold quicker and should not spend much time outdoors in harsh weather conditions. In addition, they may have some issues potty training during cold spells. Understandably, puppies may have more accidents in this weather.

Frostbite most often occurs on the thin, exposed areas of a dog. The skin of their ears, tail, scrotum, and paws may look blue or white but will appear red and inflamed when circulation comes back. The surface of the skin may peel and eventually turn black. Use warm (not hot) compresses on the affected areas and then seek medical care.



Cats are particularly vulnerable to the cold and can actually freeze to death. Crafty cats will do what they have to do to stay warm and alive. When left outside, many cats seek out warmth under car hoods and engines, and can easily be killed when cars are turned on, so take a peek under your hood and tires before turning on your car.

Make sure collars are secure and never let dogs off the leash. Getting lost in sub-zero temps is deadly. Their scent trails are compromised in the snow, and frostbite and hypothermia can set in quickly, leaving them unable to find their way back home.

Cars can be lethal. It's worth remembering that a cold car can be just as deadly as a hot car for a dog. They can freeze to death in an unheated vehicle. Not only are they already at freezing temps, but cars can act as a refrigerator, keeping all the coldness inside.

Stay away from salt. Be on the lookout for salt on sidewalks and driveways, which can irritate and even burn your pup's paws. Wipe their paws off with a paper towel or

warm cloth when you return from a walk.

Check on neighboring pets. It's imperative to remember that if we see an animal left outside in this weather, we must report it to the proper authorities as soon as possible. Dogs left outside in cold temperatures suffer needlessly and can easily die. It is a form of abuse. We are the protectors of animals and need to be vigilant about their well being at all times.

Anti-freeze can be fatal. It is poisonous, and even a lick or two on a quick walk can add up to distress for your dog. Keep an eye out for any liquid on sidewalks and steer clear of it. Also, do not let your dogs roam freely where you cannot monitor their activity. If there is any doubt that your dog may have ingested antifreeze, take her to the vet immediately.

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.



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Author, activist and father Eric Roswood (right) wrote a book to guide same-sex couples through the adoption journey. He lives in California with his husband Mat and their adopted son, now 2.

Brave new world

Part two of our look at same-sex adoption

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

Attitudes toward same-sex parenting are changing, but the road to parenthood remains rocky. Just ask any lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parent, and he'll tell you that adopting a child is an uphill battle, but well worth it when a happy family unit is finally created.

The challenges facing these couples are often daunting, and more problems lay ahead as they grapple with the same issues that adoptive heterosexual or single parents

have to deal with when raising children who will eventually question where they came from.

"It is recommended that adoptive parents disclose the fact that a child has been adopted as soon as he or she is able to understand this concept (typically around age 5 or 6)," says Manhattan-based, licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Melissa Robinson-Brown, who suggests that parents remain supportive, open, and honest when children pose questions.

"Same-sex couples may also face questions from their children, once

they are exposed to kids who come from families with heterosexual parents, so age-appropriate language is key," she continues. And, as children grow older, parents can begin using the word "adoption."

She adds: "Based on my work with children and adolescents who have been adopted, the fact that a child has been adopted will often play a role in identity development, especially during adolescence."

Same-sex couples are faced with many different options when choosing to have children today. In his new book, "The Journey to Same-Sex Parenthood" (New Horizon Press), slated for release in March 2016, author, activist and father Eric Roswood helps same-sex couples navigate the various paths to parenthood: adoption, fostering, surrogacy, assisted reproduction, and co-parenting. He shares the experiences and wisdom of others who have already completed the journey.

In 2013, Roswood and his husband Mat adopted their son through open adoption. (They live in California and were married at Disneyland back in 2011.)

"When we decided to have children together, we were lucky enough to match with a birth mother in Illinois, who was only 13 weeks pregnant at the time, so we got to experience much of the pregnancy journey," Roswood says. "We were there for the first sonogram and heard his heartbeat before he was even born."

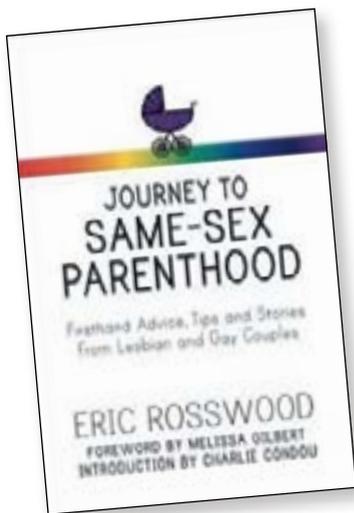
Their son's birth mother wanted to have a home birth, which was a bit of a challenge because midwives aren't technically allowed to practice in Illinois.

"We eventually crossed state lines into Iowa, where she lived with us for a few weeks and eventually gave birth in our hotel room. Because three states were involved (our home state of California, her home state of Illinois, and Iowa, where our son was born), the paperwork was kind of a nightmare."

It took almost two years to get a copy of his birth certificate.

When their son, now 2, was born, Roswood became a stay-at-home dad.

"I'd say the biggest challenge we've had as parents is finding



changing stations. It's hard to believe that many places still have changing tables in the women's restroom only. It sends a message that it's a woman's job to take care of babies, and that men don't need to be as involved in the day-to-day parenting. How outdated is that?"

Philadelphia-based attorney Angela D. Giampolo founded PhillyGayLawyer.com and Giampolo Law Group for the sole purpose of meeting all of the legal needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

In a recent interview, she talked about her work with these couples and in an article titled "The Challenges Facing Same-Sex Couples Who Wish to Adopt Children," she writes:

"All across the United States, alternative families are modernizing the American dream. In a new take on traditional household arrangements, 'Daddy' and 'Papa' trade off walking the dog, driving the kids to soccer practice, and juggling household chores. However, there is complexity hidden in the mundane — it is unlikely that this idyllic snippet of family life came so easily into being.

"While many heterosexual couples take for granted the ability to conceive their own children, same-sex couples know just how difficult it can be to expand their families. A single episode of ABC's hit show 'Modern Family' portrays the heartache of a failed adoption attempt, when same-sex partners Mitchell and Cam drive for hours to pick up a new baby boy, only to find that his birth mother has changed her mind.

"While it is true that the process of bringing new children into the family can be daunting and

disheartening, it is entirely doable and completely worth the work."

Since the laws around adoption differ from state to state and county to county, Giampolo says it's imperative that anyone looking to start a family, be it through adoption, artificial insemination, or surrogacy, contact a lawyer licensed in their state.

"You need to be aware of the process in your state; what clearances are needed; do you need a home study; what are the termination rights of a biological parent, etc."

She says the majority of her lesbian couples use IVF, and it's fairly simple for them.

"My gay male clients have a harder time creating families, unfortunately, and it is much more costly and comes at greater legal risks. Men have the option of using a surrogate, or adopting through a private agency or foster care."

The greater legal and emotional risks have to do with the termination of parental rights involved.

"It is heartbreaking when a client of mine has been fostering a child for two years and then goes to adopt him or her and have the judge give the biological parent a 'second chance.'"

Giampolo points out that while having a family for a same-sex couple is clearly more work than what the majority of heterosexual families are used to, the power inherent in marriage and a second or step-parent is irreplaceable.

"Once both individuals have legal parentage, both are treated equally. Additionally, both people can make important medical, educational, and custodial decisions and they are automatically entitled to collect benefits in the event of death.

"These rights are of immeasurable value when planning for the security and happiness of your family. And while the steps to secure them can be alien to the 'traditional American family,' the security that comes with those rights makes having a family a reality for same-sex couples everywhere. As we gain more equality, the future holds great things for LGBT families."

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer, journalist, and parent who is a regular contributor to New York Parenting.



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FAMILY HEALTH

DR. PRAMOD NARULA, MD
Chairman of Pediatrics
New York Methodist Hospital

Safety on the ice

My tween-aged son is excited about ice skating with his friends this winter, but he and I are at an impasse: I insist that he wear a helmet and protective gear, and he is mortified at appearing “uncool” at the skating rink. But I feel my resolve weakening. I was young once and remember having the same worry in front of my friends. And no one thought of wearing helmets for skating when we were kids. What should I do?

You know what’s really uncool? Brain damage from head trauma, or having your parents help you bathe because your wrist is fractured, or fingers severed by passing blades. Although convincing your son about the risks of skating unprotected may feel frustrating for both of you, I suggest that you insist he wear a helmet and protective gear at the rink.

Pediatric emergency room data shows that most of the ice skating-related injuries occur in children younger than 16. Younger people tend to have less experience on skates, but they tend to be more reckless on them.

The absolute minimum you should allow your son to skate with is wrist guards, a helmet, and protective gloves.

The most common skating injuries seen in emergency rooms in your son’s age group are fractures, specifically fractures of the distal radius — or wrist. Wrist fractures are most often the result of sticking one’s arm out to brace for a fall. An unprotected fall may result in pain or swelling in the wrist, a trip to an emergency room for X-rays, and if the wrist is indeed fractured, referral to an orthopedist for a splint or cast.

However, if wrist guards are worn upon falling, the hardware of the wrist guard absorbs the pressure of the fall. There still may be soreness, but the chances of a fracture would be significantly reduced.

Concussions are another skating injury often seen in hospitals and doctor’s offices — serious injuries that can affect brain function. Children’s heads tend to be disproportionally



tionally larger than their bodies and necks than adults’ heads, and this can create a whiplash effect if they receive a blow to the head or body, producing greater acceleration of the brain within the skull.

To minimize the risk of concussion while skating, a helmet is mandatory. As with wrist guards, helmets absorb some of the energy of the fall before it transfers to the skull. However, it is important to remember that concussions can still occur even when wearing a helmet. So be sure that your son knows to tell you if he experiences any of the symptoms of concussion after a fall. These include nausea, imbalance, headache, confusion, light or noise sensitivity, blurred vision, sluggishness, or other odd

sensations. If you are unsure, err on the side of caution, and take him to a doctor for a neurological evaluation.

Protective gloves should also be part of the required skating gear. Not only will the gloves keep his hands warm, but protective gloves add a layer of defense between the naked fingers of his just-fallen body and the newly sharpened blades on the skates of the person coming up behind him.

In conclusion, I advise you to stick to your guns and not let him skate without protective gear. Chances are, he will wind up having so much fun skating, he will quickly get over his mortification of looking “uncool.” From this doctor’s point of view, safety is as cool as ice.

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Prehistoric adventures

Kid Critics find 'The Good Dinosaur' a familiar fossil

"The Good Dinosaur," which opened Nov. 25, asks the question: What if the asteroid that forever changed life on Earth missed the planet completely and giant dinosaurs never became extinct? In this epic journey into the world of dinosaurs, an apatosaurus named Arlo makes an unlikely human friend, learns the power of confronting his fears, and discovers his capabilities.

I enjoyed watching this 3D, computer-animated, adventure-rich, dramatic comedy. "The Good Dinosaur" is very emotional and funny, a perfect movie for the family. This movie is about what would happen if an asteroid missed the Earth and never killed the dinosaurs. In the film, you meet Arlo (voiced by Raymond Ochoa), who is a very insecure, scared dinosaur. He meets a human kid named Spot (voiced by Jack Bright). Arlo chases Spot and falls into the water, taking Arlo very far away from his family. Will Arlo make it back to his family or will he be lost?

I like how it touches our emotions and admit that it made me cry in



some parts. I also liked the jokes. I love the action scenes that involve the water — it kept me on the edge of my seat.

My favorite character is Arlo, who is ecstatic, extremely compassionate, and learns to face his fears. Arlo is very relatable, because everyone has fears. People sometimes think fears are silly, but they're not. I love that he is very motivated.

The moral lesson in this movie is that you can discover what you're truly capable of if you are willing to face your fears. Arlo proves that.

I give this film 5 out of 5 amazing stars and recommend it for kids ages 5 to 18. Adults might like this as well.

— Ryan R., age 11

See his video review at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml6U8t-1C0w>



I find it strange that Pixar has released two films in the same year. Especially considering that "Inside Out" has been locked for the Academy Award for Animated Feature since it was released. It's almost unfair, because "The Good Dinosaur" is a very good film that, I'm afraid, will get lost in the shadow of its all-too-recent predecessor. Despite such lofty competition, "The Good Dinosaur," in just about any other year, would be a great candidate for Best Animated Feature. It is some of the most beautiful animation I've seen, with a story so familiar, that its heartwarming qualities hit home.

The story is something we've seen many times before in both animated films and live-action ones. It is the story of the young boy who's too afraid to live life and has to be shown the world to overcome his fears. Throw in some family death and

comic relief friends, and you could write the rest yourself.

Luckily, this movie features great relationship bonding between our protagonist, Arlo, and his young friend Spot. They start out not liking each other, and by the end, they're nearly inseparable. It is a relationship that develops with humor and a sweetness that brings tears to the eye.

That young boy, Spot, is portrayed as a dog, actually. That is a part of an interesting dynamic with this movie. The dinosaurs are like people, and the young caveboy plays the pet. He even has a pet name. It adds to the humor of the film — which is full of humor.



The opening joke, in which the film plays with the audience and threatens a meteor strike on earth, sets the tone.

The most impressive part of director Peter Sohn's movie is the animation. Cinematographer Sharon Calahan has helped make a beautiful film. There is actually a point in the movie I thought J.J. Abrams was directing, because there are some beautiful lens flares in there. That's how intricate the animation is and how true to its environment it is.

Unfortunately, the familiar story limits how good this film really can be. Considering that, there isn't anything groundbreaking. There is even an homage to "The Lion King" included.

I give this film 4 out of 5 stars. It is a fantastic family film and one I highly recommend.

— Willie J., age 16

See his video review at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQOx-p6q8eg>



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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

The ABCs of GMOs

Last fall, the television talk-show “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” interviewed people shopping at a farmers’ market about genetically modified organisms, commonly known as GMOs. Asked if and why they avoid them and what the letters “GMO” refer to, the shoppers were hard pressed to answer correctly. Regardless, they were perceived to be “bad.”

It’s clear that there’s poor public understanding of the science behind genetically modified organisms.

A genetically modified organism is a plant whose DNA has been manipulated with genetic material to achieve an advantage such as resistance to insects, disease, and weed killer, or tolerance to frost or drought.

Eight U.S. crops are genetically modified: Alfalfa, sugar beet, corn, soy, canola, cotton, papaya, and zucchini and yellow summer squash.

The vast amount of soy is used for animal feed and soybean oil, but the soybeans used for edamame, tofu, and soy milk are a different plant and are not modified. Wheat is never genetically modified.

Like the recent gluten-free craze, food manufacturers of packaged goods are sensing a marketing opportunity to set their products apart from the competition. More and



more, you’re seeing “Non-GMO” plastered on the front of food packages — without a verification process — in order to sell products.

The facts

Let’s dispel the myth that most processed foods are genetically modified because they include oil or sugar made from modified crops. In reality, the process of creating oil and sugar breaks down all the proteins from the plant — including the modified protein — so that the end products do not include any

of the original genetically modified proteins.

For all the angst over these foods, peer-reviewed scientific studies overwhelmingly suggest there are no observed health problems from eating food with genetically modified ingredients. The National Academy of Science, World Health Organization, European Food Safety Authority, Department of Agriculture, Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control, and several national medical and health organizations have all deemed genetically modified ingredients to be identical to their non-modified counterparts and safe for human consumption.

Still, if you wish to avoid modified foods, simply choose USDA Organic products — which is a guarantee that a product contains no modified ingredients — or look for the “Non-GMO Project Verified” label. There is also a new voluntary Department of Agriculture government certification and labeling program.

By eating more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and lean animal protein, you’ll eat healthier and avoid genetically modified ingredients.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who is a new Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

Turkey, brie, and apple sandwich

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Makes: 1 serving

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 slices whole wheat sourdough bread, toasted
- 3 slices Hillshire Farm Naturals Hardwood Smoked Turkey
- 1 slice Brie cheese
- 4 thin slices green apple

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat broiler. Arrange bread on a baking sheet. Spread mustard on one slice of bread. Layer with turkey, apple, and brie cheese. Broil 2 minutes or until cheese melts and turkey is warm. Top with second slice of bread.



NUTRITION FACTS: 360 calories, 50 g carbohydrate (12 g sugar), 20 g protein, 8 g fat (3 g saturated), 7

g fiber, 1290 mg sodium, 15% DV calcium, 15% DV iron.

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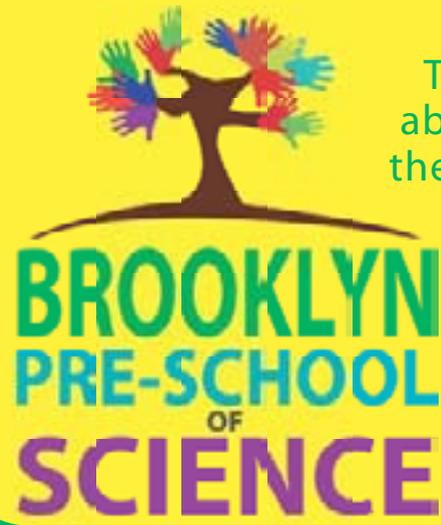
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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

Apps to fight stress

Here's a news flash: life can be stressful. For parents. And for kids.

Technology, of course, is part of the problem. But it can also be part of the solution. The apps described below were designed to promote well-being. Some are intended specifically for family members at different ages and stages; others are more generic. All offer respite from the demands and pressures of family life.

Apps like these have been developed in response to a growing body of research indicating that stress is at the root of many social, mental, and physical problems. The antidote is often mindfulness, which can be cultivated in a variety of ways. Research suggests that becoming more aware of bodily sensations, thoughts, and feelings can help people cope with anxiety, sleep more deeply, focus on tasks, and enjoy family time more.

Don't add any of these apps to your must-do list. That would, of course, defeat the purpose. Instead, play with them to find out whether one of them helps the people in your family relax and connect with what's important.

Mindfulness for Pregnancy helps expectant parents become deeply aware of the physical and emotional changes of pregnancy. The program includes guides to gentle yoga stretches, walking meditation, loving kindness meditation, and being with baby meditation. \$2.99. For Apple.

Sleepy Sounds is one of many apps that promise to help children (and adults) fall asleep. This app offers choices — you can tune in to white noise, nature sounds, a lullaby, or music of your own choosing. The app also provides a soothing animation that can function as a nightlight for children, and you can set a timer so the sound doesn't play all night. Free. For Apple and Android.

Settle Your Glitter is a deceptively simple app that can be used by children as young as 5. The app asks children to become aware of they are feeling. Then they see a virtual snow globe filled with swirling glitter. Coached by a friendly puffer fish, kids can settle the glitter by breathing deeply. The app is produced by



The Settle Your Glitter app

the Momentous Institute, which also created **Breathing Bubbles**, another app which encourages children (or, for that matter, adults) to breathe deeply as they “release a worry” or “receive a joy.” Free. For Apple.

Smiling Mind was created by a non-profit in Australia and has content customized for different age levels. Children answer a few questions and then are encouraged to practice easy-to-follow meditations designed to calm the mind and relieve stress. The app keeps track of progress and includes connections to Facebook and Twitter. Free. For Apple and Android.

Take a Chill is specifically for tweens and teens. Developed in response to research suggesting that mindfulness increases self-esteem and decreases anxiety, the app introduces teens to simple tools for self-assessment as well as quick meditations. Users can set up the program to send them reminders and motivational quotes. \$1.99. For Apple.

Take a Break is perfect when parents feel they are the ones who need a time out. Created by Meditation Oasis, the free app includes two guided meditations — one seven minutes and one 13 minutes. If you feel like you don't have that much time to spare, consider the **Simply Being** app, which costs \$1.99 but includes a five-minute option. These apps also provide an opportunity to reset between work and family time. Free. For Android, Apple, and Windows.

Calm will appeal to family members of all ages. Inspired by the

idea that contact with nature helps people regain a sense of balance, the app includes video of beautiful settings, matched with natural sounds or soothing music. When a walk in the woods or a visit to the beach is out of the question, this app can provide an oasis. Free. For Apple, Android, and Windows.

Stop, Breathe, and Think asks you to close your eyes for 10 seconds. Then you take a quick inventory of your mental, physical, and emotional health. Based on the results, the app recommends a five- to 10-minute meditation. Developed by Tools for Peace, the app also includes meditations that improve sleep and reduce stress. Free. For iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad.

Omvana is an easy way to explore different approaches to mindfulness and meditation. The app includes free as well as paid recordings featuring vocals and calming sounds. A mixer allows you to combine the two, so you get a customized track. The app is also supported by a website, omvana.com. Type “parenting” into the search engine, and you'll find lots of intriguing ways to build family harmony, including a two-minute laughter meditation. Basic app is free. For Apple and Android.

Gratitude Journal is an updated way to “count your blessings.” Parents can use the journal as a personal reminder of what's been good about every day. Or you may want to involve kids in creating a daily record of what they are thankful for. \$2.99. For Apple. (**Attitudes of Gratitude** is a similar app, available for free on Android.)

Apps like these are one of many ways to help children become resilient, so they can put life's problems in perspective. As a parent, you may not be able to protect your kids from stress, but you can equip them with skills that will help them cope, and mindfulness is a good place to start.

Carolyn Jabs raised three computer-savvy kids, including one with special needs. She has been writing Growing Up Online for 10 years and is working on a book about constructive responses to conflict. Visit www.growing-up-online.com to read other columns.

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TIPS FOR FEEDING KIDS

CHEF JOANNA DEVITA

Try something new for the new year

As we celebrate the New Year, many of us decide to evaluate the type of food we eat and the lifestyle we live. Whether it is eating lighter, gluten-free, vegetarian, or getting fit, many New Year's resolutions involve changes in diet. It can be a little tricky accommodating these diverse preferences at mealtime. I often turn to nutrient-dense, meat-free proteins, such as beans, nuts, and lentils to round out a meal suited for everyone at the table.

Try a chickpea curry. Chickpeas are delicious on their own, but they really shine when you spice them up and simmer them in a flavorful sauce. This curry goes great with steamed rice and roasted vegetables (recipe below).

Add a fresh pop of green. Edamame, both in the shell and out, are a great addition to meals. Not only do they look beautiful, but they are also packed with protein and nutrients. They store very well in the freezer and steam up in no time. Stock up on frozen snap peas and sweet peas as well. They are easily stirred into rice and noodle dishes that will please the whole family!

Try Tuscan-style white beans with greens. Winter is a great time to delight in the flavors, textures, and nutritional benefits of hearty braising greens. Try cooking cannellini or great northern beans with onions, garlic, fresh herbs, vegetable broth, and chopped, clean hearty greens such as kale, collards, or mustard greens. Squeeze



fresh lemon, drizzle good olive oil, and sprinkle extra herbs and seasoning just before serving. This dish makes a great addition to an Italian-inspired feast. Grill some sausages for the meat eaters and slice up some good bread.

Come prepared. When visiting family and friends, they may not be aware of the changing dietary preferences you and your family may have. Try preparing a black bean and corn salad ahead of time and bring enough to share. Blanch frozen corn, drain canned black beans, and combine with a tangy lime vinaigrette. Add sliced scallions, fresh cilantro, garlic powder, and salt and pepper to taste. This salad is great

served cold, room temperature, or hot. Put it into a burrito, on top of a salad, or alongside whatever your hosts are serving. This salad will last up to four days in the fridge and travels very well. It covers all the bases, as it is dairy-free, gluten-free, meat-free and, of course, delicious.

Experiment with homemade veggie burgers. At the school, we make ours with lentils, chopped mushrooms, and sun-dried tomatoes. Test a few recipes and see which one suits you the best. Once you find it, make a big batch. Form patties and freeze in layers separated by parchment paper. Next time burger night rolls around, pull out just what you need and leave the rest frozen. Put out exciting condiments and toppings such as caramelized shallots, spicy mayo, and sliced avocado. Everyone can add what they like and enjoy together!

Joanna DeVita, executive chef at Léman Manhattan Preparatory School, is an accomplished chef from New York. DeVita is the mother of two children (ages 5 and 2) and loves nothing more than spending time with them in the outdoors, sharing her love and respect for nature, good ingredients, and the joy of cooking with her family.

Curried chickpeas

INGREDIENTS:

2 tbsp vegetable oil
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tablespoon minced ginger root
1 small onion, diced
2 tsp curry powder (try making your own by toasting the spices and grinding them in a coffee grinder)

2 small can chickpeas, drained and rinsed, or cooked from dry chickpeas
¾ cup vegetable broth
¼ cup cream or coconut milk (optional)
5 sprigs fresh cilantro, chopped
Salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS: Heat oil in a medium saucepan. Sauté onions with a pinch of salt and pepper until softened and translucent. Add ginger, garlic and

curry powder and cook until fragrant, taking care not to burn the garlic and spices. Add the chickpeas and coat with the mixture in the pot. Add the liquids and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer, let simmer on low for 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in chopped cilantro and add seasoning to taste. Serve immediately or at room temperature. This dish is very good reheated as well.



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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Do you two need a parenting schedule?

I was recently asked the question: Do we need a parenting schedule? Here are a few thoughts that parents may find helpful.

For most families, a schedule of what dates the child will spend with either parent is of great value, for every member of the family.

Children will not feel torn: The recently celebrated Christmas holiday serves as a good example of how children can feel conflicted, if deciding which parent they will spend time with is left up to them. Do you think your kids might have felt this way? “If I’m with Mom, will I make Dad feel bad? And, if I’m with Dad, won’t Mom be lonely, and feel that I love Dad more than her?”

For a lot of children, being put in the position of having to choose is a no-win situation; whatever the decision, the child feels disloyal to someone.

Note that many holidays can be “split” in some manner. Hanukkah, also celebrated last month, is eight days long. Often, it is possible for a child to spend at least a day or two with one parent, and the remainder with the other. Depending on the circumstances, a child may be able to be with Dad on Christmas Eve and Mom on Christmas Day, or vice-versa.

Also note that older children may need a different arrangement; or even no arrangement. My daughter, recently turned 18 and living at college, had long been looking forward to tossing out the parenting schedule she had been living under. Although she had said that she believed the schedule we had was the best one possible, and though her mother and I were very flexible about our daughter being with the other parent when something came up — which our teenager recognized and appreciated — a schedule was nevertheless confining for her.

Since she turned age 16 or so, I had been hearing, “One thing I look forward to about college is not having a schedule of when to be with you and Mom.” I had my doubts; wouldn’t those conflicted feelings that often



come from having to choose which parent to spend time with still be there? But, she loves the new freedom, and no schedule is a big success for this child of divorce. (It helps a lot that both of her parents are very easy going about this, and that our daughter wants to — and makes a point of — visiting with each of us, though we don’t know weeks in advance when to expect her.

Will no schedule work in your situation when your child heads off to college? I couldn’t say, and am only grateful that it is successful here. As one who shares information with others about parenting during separation or divorce, I still can’t say that I would necessarily recommend not having a parenting schedule. It depends so much on your child, and on you the parent, too. If your child wants to try it, can you be supportive? Or, will you make every one of your kid’s trips home a guilt trip as well?

Parenting schedules benefit parents, too! Want to go out with friends? Take a class? Run errands? Go shopping? Sleep in? With a schedule in place, you’ll know when you can, and find planning ahead much

easier to do.

For many parents, a schedule also has the great benefit of reducing the conversations and interactions with the other spouse. If you’ve agreed about which parent your child will be with, and when, there should be fewer occasions to discuss and argue over these questions. If one parent has just been “showing up” to see or take the children whenever he feels like it, a schedule should help to end that behavior.

Need help in creating or revising a parenting schedule? Consider trying on your own; there are books and websites to help you. Otherwise, give some thought to mediation; parenting schedules are a big part of what divorce mediators do.

New York City and Long Island-based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without going to court. Contact him at lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com, (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/>. Follow him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lchabin.

Disclaimer: All material in this column is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

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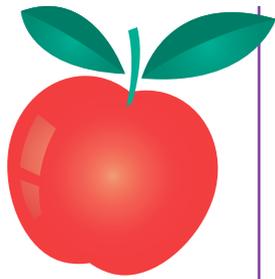
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DEAR TEACHER

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How to jump-start a toddler's education

Dear teacher,

I am a stay-at-home mom who is anxious to help my toddlers get a head start on learning. What is my best approach?

Dear parent,

One of the best ways to start toddlers on the path to being a learning star is by talking to them. This is true whether you are with them all day long or have more limited time, because you are a working parent.

It is sad, but true, that young children from poorer homes usually hear far fewer words than those from well-to-do homes. The difference in the number of words that are heard in an hour is absolutely enormous — more than 1,000.

It is believed that this greatly affects the variance in IQ between economic groups. So talk, talk, talk to your children, and whatever your income level is will not be a factor in them being smart students.

Incidentally, this does not mean hearing words on television; this simply doesn't help children.

Beyond just talking to children, introduce them to the world, and talk about it. Get out of your home. Go to stores, restaurants, parks, museums, and libraries — anywhere they can have new experiences. Let them see rivers, lakes, the ocean, bugs, and birds, planes, trains, and buses. Have them experience elevators and escalators, and look at the day and night sky. Take them on walks and car rides. Introduce them to all of your relatives. Each new experience will widen their horizons. The more they learn about the world, the more they will understand when they begin reading about it in books.

Stopping homework procrastination

Dear teacher,

Our son puts off and puts off starting his homework every night, then doesn't have enough time to finish. Is there any way to cure or at least improve his tendency to procrastinate?

**Dear parent,**

For many families, a homework contract resolves a lot of homework problems. The agreement between parent and child can state a specific time for starting homework. Both must talk over the terms and agree to them. In certain cases, it may be helpful to have rewards and penalties to incentivize the child to follow the terms of the contract. You should look at our contract on dearteacher.com. It is found under Skill Builders/Study Skills.

The tendency to procrastinate can be also be reduced by having you and your child look over his homework at the start of a homework session as defined on the contract. Then, together you can decide which assignment will be the easiest to do. Starting on the easiest assignment will reduce your son's reluctance to start his homework. You can further push your son to start his homework by not letting him do anything else before his homework is completed.

Math test anxiety

Dear teacher,

You have written about math anxiety

being a real phobia that can actually be seen in the brain patterns in the regions associated with problem-solving. We have strengthened our fourth-grader's basic math skills, so she can handle her homework okay. However, she still panics on tests. How can we help her do better?

Dear parent,

You have taken the first step in helping your child grasp basic math skills. Now you need to help her learn to unfreeze her mind when she is being tested.

Instruct her look over the entire test to find just one problem that she can answer. Then she should look for others that she can solve. By solving a few problems, her confidence will be enhanced, and she will be ready to go back to the start of the test.

Should she get stuck on a problem, teach her to draw a picture of it to make the solution easier.

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com.

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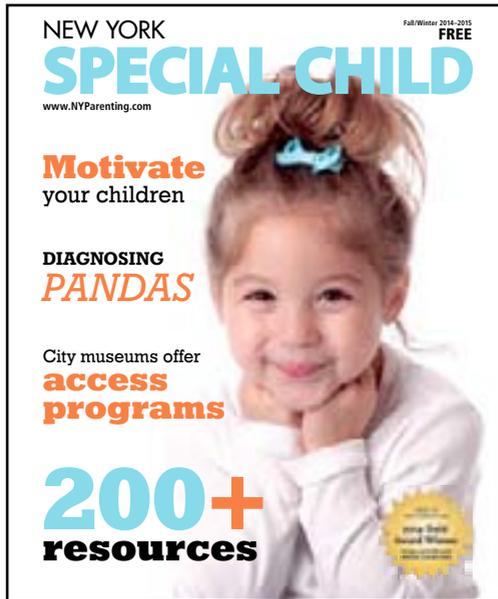
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Blasting off!

Kid Critics offer their take on 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'

The wait is over! Star Wars: The Force Awakens opened on Dec. 19, and the word is that you will NOT be disappointed!

You should know that the pace of this film is very fast and the action, quite intense. The original film's iconic characters played by Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher are back, older, and even more incredible than ever. But the new team, played by Daisy Ridley and John Boyega, definitely strikes out on its own and commands attention.

It is surprising that only 10 to 12 hours of films created the giant franchise we know as Star Wars. People have been waiting for a good Star Wars story ever since Episode 6 came out 32 years ago. Fellow Star Wars fans, I am pleased to tell you, it has come.

Everyone knows Star Wars is a sci-fi, action franchise, but this film is very unique for the fact that it goes much deeper. With Evil getting more and more powerful, there is drama and fighting between the characters,

but that doesn't stop romance from sneaking in with a little bit of comedy. Granted, I was worried it would turn into a kid's comedy, but quite a few times I found my self thinking that not only are the jokes perfect, they are also not over used!

Alright, let's get to the part everyone wants to read, the plot of the most hyped, but hidden film of the decade. The events start out 20 years after what took place in Episode 6, (spoiler alert for people who didn't see episode 6). The Empire has fallen, yes, but a new Evil has risen, known as The First Order. The rebellion needs new Jedi now more than ever, but Luke (Mark Hamill) is missing and they need to find (wait for it) a new hope!

Is the film worth the wait? Ever since almost a year ago, people have been talking about new Star Wars episode, and it is SO worth it. Fa-

mous directors have taken on some great challenges before, including Spielberg finishing Kubrick's AI. But J.J. Abrams took on something completely out of the ball field trying to continue Star Wars. The cinematography is spectacular, the ending shot (no spoiler) is one of the greatest endings I have ever seen in a film, and the whole story itself is unexpected and very enjoyable. Although there are many aspects that are not in the original Star Wars films, I think it is actually very nice to see Star Wars not get ruined, but go through its own evolving evolution.

As for the acting, of course, the original A-Team — Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and more — are phenomenal and I think it was the perfect idea to bring these characters back for the pure enjoyment of long standing fans. However, it is really Daisy Ridley who steals the show. Her character, Rey, is so fresh and unique, full of emotion, and this character (still no spoilers, sorry) goes through so much drama in the



film. It must have been a very hard role to play. Daisy gives it 110 percent. I predict she will be win an Oscar nomination for this role.

The special effects obviously got better since the last Star Wars film in the early 2000s, and I still want to mention how breathtaking they are. Even for 2015, with all the CGI aliens, ships and spectacular space scenes, it is quite literally "eye candy." My only criticism of the film is that it is a bit too long. However, not one single scene is out of place or feels unneeded.

One of my favorite scenes is when we are reunited with Hollywood's favorite space ship. Rey and Finn (John Boyega) are trying to escape The First Order. They have two options for space flight, a "piece of junk" or another space ship. Well, the space ship gets blown up and it turns out the "piece of junk" is the millennium falcon! Of course, everyone cheers, claps and whistles in the audience once the camera shows the breathtaking ship. It is not only enjoyable, and a bit funny, but the camera technique is perfect. If you want to know the rest of the story, go get your tickets and watch the film!

This film is actually pretty mature. It isn't as kind as episodes 1, 2 and 3. It has its violence, so I recommend it for ages ten to eighteen. And, adults who saw previous Star Wars films and appreciate them will enjoy this film as well. I give it five out of five stars, because, even if it is a little bit boring in the middle, (it is 2 hours and 10 minutes long) J.J. Abrams, the cast and crew achieved the impossible and created a new masterpiece that can be proudly added to the Star Wars franchise. I am also glad to say that, for the first time in over 20 years, Star Wars returns! You can see Star Wars: The Force Awakens in theaters starting December 18th!

— Gerry O., age 13

See his video review at: <https://youtu.be/0QMbcIXGWMs>

• • •

Star Wars: The Force Awakens is a wonderful film that many people will love. Today's technology really makes the fantasy of Star Wars seem like reality. The scenery is great from the beginning to the end. The forests are vast and really fit the movie wonderfully. The beautiful stars, planets and, even the spaceships, are amazingly real looking.

The storyline It tells what hap-

pens after peace was established in the galaxy at the end of Episode 6, but now it's more than 30 years later and there is no longer peace.

The actors lured me into believing everything is really happening. Daisy Ridley as Rey shows emotion and strength. John Boyega portrays Finn as a man who starts out being afraid but must overcome his fears. And Adam Driver is excellent playing Kylo Ren, the new bad guy who tries to live up to the evil of Darth Vader and does many foolish things in the process. Each characters enliven the new story. Also, Star Wars fans of all ages will love reconnecting with characters from the original films.



The costumes are great and fit the characters in many ways. Rey's costume, a rugged suit for the desert planet Jakku, shows that she is resourceful and can take care of herself. The unusual and cool costumes fit in well with the previous films in the series.

Many strange creatures add the element of being on other worlds. I really enjoyed seeing all the extra characters in each scene like pirates, gangs and a variety of aliens. A fun new sidekick is BB-8, a feisty round astromech droid that belongs to the rebellion.

The buildings look real and at the same time like they belong in Star Wars. The props, such as blasters and space ships, are also realistic. They are grungy and look like they have seen some use. The only things I didn't like were the Stormtrooper's blasters and armor which looked plastic and fake.

The special effects are wonderful from lightsabers to explosions and lasers from the guns. They are a huge part in the film and bring the movie to life.

I do love this film, but some parts of it are not quite the way I expected. There are not many breaks from battles, and there's so much action that it feels intense and rushed.

This film is best for ages 7 to 18 because of the intensity of the action. I give this movie 4 1/2 out of 5 stars. It will definitely awaken the Star Wars fan in everyone.

— Nathaniel B., age 9

See his video review at: <https://youtu.be/7dkw3N6oKrQ>

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Calendar

JANUARY



Photo by Chris Bolin

It's legendary

This original production is a legend in the making — and it's at Brooklyn Academy of Music on Jan. 15, 16, and 17.

"Legend Has it" is a new work created by Rebecca Northan, featuring Renée Amber, Bruce Horak, Mark Meer, and Jamie Northan, and is suitable for children 8 and older.

The play takes place in the mystical realm of Jarō, a fantasy world full of goblins, wizards, swords, and magic. The young hero of the story is literally pulled from the audience and his or her decisions decide the trajectory of the entire show. The setting and characters are evoked

primarily through detailed costumes, props, and masks with minimal set design.

Headed by the show's creator Rebecca Northan, the ensemble of master improvisers ensures that each performance offers a unique take on the young hero's story. There is a special Q&A with the actors after the performance on Jan. 15.

"Legend Has It," Jan. 15 at 7 pm, Jan. 16 at 2 pm and 7 pm, and Jan. 17 at 2 pm. Tickets are \$18.

Brooklyn Academy of Music [30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place in Fort Greene, (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org]

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Calendar

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SAT, JAN. 2

IN BROOKLYN

Map NYC: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm to 2 pm; Free with museum admission.

With more than 24 subway lines and more than 200 bus lines there are a lot of routes to remember. Create your own map. For children 3 years and older.

Harlem Globetrotters: Barclays Center, 620 Atlantic Ave. at Pacific Street; (917) 618-6100; www.barclayscenter.com; 2 pm and 7 pm; \$15-\$105.

The wizards of ball-handling celebrate their 90th anniversary world tour with two epic games at Barclays Center.

SUN, JAN. 3

IN BROOKLYN

Pine pillow workshop: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 10 am – noon; Free with garden admission.

Make your own fragrant Japanese pine needle pillow to take home (ages 3 and up).

Origami academy: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 10 am – noon; Free with garden admission.

Join the paper-folding pros and learn how to craft tiny animals and flowers (ages 7 and up). Classes begin every half hour. Led by Taro's Origami Studio.

LEGO workshop: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 10 am – noon; Free with garden admission.

Use Lego blocks to build the garden's renowned Cherry Esplanade in miniature form.



No more winter blues

Celebrate the Winter Bash at Shapeshifter Labs on Jan. 31.

Amelia Robinson of Mil's Trills — queen of indie rock — presents the sixth annual bash that celebrates a new year and helps you shake away the winter blues with music, art, and com-

munity.

Winter Bash on Jan. 31 at 11:30 am; admission is \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

Shapeshifter Labs [18 Whitwell Place and First Place in Gowanus; (646) 820-9452; www.shapeshifter-lab.com/].

Arty Facts: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 11 am; Materials fee plus museum admission.

Families enjoy a day at the museum with hands-on activities, and explore the works of artists.

Map NYC: 1:30 pm to 2 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 2.

SAT, JAN. 9

IN BROOKLYN

Survival workshop: Park House, 43rd Street and Seventh Avenue; (718) 421-2021; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Urban Park Rangers are well-versed in outdoor lore. Learn tips and tricks that will enhance your knowledge of the natural world, and might just save your life. Whether you are preparing for an extended journey through the woods or just want to be more prepared for any situation, an outdoor skills program is the perfect fit for you. Recommended for children 8 and older.

Map NYC: 1:30 pm to 2 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 2.

NYTM Train Operators School:

New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 2 pm to 4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 10 and older experience what it's like to operate a train by visiting the NYC Subway Car lab.

FURTHER AFIELD

The Secret Theatre's Academy of Dramatic Arts January Trial Classes:

The Secret Theatre, 44-02 23rd St., Queens; 718-392-0722; classes@secrettheatre.com; www.secrettheatre.com; 9 – 1 pm; Free.

Are you not sure if your little one will take to performing? You can always sample the school at one of our trial classes! Pick ONE Saturday in January from Jan. 9 through 30 for your child 6-17 years old to try one of our three classes: Junior Drama 9-10:15am (ages 6-10), Senior Drama 10:30-11:30am (ages 11-16), or Senior Musical 11:30-1pm (ages 11-17). These classes not only develop a talent inside the student, but aid in socialization, leadership skills, decision-making, and many other life skills.

SUN, JAN. 10

IN BROOKLYN

Arty Facts: 11 am. Brooklyn Museum. See Sunday, Jan. 3.

"I Can Be a Superhero": powerhouse on 8th, 1111 Eighth Ave. between 11th and 12th streets; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 11:30 am; Free.

Jump into a fun-filled world of an animated girl and discover just what she can become using just her imagination. Fiona Smart introduces her book. RSVP requested.

Woodworking: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Urban rangers teach you how to create a birdhouse from recycled materials. Recommended for tweens and teens. Participants chosen by lottery.

Map NYC: 1:30 pm to 2 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 2.

FRI, JAN. 15

IN BROOKLYN

"Legend Has It": BAM Kids, 30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place; (718) 636-4129; www.bam.org; 7 pm; \$18.

The play takes place in the mystical realm of Jarō, a fantasy world full of goblins, wizards, swords and magic. The young hero of the story is literally pulled from the audience and his decisions decide the trajectory of the entire show. Headed by the show's creator Rebecca Northan — the improvisational writer and performer behind the internationally acclaimed clown show, "Blind Date" — and an ensemble of master improvisers, each performance offers a unique take on the young hero's story.

SAT, JAN. 16

IN BROOKLYN

Artie Bennett: Edamama, 568 Union Ave at Frost Street; (718) 388-3663; www.edamama.com; 10:30 am and 12:30 pm; Free.

Praised children's book author Bennett, who has written "The Butt Book," "Poopendous," "Peter Panda Falls Down," and "Belches, Burps and Farts ... Oh My!," reads aloud from his work as well as breaks down the science behind them.

Scavenger hunt hike: Fort Greene Park Visitor Center, enter park at Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park; (718) 722-3218; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Continued on page 54

Continued from page 53

Join with urban rangers as they introduce you to the treasures hidden in the park. It's a leisurely stroll on mostly paved paths. For tweens and teens.

Metro measure: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm to 2 pm; Free with museum admission.

How many people can squeeze into a subway car? Take to the platform and learn how to measure. For children 5 and older.

NYTM Train Operators School: 2 pm to 4 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 9.

"Cinderella": Boss Children's Theatre, 11 Snyder Ave. between Bedford Avenue and Flatbush Avenue; (929) 352-6771; 2 pm; \$15.

Laugh, sing along and enjoy. A hip-hop tale.

"Legend Has It": 2 pm and 7 pm. BAM Kids. See Friday, Jan. 15.

FURTHER AFIELD

The Secret Theatre's Academy of Dramatic Arts January Trial Classes: 9 - 1 pm. The Secret Theatre. See Saturday, Jan. 9.

SUN, JAN. 17

IN BROOKLYN

Arty Facts: 11 am. Brooklyn Museum. See Sunday, Jan. 3.

Metro measure: 1:30 pm to 2 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 16.

"Legend Has It": 2 pm. BAM Kids. See Friday, Jan. 15.

MON, JAN. 18

IN BROOKLYN

Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute: BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street; www.bam.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Keynote address by author Michael

It's 'Poopendous'

It's stupendous, it's tremendous, it's "Poopendous" — it's author Artie Bennett reading at Edamama on Jan. 16.

The praised children's book author Artie Bennett, creator of "The Butt Book," "Poopendous," "Peter Panda Falls Down," and "Belches, Burps and Farts ... Oh My!,"

reads aloud from his work as well as breaks down the science behind them.

Save that date for Artie Bennett on Jan. 16 at 10:30 am and 12:30 pm; free.

Edamama [568 Union Ave. at Frost Street in Williamsburg, (718) 388-3663; www.edamama.com]



Eric Dyson, musical performances by The Brooklyn Interdenominational Choir and Kimberly Nichole, emceed by Borough President Adams, and presented by BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music).

Freedom songs and stories: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; 2 pm and 3 pm; \$3.

Tammy Hall shares diverse tales from around the world to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.

FRI, JAN. 22

IN BROOKLYN

Movie nights: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 5 pm to 8 pm; Free.

Planned by teens, for teens. Teens watch fun, thought-provoking, engaging, humorous, creative, and inspiring films with friends. Teen curators show a special film program inspired by a work of art or a special exhibition or collection, feature a gallery activity, present a talkback, and provide refreshments. For teens 13 and older.

SAT, JAN. 23

IN BROOKLYN

Metro measure: 1:30 pm to 2 pm.

New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 16.

"Step Afrika!": Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd. between Amersfort and Kenilworth places; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 2 pm; \$20.

The world's first professional company dedicated to stepping incorporates intricate rhythmic patterns of kicks, stomps, claps, and chant. The dancers use their bodies as instruments for a high-energy performance.

NYTM Train Operators School:

2 pm to 4 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 9.

"Cinderella": 2 pm. Boss Children's Theatre. See Saturday, Jan. 16.

FURTHER AFIELD

The Secret Theatre's Academy of Dramatic Arts January Trial Classes: 9 - 1 pm. The Secret Theatre. See Saturday, Jan. 9.

SUN, JAN. 24

IN BROOKLYN

Arty Facts: 11 am. Brooklyn Museum. See Sunday, Jan. 3.

Metro measure: 1:30 pm to 2 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 16.

SAT, JAN. 30

IN BROOKLYN

NYTM Train Operators School: 2 pm to 4 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 9.

"Cinderella": 2 pm. Boss Children's Theatre. See Saturday, Jan. 16.

FURTHER AFIELD

The Secret Theatre's Academy of Dramatic Arts January Trial Classes: 9 - 1 pm. The Secret Theatre. See Saturday, Jan. 9.

SUN, JAN. 31

IN BROOKLYN

Arty Facts: 11 am. Brooklyn Museum. See Sunday, Jan. 3.

Winter Bash: Shapeshifter Labs, 18 Whitwell Pl. and First Place; (646) 820-9452; 11:30 am; \$10 in advance (\$15 at the door).

Amelia Robinson is Mil's Trills — the songstress presents the sixth annual event that celebrates a new year and shaking the winter blues away with music, art, and community.

Fare game: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm to 2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Be a fare collector for the day. For children 5 and older.

Lunar New Year: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd. between Amersfort and Kenilworth places; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 3 pm; \$25 (\$12.50 children under 12).

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company celebrates the Year of the Monkey.

MON, FEB. 1

IN BROOKLYN

Fare game: 1:30 pm to 2 pm. New



Hip-hop Cinderella

It's a hip-hop version of "Cinderella" at the Boss Children's Theatre on Jan. 16, 23, and 30.

Laugh, sing along, and enjoy this tale of love, romance, and overcoming an evil stepmother — with a modern twist.

"Cinderella" on Jan. 16, 23, and 30 at 2 pm.

Tickets are \$15.

Boss Children's Theatre [11 Snyder Ave. between Bedford Avenue and Flatbush Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant; (929) 352-6771].

Our online calendar is updated daily at www.NYParenting.com/calendar

York Transit Museum. See Sunday, Jan. 31.

LONG-RUNNING

IN BROOKLYN

Heart and Seoul: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays - Sundays, 10 am to 5 pm, Now - Sun, Jan. 3; Free with museum admission.

The Brooklyn Children's Museum will ride Hallyu (the Korean Wave) with a new exhibit that brings modern-day South Korea to New York City.

Teen pass: Red Hook Recreation Center, 155 Bay St. between Otsego and Court streets; www.nycgovparks.org; Weekdays, 3 pm and 6 pm.; Free.

Clubs that focus on the areas of city parks, arts, environmental science, and sports that are tailored to the interests and talents of sixth through eighth graders.

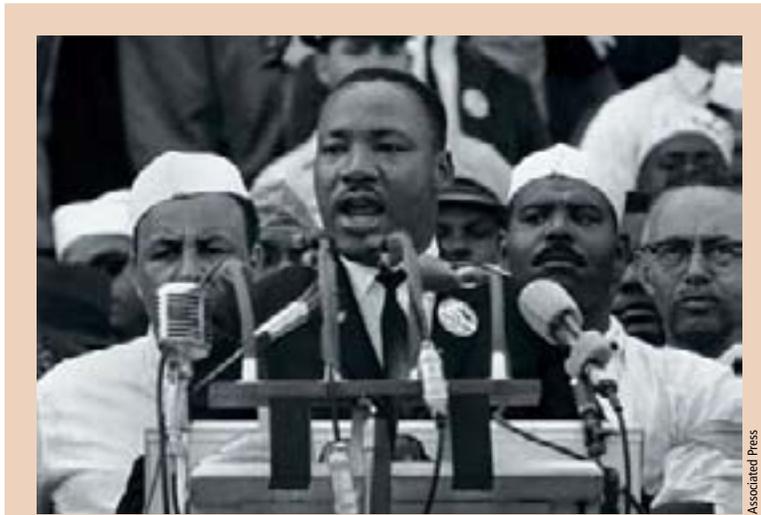
Family Day: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; Saturdays, 11 am, Now - Sat, April 16; \$5.

Lloyd Miller, Together in Dance, and the staff provide a fun Saturday with crafts, singing, and moving and grooving. Suitable for families with children that are 3 to 7 years old.

Fishing Fun: North end of Esplanade, East Drive and Ocean Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 2 pm and 3 to 4 pm.; Free.

Families with children 15 and younger learn about aquatic ecology, fishing safety, and collect their own bait.

Bird Watching: North end of Esplanade, East Drive and Ocean Av-



Celebrate with stories

Celebrate the life of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. in Freedom Songs and Stories at Lefferts Historic Homestead on Jan. 18. Storyteller Tammy Hall shares diverse tales from around the world to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.

Freedom Songs and Stories on Jan. 18 at 2 pm and 3 pm. Admission is \$3.

Lefferts Historic Homestead [452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway in Prospect Park, (718) 789-2822, www.prospectpark.org]

enue; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 2pm and 3 to 4 pm.; Free.

Families with children 15 and younger join with a ranger and identify the more than 250 species of birds in the park.

FURTHER AFIELD

Annual train show: Grand Central Terminal, 42nd Street and Park Avenue, Manhattan; web.mta.info/mta/museum/#general; Weekdays, 8 am to 8 pm, Saturdays and Sundays,

10 am to 6 pm, Now - Sun, Feb. 21; Free with standard admission.

Zip through tunnels, see familiar skyscrapers, and visit subway stops by viewing model trains. The layout Lionel Metro-North, New York Central, and subway trains along with a miniature replica of Grand Central Terminal is a great way to spend the holidays.

Holiday Train Show: New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718)

817-8700; www.nybg.org; Daily, 11 am - 5 pm, Now - Mon, Jan. 18; Included with an All Garden Pass.

The annual event returns with more trains and more tracks with an additional 3,000 square feet of exhibition space. Displays include Grand Central Terminal, Radio City Music Hall, the historic Hudson River Valley houses, Brooklyn Bridge, and Rockefeller Center.

"All Aboard with Thomas and Friends": New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Daily, 11:30 am - 5:30 pm; Sat, Jan. 2 - Sun, Jan. 24; \$20 (\$18 students/seniors; Children 2-12 \$8; members and children under 2 free).

Join Thomas and Driver Sam on a fun-filled, sing-along, mini-performance adventure by helping them decorate the station in time for the big Sodor surprise birthday party before the guest of honor, Thomas the Tank Engine, arrives! The show is 20 minutes long with plenty of songs to delight the audience as everyone sings along. When children arrive at the theater, they receive coloring sheets and crayons. After the show, they are called up in order of arrival to have their photo taken on stage with Thomas and Driver Sam.

The Titanosaur: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at West 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; Daily, 11 am to 5 pm; beginning Fri, Jan. 15; Free with museum admission.

The cast of the largest dinosaur that ever walked the earth is now on exhibit. The 122-foot long dino is residing on the fourth floor. This giant herbivore belongs to a group known as titanosaurs, and weighed about 70 tons.



Have some historic fun

It's family fun at the Brooklyn Historical Society, with Handmade History and Lloyd H. Miller in a double header on Jan. 16.

Families can discover fun Brooklyn facts in Handmade History and get inspired! After visiting one of the galleries, participants let their creativity run wild with a fun art-making project that they can take home.

If art work isn't enough, you can sing along in "Sing Back Brooklyn," a monthly musical

event featuring stories, skits, movies, and the ever-tune-ful Lloyd H. Miller who sings, dances, and shares quirky historical tidbits about the borough.

Both programs are on Jan. 16 from 11 am to noon and are suitable for children 3 to 7 years old. \$5.

Brooklyn Historical Society [128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 222-4111, www.brooklynhistory.org].



THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Meet the Beatles, again

John Lennon loved his mother but, alas, he didn't get to see her much: when he was five years old, his parents split and mum left John with his Aunt Mimi and Uncle George. Missing her greatly, he threw his energies into a cheap guitar she'd bought for him. Aunt Mimi said he'd never make a living with it, but "John didn't believe her."

You'll learn in "Fab Four Friends" by Susanna Reich, illustrated by Adam Gustavson, that he was right, and dreams can come true.

Music was important in Paul McCartney's life, too. It "flowed through every room" in the house where he lived with his father, who taught Paul everything about chords and instruments. When Paul met John, they became friends because they both loved music so much! Another boy who enjoyed music and guitars was George Harrison.

Though he was younger than John and Paul, George loved rock and roll, too. He also had a good ear and could play a song after hearing it only a few times on the radio. John

didn't think much of the kid, until George took out his guitar and started strumming. John was impressed and invited George to join their group, The Quarrymen. Later, they called themselves The Beatles.

People started flocking to clubs where the boys played, and someone started a fan club. John, Paul, and George hired a manager, who began looking at record companies. But something was missing.

Richard Starkey's loved the drums and he was known around Liverpool for being "tops." Having him as a Beatle made perfect sense.

To an adult, it might seem like yesterday since the Beatles reigned on radio and record. You just heard one of their songs in an elevator. But will your child understand what's inside "Fab Four Friends?" That's a question I had, as I was reading this gorgeously-illustrated, well-researched book. Author Susanna Reich teases



readers with little-known facts, but will kids care? Will they see the significance of Adam Gustavson's artwork? I think so, which is why I highly recommend it for older kids and adult Beatles fans. Small children won't be able to "come together" for "Fab Four Friends," but older readers will want to "hold" it in their hands.

"Fab Four Friends," by Susanna Reich, illustrated by Adam Gustavson [32 pages, \$17.99].



Discover the wonders of science

Science can tell you how the sky is blue and your cat isn't; why you kinda resemble your great-grandpa, if you squint; and when's the best time to go moon-watching. Fascinating stuff, right? But what if, as in the new novel "The Storm" by Virginia Bergin, you were the science experiment?

The rain had killed everybody that Ruby Morris knew. Or did it? She couldn't be sure if the mutant germs inside the water had only taken her friends, her mother, step-father, and baby-brat brother, or if it had killed her father, too. After all, the rain was deadly, but not completely: a few people, including that nerd, Darius Spratt, were smart enough not to get wet.

But Darius was gone now, as was the food and water Ruby had left, and her hair, which she'd shaved off because she couldn't wash it anyhow. Her baldness enhanced the

bruises and broken nose she'd gotten from a car wreck that happened while she was looking home.

But on her way there, she found something unexpected: her old frenemy, Saskia, who'd stolen almost every boy Ruby ever liked.

Except that Saskia accidentally got her foot wet, someone hacked it off to save her life, and Ruby couldn't just let her bleed to death so she took Sask to the army camp, though Ruby sensed that doing so was dangerous. She'd been there before, had seen the fence and the guards with guns, and she knew it wasn't a good place. But they had medicine.

And there at the army camp was Darius Spratt! He was alive, had found a job "crunching numbers" for the army, and he assured Ruby that she'd be okay.

Turns out nobody was safe in the army camp, especially Ruby, and especially after the army learned something surprising about her. She had to escape, but secrets would definitely go with her.

The army wasn't about to let that happen...

So did you read last years' "H2O" by author Virginia Bergin? If not, stop right here and read it first. If you don't, very little in "The Storm" will make sense. If you're ready for this sequel, though, here's what to expect: a screaming ride filled with loops and turns that make your stomach do flip-flops and your heart pound. You can expect to be practically tied to this book and when it's over, you can expect to want more.

But will you get more? Hard to say, but there is a nice tease at the end of this book, one that'll keep teen-and-up readers hanging from a pretty high cliff. And if that's what you like in a book, then reading "The Storm" isn't rocket science.

"The Storm," by Virginia Bergin Little Shaq," [336 pages, \$16.00].

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was 3 years old, and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill with two dogs and 12,000 books.

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New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

Medal in fun

With their new mini luge, the Zipfy, your kids will make the most out of snowy winter days and be sure to medal in fun. And parents can also take a turn on the plastic sled as it has a 250-pound weight capacity, and it's recommended for kids ages 5 to 106. The feet-first safety design makes it easy for the rider to stop and control his speed, while the handle makes it a cinch to maneuver. Choose from the classic red Zipfy, or the new purple on pink, or two-tone green or blue versions.

The Zipfy measures 13-inches



wide by 21-inches long and 16-inches high, and weighs just three pounds, so it won't slow them down when they're trudging back up the hill.

Hot chocolate for the little racers is not included.

Zipfy Mini-Luge sled, \$39.99, www.hearthsong.com.

Lights, camera, action!

Long, gray, winter days and the plaintive wail of "I'm bo-o-ored" call for parents to have a preemptive stash of entertaining activities for kids to while away the hours. SpaceFlix allows kids to use their Apple or Android device to create a space-themed, stop-motion film.

In the process, it will have the tweens mining their creativity. How? They can't yell "action!" until they've sculpted their lead aliens, er, actors from modeling clay. A younger child may even want to draw storyboards to plan out each scene, while an older child may

even be tempted to write a screenplay before recording.

After they've set the stage (which is a two-sided set, featuring a pock-marked, green moonscape on one side and an interior of a spaceship on the reverse), they can download the stop-motion animation app and get the players moving. The kit includes stickers, invisible fishing line, and punch-out props to jazz up the actors and set.

Recommended for wee Steven Spielbergs ages 8 and older, this is a riveting way for a child to play alone, with friends, or with a whole family of earthlings.

SpaceFlix kit and app, \$16.99, www.marblethebrainstore.com.



In tunes with nature

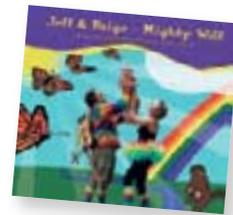
"Mighty Wolf," the new album from Jeff & Paige, is a joyous nature hike told through narration and song. Paige Doughty and Jeff Kagan give voices to the insects and animals they meet along the way (imagine an English-speaking beaver, with a lisp). Their human baby, Wolf, can be heard cooing, too.

Jeff & Paige's original songs are entertaining while slyly delivering challenging educational material. I was

introduced to the concept of a keystone species (such as the important, aforementioned lisping beaver), and I laughed — and groaned — at the hilariously dark, euphemism-rich "Dead and Delicious," a rocking song about road kill scavengers ("Carry on, raven/ Carrion").

Jeff & Paige are extraordinarily talented educators, and I can't wait to see what Wolf will inspire them to teach us next!

"Mighty Wolf" CD by Jeff & Paige, \$15, www.jeffandpaige.org.



It's pasta time with Nona

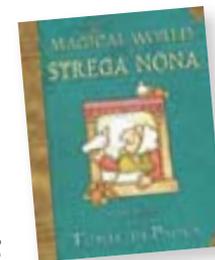
"The Magical World of Strega Nona," six children's stories featuring author-illustrator Tomie dePaola's wise, nurturing title character, will be treasured by kids ages 5–8.

In addition to the Caldecott Medal-winning "Strega Nona," the collection also includes "Strega Nona's Gift" — a story about how Nona celebrates Epiphany, the Italian holidays on Jan. 5 and 6, and how bungling Big Anthony has his own epiphany.

The hefty tome includes a map of Nona's Calabrian village, kid-friendly Italian recipes, and pasta cooking tips. It includes a CD featuring dePaola reading "Strega Nona: Her Story."

"The Magical World of Strega Nona" is a spellbinding collection, but it's up to you to provide the "ingrediente segreto," the secret ingredient: love!

"The Magical World of Strega Nona," \$40, www.barnesandnoble.com.



Game builds suspense

The new board game Lift It! Deluxe has parents and kids building structures using the crane that they hold in their hands — or strap on their heads — for maximum

guffaws.

Lift It is recommended for players ages 8 and older, who will be maximizing their coordination skills while they race the clock to stack pieces with the crane. Players can also join forces in teams and cooperatively crane.

But the fun in this game is really watching the parents or grandparents trying to maintain their dignity with a crane strapped to their head. With Lift It! Deluxe, the hilarity will ensue.

Lift It! Deluxe board game, \$34.99, www.marblethebrainstore.com.



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