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# Letter from the publisher

## The question of homework

**K**ids are now settled in their classes and the homework reality has begun again in earnest.

When my daughter entered elementary school I soon realized that times had drastically changed from my days in school. I never

had homework in the lower grades of elementary school, and I mean never! Kindergarten wasn't a time for rigorous work; it was a time for socialization and communal fun. We played, we ate, we finger-painted, we read books aloud, we had music and movement, recess and even a nap.

Now this is the typical behavior of a preschooler not a school child. Everything has been moved up and we have accelerated education, study, awareness and production through-



out the life experience. It seems there is little time left to be innocent and without responsibilities.

Nowadays the tone is entirely different and nowhere outside of politics is the divide clearer than witnessing the opposing attitudes of parents on the subject of homework.

Many parents want lots of homework, starting as early as Kindergarten. Those with this priority also seem to be largely in favor of discipline, structure and possibly even uniforms, even in a public school setting.

These academically focused parents are mindful that in this highly competitive global reality children need to have rigorous academic instruction and achievement as early as possible, and are expecting continuous assignments of homework

as a routine. They are advocating for nightly work and aren't satisfied that education is quality or complete without it.

Parents on the other side of this question want their kids to be free after school and on weekends. Free to participate in outside activities of all kinds, whether they are structured such as classes in art, music, gymnastics, or the like, or just free to "hang out" and be kids. Many of these parents state that visiting museums, watching public television, seeing live shows, are high priorities for them in the education process of their children and don't want their children's free time to be consistently mandated to homework assigned from classroom teachers.

These contrasting opinions are not always compatible and many parent association meetings are often spent in debate over the tone of the dialogue

and the outcome of the curriculum as a result. The good news is the strong participation of the parents and their concern and interest over what happens in and out of their children's classrooms. Better to have opposing opinions than none.

I'm wondering where you stand? What do you expect in terms of homework? How much is too much? How little is too little? We will print your letters in upcoming issues. Send your responses or thoughts to family@cnglocal.com.

Have a great Thanksgiving! Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
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# From our readers

Hello Susan,  
 What a terrific issue to see on the newsstand! I only just picked *Manhattan Family* up, but am thrilled to see you're covering teens. There is a dearth of information out there for parents of teens and it's such a challenging time in parenting.  
 I'll be sure to pass it along to a few parents I know.  
 Best,  
 Faye Rogaski



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# HOMework

## A conversation with parents & experts

What is its value, and how much is too much?

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

Parents throughout the five boroughs are debating the value of homework and whether their children should have more or less of it. Many parents think their children are burdened by excessive take-home assignments, while others believe the homework reinforces important concepts and flags comprehension issues for the teacher.

“The consciousness around homework has definitely changed. Once you start to name a problem, people think about it differently,” Sara Bennett, Brooklyn co-author of “The Case Against Homework,” recently shared with me.

Both Bennett’s work and Alfie Kohn’s book, “The Homework Myth,” cite statistics indicating that there is no correlation between increased homework and academic achievement. Bennett tells me that convincing parents of this can be difficult, since many have believed otherwise for so long.

Kohn also claims that there is a connection between excessive homework and a loss of interest in learning, and that nothing more than “folk wisdom” supports the belief that homework teaches self-discipline, good study habits, or responsibility.

### Reports from the homework front

Chevon Weeks, whose children attend a lottery school in Queens, tells me that she likes her children to be challenged, as “homework will give them a better future.” She is “so pro-homework” because she believes that homework helped her do well academically and is “a necessary evil which will help children compete globally.” Weeks also believes that the teachers need to give homework, so they can get through the new core curriculum and that kids will naturally “veg out” without it.

“Practice makes perfect,” she tells

me, although she won’t condone “busywork.”

Lyss, a Manhattan mom, agrees that it is important that her children do their homework and also believes in its value.

Last year, Diane Butler’s third grader had almost two hours of homework per night at her charter school in the Bronx. Her daughter sometimes gets frustrated and is fearful that she will get detention if it is not completed.

Tracy from Staten Island says, “If the teachers are doing a good job, they shouldn’t be giving [the kids] a ton of work.”

Tamara, a Manhattan mom, notes a disconnect between a parent and teacher, or between a teacher and child, when the homework is overwhelming and the issue is not being addressed. She is one of many parents who understand that the solution can only come from a partnership with the teacher.

### Ban homework?

Author Bennett indicates that good teachers should be able to reinforce important material during the school day, conceding that homework may occasionally provide a bit of reinforcement, despite the statistics disassociating it from direct academic success.

In her book, Bennett stresses, “Teachers receive little training in devising truly educational and meaningful assignments,” focusing attention not just on the excessiveness of assignments, but on their substance.

“I never saw a decent, worthwhile homework assignment, and I don’t know if there is better homework [than what is now being assigned],” she says.

Parents are frustrated, too, when teachers only spot-check homework or fail to provide feedback after a long night’s struggle to complete an assignment.

Still, moms like Tamara, who re-

members her homework as “drudgery,” views her first grader’s homework as “appropriate, inventive, and creative.”

Without hesitation, Bennett indicates that she would support a homework ban. Her colleague Kohn agrees, especially with respect to elementary school. At a minimum, he tells me he would advocate for “a no homework default policy,” where the norm would be homework-free evenings with families deciding how to spend the time, and where a rare assignment is only permitted if it is absolutely necessary and fosters students’ interest in learning.

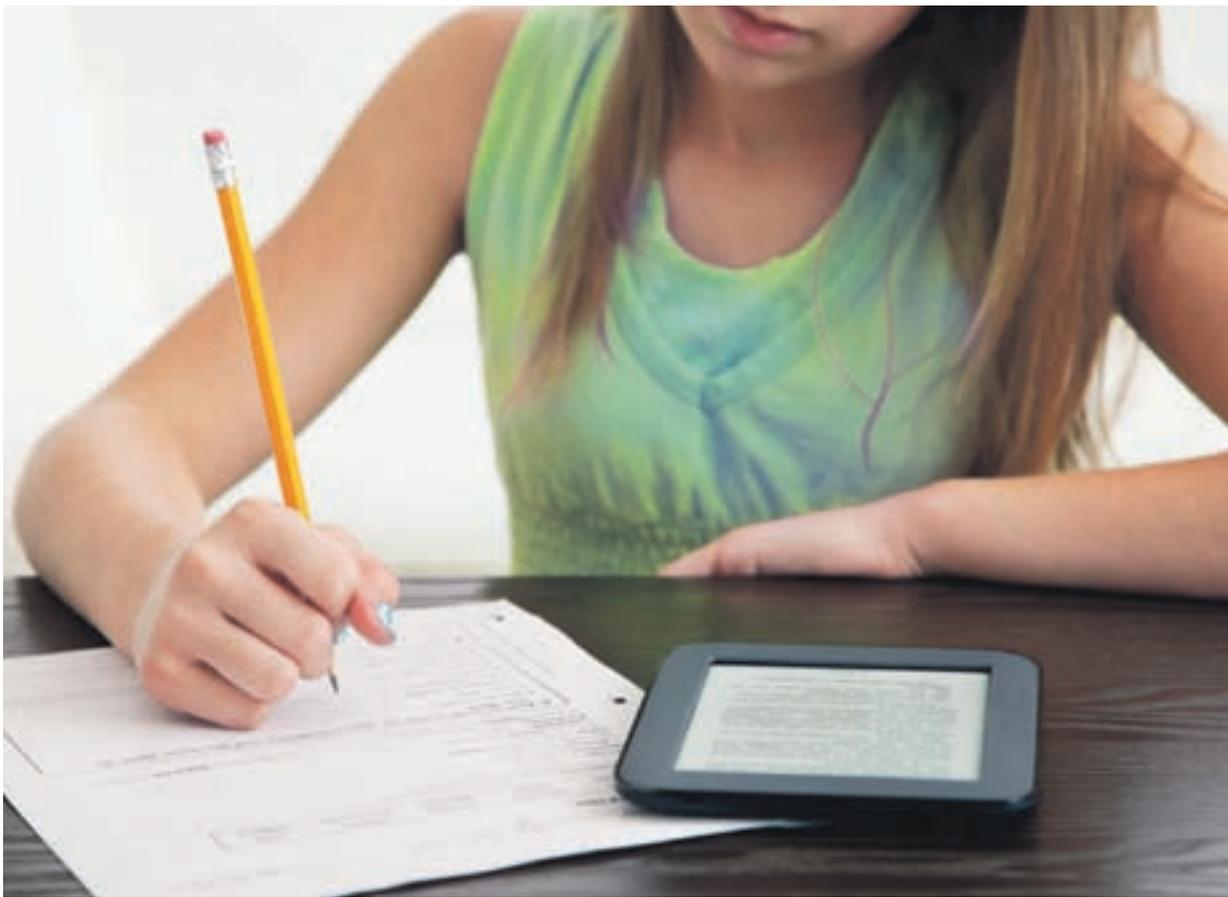
Vicki Abeles, director of the groundbreaking film “A Race to Nowhere” would favor a ban, as well, telling me, “We haven’t sounded the alarm loud enough when it comes to the long-term health consequences of the ‘busy-trap’ lives of our children” and that “we are depriving them of the growth that comes from having a job, making dinner with their families, reading for pleasure, and pursuing their own interests.”

Both the National Education Association and the National Parent Teacher Association recommend up to 10 minutes of homework from Kindergarten to second grade, and the National PTA recommends an additional 10 minutes more per grade thereafter. These guidelines seem to be echoed on many of the school’s individual websites, which often include nightly reading. Unfortunately, most of the parents I contacted were unaware of their school’s guidelines.

In the meantime, absent a ban, Kohn, Bennett and Abeles have helped to draft a petition for Healthy Homework Guidelines they hope the National PTA will adopt. For more information, go to [www.change.org/healthyhomework](http://www.change.org/healthyhomework).

### Parents speak up

Unlike years ago, when parents pressured their children to finish



all of their homework, no questions asked, schools today expect more parental supervision and are looking for more open communication with parents. Several schools' homework guidelines even encourage parents to write a note if their children are unable to complete an assignment within a reasonable time and speak with the teacher if it becomes a persistent problem. Some of the parents I spoke with did just that.

One parent went even further and persuaded the teacher that certain regularly assigned homework was not necessary for her child, and as a result, he was no longer required to do it. Still, Kohn would prefer that all families be given the ability to "opt in" to receive homework, as opposed to opting out.

"We're asking them to go back to work at the end of the workday, and I fundamentally disagree with that," Suzanne, a Manhattan mom remarks. She not only resents the need to reserve weeknights for homework, effectively eliminating after school community building and family socialization, but also the need to squeeze enrichment activities into weekends, thereby curtailing traditional family outings.

"Parents need to speak up if the workload is excessive, and they need a vision for what they want as a fam-

ily and need to be brave enough to do it," she advises.

Suzanne noted that the problem is not just in her school, but is systemic and fear-based, telling me, "if we can't meet the [New York State core educational] standards without so much homework, then we need to change the standards."

She says she would support a change to do away with homework before second or third grade, introducing it in a reasonable amount, at an age when the children can work more independently.

Moreover, this mom, so aggravated that the homework required her attention deficit hyperactivity disorder-diagnosed child to take twice the suggested time, successfully advocated for the inclusion of a modification clause for children with Individualized Education Programs as part of her school's guidelines. Hopefully, other schools will follow suit, allowing for down time and family time after a long day.

### **Who's really completing the assignments?**

Lori Hiller, a school social worker from Brooklyn, recognizes that sleep-deprived, anxious kids burn out as the evening wears on. If parents then complete the homework,

the benefit of the assignment is lost. Parents admitted to me that they do more than just assist with the assignment, either because they believe that the younger children do not possess the fine motor skills for elaborate projects or because they "want to get it out of the way."

When my third grader's groupings of taped pennies on plain cardboard was presented alongside another student's ski slope diorama perfectly engineered out of 100 toothpicks, I thought I was the only parent who was not doing my child's project for him. One Queens mother excused parents' over-participation, saying the child still needs to understand the concepts to present the project in class. A Brooklyn mom explains the overreaching as an attempt to avoid an evening of conflict and guarantee an A grade.

Many parents fear that their children will be penalized for incomplete or incorrect homework, so they make sure it is handed in corrected. Unfortunately, the teacher can't then tell if the child has mastered the material or the parent has taught the child that he must come home with top grades, no matter the cost. This mentality can have serious repercussions later, as Bennett references the recent cheating scandals at Harvard University and Stuyve-

sant High School as an outgrowth of this.

### **Defend family time**

Kohn tells parents that their role is "to support their child's emotional, intellectual, social and moral development, not to be the school's enforcer." One Brooklyn mom echoed that sentiment, telling me of her distaste over acting "as the homework police," noting the stress that even appropriate parental supervision can cause in a household, and aware that constant conflict over homework, coupled with some teachers' fear tactics, can result in children hating school.

Hiller notes that families with two working parents often lose their after-work family time to homework and miss the natural interaction they should be having regularly with their children. One working mom from Forest Hills told me she makes the effort to go over all the homework the daughter completed in her after school program, no matter how exhausted she is from her day.

Still, Hiller says, "There is a place in the world for homework and learning how to organize things," but recommends it be coupled with family-imposed structure, in the form of chores and dinner together, as well as informal outings and leisure activities, which can prompt learning, as well. She is aware of the statistics Kohn and Bennett rely upon, but believes that homework has served to provide her own children with good study habits.

"Homework is not like the weather, something to which we just have to reconcile ourselves," says Kohn. He challenges parents to go beyond the logistical questions related to an assignment and inquire as to the value of the assignment itself. He would even encourage parents to band together to convince educators that the value of homework is truly a myth.

Ultimately, we all want the same thing: our children to succeed. In order for that to happen, parents and teachers need to adopt Bennett's approach and recognize that we are "all in this thing together."

*Risa C. Doherty is an award-winning freelance writer, attorney and mother of two, who survived years of homework hassles.*

# Weighty issues

How to respond to your child's questions about being overweight

BY KIKI BOCHI

**Y**our child comes home from school, devastated that other kids are teasing her about being fat. You've noticed that she's getting a bit pudgy, but you're not sure how to broach the subject.

Talking to children about weight can be touchy. Many parents struggle with what to say and how to say it. In fact, one survey by WebMD found that many parents feel that talking about weight is more uncomfortable than talking about sex and drugs.

It's no wonder why. Ask adults who have struggled with their weight most their lives, and most have horror stories about insensitive comments they endured as children that were intended to "help" them. Understandably, today's parents are worried about saying the wrong thing, hurting their child's self-esteem, or worse, triggering an eating disorder.

With the ever-growing proportion of children who are overweight or obese, however, parents need to develop smart strategies about how to address the issue of weight. Unfortunately, there isn't that much practical advice out there.

"When parents search online or ask a medical professional for help in talking with their children about tough topics like sex or drinking, they can find a host of useful tools," says Scott Kahan, the director of STOP Obesity Alliance, a collaboration of nearly 70 consumer, government, labor, business, and health organizations. "Yet, if they search for information on how to field questions on weight, they won't find much beyond the simplistic 'eat less, move more' proclamation we've heard for years.

And that's just not sufficient to help the millions of families facing this serious and emotional health issue."

To help, STOP and the Alliance for



a Healthier Generation have developed a free conversation guide that covers "real-world" situations regarding weight, including understanding body mass index, body image, bullying, weight bias, and family obesity. It offers various scripts on how parents can respond to their child's questions and concerns, keeping the focus on healthy choices.

"Weight is a tough issue — perhaps the toughest today's parents face, given all the complexities," says

Ginny Ehrlich, CEO of Alliance for a Healthier Generation. "But that doesn't mean we can avoid it. In fact, it only intensifies the need to weigh in."

The free guide, aimed at the parents of children ages 7 to 11, is available online at [www.WeighInOnObesity.org](http://www.WeighInOnObesity.org).

*Kiki Bochi is an award-winning journalist who brings readers the best advice and latest developments in family health and child development.*

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# Get to the Met!

Programs for families abound at venerable New York institution

BY MARIE HUESTON

One of the wonderful things about raising children in a city like New York is the opportunity to expose them to world-class art from a very young age. The Metropolitan Museum of Art is one of the best places to do just that. Within its galleries, young eyes can gaze upon golden earrings worn thousands of years ago, swords and shields carried by knights of old, room settings in which our nation's founders might have stood, and towering panels of bold color and swirling patterns. In every corner of the building, the Met inspires imaginations to soar.

But where to begin? The prospect can be daunting even for the most seasoned museum goer, let alone a family with young children. Fortunately, the Met offers a variety of programs ranging from story time, to walking tours, to art projects that will help you navigate and appreciate the museum's vast collection.

"We want kids and adults to revel in the wonder of art," says Jacqueline Terrassa, managing museum educator for Gallery and Studio Programs. "Our programs are designed to help children hone their abilities to notice, to imagine, and to create. If we spark in them a curiosity and a desire to explore more, then we've achieved our goal."

According to Terrassa, the things children see and make in the Met can often open up new ways of viewing the world outside the museum walls. This has certainly been the experience of Upper West Side mom Sarah Cusick, who has been bringing her two children (daughter Clarissa, 7, and son Luca, 5) to Met family programs since they were toddlers.

"We'll be walking in the city and Clarissa might point out a shape or an architectural style she learned about at the Met," Cusick says. "And a while back, there was an ad campaign with an image of the Mona Lisa that started Luca talking about Leonardo Da Vinci."

Here are some detailed descriptions of the family programs offered at the Met. All are free with museum admission, which is currently a \$25 suggested donation for adults, \$17 for seniors, and free for children 12 and under. Arriving 10 to 15 minutes before programs begin is advisable so you and your children have time to settle in.

**Start with Art at the Met:** Geared towards kids ages 3 to 7, the appropriately named Start with Art at the Met introduces children to beginning concepts of art appreciation like color, movement, and technique. Children walk through the museum and sit to hear stories or draw. Past sessions have visited the galleries of European Paintings, Greek and Roman Art, and Arms and Armor, to name just a few. Pencils, colored pencils, and paper are provided for sketching.

Start with Art Plus incorporates a more detailed art project such as collage, mask-making, or clay.

*Start with Art: Thursday 3:30–4:30 pm; Saturday 11 am–noon, and 2:30–3:30 pm. No program on Nov. 22; no afternoon program on Nov. 10. Start with Art Plus: Sunday, Nov. 25, 2:30–3:30 pm.*

**Art Trek:** Similar in nature to Start with Art but aimed at kids ages 5 to 12, Art Trek makes more stops on a typical tour and delves deeper into the history and background of each work of art. Children might be asked to compare and contrast

two pieces they've seen or to relate the works back to subjects they might be learning about in school. Pencils, colored pencils, and paper are provided for sketching. Art Trek Plus might include a performance or other surprise along the way.

*Art Trek: Saturday 11 am–noon and 2:30–3:30 pm. No afternoon program on Nov. 10. Art Trek Plus: Sunday, Nov. 25, 2:30–3:30 pm.*

**Story time in Nolen Library:** Parents often use Story time in Nolen Library as a jumping-off point to explore galleries in the museum. Afternoon sessions are recommended for kids 3 to 7; morning sessions for those 3 and younger. "Strolling Guides" handed out at the afternoon sessions encourage families to search for subjects and imagery that have been touched upon in the books they've listened to. These guides are available upon request following the Toddler Story time, which focuses on books that young children love to hear, not necessarily ones that relate directly to art.

*Story time in Nolen Library: Tuesday to Friday 3–3:30 pm. Toddler Story time in Nolen Library: Tuesday to Friday 10:30–11 am. No programs on Nov. 6.*

**How Did They Do That?** Inquisitive visitors of all ages can examine the tools and techniques used to create particular works of art in How Did They Do That? Held one weekend each month on both Saturday and Sunday, the 30-minute workshops allow participants a closer look at pieces in the collection, as well as the chance to learn about the materials involved in their construction. Past topics have included Japanese screens and Islamic book arts. November's theme is "Crossbows of the World" and will take place in the Arms and Armor galleries.

*How Did They Do That?: Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 10 and 11, 1–4 pm with information sessions repeating every 30 minutes.*

**Sunday Studio:** Another activity suited to all ages is Sunday Studio, where children are able to create their own works of art alongside originals in the permanent collection. Instructors are on hand throughout



Photo by Don Pollard



Kids will have a great time learning about art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

each two-hour session, so stop in anytime and stay as long or as little as you'd like. Japanese ceramics and American landscape panoramas are among the subjects featured in the past. This month, kids can try their hand making Egyptian hieroglyphs on papyrus in the Egyptian Art galleries. All art supplies are provided.

**Sunday Studio:** *Sunday, Nov. 4 and 18, 1–3 pm.*

**Drop-In Drawing:** An evening program open to both children and adults is Drop-In Drawing, held on one or more Fridays each month. Locations vary: one session might gather in the Roman Sculpture Court, another in the galleries of Modern and Contemporary Art, and yet another in the Astor Court — a recreation of a Ming-Dynasty style Chinese garden courtyard. November's session will meet in the Carroll and Milton Petrie European Sculpture Court. Art instructors provide guidance every 30 minutes throughout the two-hour program. Paper and pencils are provided, but attendees are welcome to bring their own

sketchbooks or pads.

**Drop-In Drawing:** *Friday, Nov. 9, 6:30–8:30 pm.*

**Picture This!** Developed for children 5 and older who are blind or visually impaired, Picture This! programs incorporate tactile opportunities and highly detailed verbal descriptions of pieces in the collection. Themes change throughout the year; in next month's Museum Safari, kids will interact with works of art that depict animals. Like the other family programs at the Met, Picture This! is free with museum admission, but advance registration is required. To make a reservation, call (212) 650–2010 or e-mail [access@metmuseum.org](mailto:access@metmuseum.org).

**Picture This!** *Saturday, Dec. 1, 2–3:30 pm.*

**Discoveries:** Parents with children on the autism spectrum will want to plan ahead for one of the museum's Discoveries programs, which are designed for children 6 to 17 with learning or developmental disabilities. Advance registration allows instructors to keep group sizes

smaller. The programs are multi-sensory, so handling materials, sketching, or movement are often incorporated into the tours. November and December's theme is Power and Protection: A Look at Armor. To make a reservation, call (212) 650–2010 or e-mail [access@metmuseum.org](mailto:access@metmuseum.org).

**Discoveries:** *Sunday, Nov. 18, 2–3:30 pm and Sunday, Dec. 2, 11–12:30 pm.*

**Self-guided tours:** If you visit the Met on a day that no family programs are scheduled — or if you simply prefer to explore on your own — be sure to pick up a Family Map or Family Guide when you enter the museum. The Family Map features a fold-out poster with all areas of the museum replicated in miniature. Around the sides is a look-and-find challenge: spot a unicorn for three points, Medusa's head for two points, and a Founding Father in a rowboat for four points. Each Family Guide focuses on a theme, such as Greek Mythology or the lives of children in Colonial America. For an additional fee, you can also rent Family Audio Guides that point out favorite

kid stops throughout the museum like the Temple of Dendur and the Arms and Armor galleries.

**Family Map and Family Guide:** Available year-round at the information desk inside the museum's main entrance. **Family Audio Guides:** Available at all admission desks and various gift shops; \$7 adults, free for kids 12 and younger, and free for visitors who are blind, partially sighted, or hard of hearing.

**Holiday Mondays:** While the Met is generally closed on Mondays during the year, it opens its doors on special occasions for Charles H. Tally Holiday Mondays to coincide with school calendars. Four one-hour sessions are offered during the course of the day, each with a different theme, so children 5 to 12 may choose to attend one or more as they wish. Gallery tours, stories, and sketching beside original works of art are all part of the fun.

**Holiday Mondays:** *Veterans' Day, Nov. 12, 11 am–noon; noon–1 pm; 1:15–2:15 pm; and 2:30–3:30 pm.*

**The Cloisters:** Whether or not your children are in their princesses and knights phase, everyone in the family will enjoy a visit to The Cloisters Museum and Gardens, the Met's northern-Manhattan branch dedicated to medieval art. During the one-hour family programs offered on weekend afternoons, kids ages 4 to 12 may be asked to spot mythical beasts in tapestries, noble knights in paintings and sculptures, or ornate decoration on clothing worn centuries ago.

**November's schedule:** *Tapestry Tales, Saturday Nov. 3, 1–2 pm; The Medieval Knight, Sunday Nov. 4, 1–2 pm; A Medieval Pilgrimage, Saturday Nov. 17, 1–2 pm; and Medieval Clothing and Fashion—Ropa y Ornamentos Medievales (a bilingual program), Saturday Nov. 24, 1–2 pm.*



*Metropolitan Museum of Art [1000 Fifth Ave. at 82nd Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 535–7710, [metmuseum.org](http://metmuseum.org)].*

*The Cloisters Museum [99 Margaret Corbin Dr. near Fort Tryon Place in Inwood, (212) 923–3700, [metmuseum.org](http://metmuseum.org)].*

*Marie Hueston is the author of "The All-American Jump and Jive Jig" (Sterling, 2010), and the forthcoming "Christmas Eve with Mrs. Claus" (Sterling, 2013). She lives in Brooklyn with her husband, son, and daughter.*

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## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN



# Can't sleep?

## Melatonin can help your child

**W**hen my daughter was diagnosed with not one, but two autoimmune disorders, it impacted everything in her life. From daily headaches and stomach pains to extreme fatigue and foggy brain, Kate grew accustomed to dealing with not feeling well. She always had trouble sleeping since being diagnosed, but in the last year in particular, things became worse. During the summer, she couldn't sleep at all. The more she tried, the more anxious she got and the less chance she had to sleep. Her days and nights became confused and her quality of life went downhill fast. When school reopened, it became apparent the first week that something had to be done.

I called her endocrinologist to discuss any possible sleeping aids that might help her. I had never before wanted to put her on any more medications than she was already on — especially sleeping pills — but her lack of sleep had become unbearable, I began to consider it.

Her doctor suggested melatonin. Melatonin? I had heard a lot about it in the past couple of years but didn't know much about it.

I thanked him, hung up, and

embarked on a three-hour Google search. And then I went across the street and bought her a bottle in the pharmacy. Hands-down, it was the best thing I've done to help improve her overall health.

With melatonin, the first mistake that people make is thinking that is a sleeping pill. It is not. It is a natural hormone produced by the body, which helps regulate the sleep and wake cycles. In my daughter's case, she didn't have enough to sustain her and her sleeping cycles were thrown out of whack. Once she started taking it, it immediately began helping her body do what it was naturally supposed to at night — calm down and sleep.

We all know how vital sleep is for all of us. Adequate amounts of sleep are essential for children (and in particular for children with health issues) because sleep affects us in every way, from eating and thinking to repairing cells and fighting off infection.

Dr. Lawrence Rosen, a pediatrician, nationally recognized expert in pediatric integrative medicine, and co-author of "Treatment Alternatives for Children," explains how melatonin helps.

"There are receptors in the brain

for melatonin that regulate brain chemicals related to anxiety and calming," he explains. Dr. Rosen, who is also the founder of the Whole Child Center in Oradell, NJ, recommends melatonin to his pediatric patients. "Melatonin can be a useful sleep or anxiety aid for children (typically 3 years old or older). I encourage an integrative approach to sleep and anxiety issues, including relaxation strategies like yoga or guided imagery. But if those strategies are not successful, a small dose of melatonin may be helpful."

Dr. Rosen recommends starting at 0.5 mg. and says even a very small dose can be effective. My daughter takes 1 mg. each night.

Robin Gorman Newman, founder of MotherhoodLater.com finds melatonin very useful in her son's sleeping schedule.

"My 9-year-old son has always been an active kid, and it's hard for him to wind down. He fights going to sleep, so melatonin was suggested to us. He takes 2 mg. of the GNC brand dissolvable pills a half hour before bedtime. He initially took 1 mg., but as he's grown, the doctor upped the dose."

There is some debate about the possible side effects, such as drowsiness, headaches, abdominal pain, dizziness, and strange dreams. If a child experiences any of these symptoms, melatonin might not be right for him. Bear in mind, however, that those side effects usually occur when people take too much or aren't under a doctor's care.

For my daughter, melatonin has been a lifesaver. Ever since the day she started taking it, she has been able to sleep, which is incredible given her history. If your child has been affected by a sustained lack of sleep or inability to get to sleep, a complete check-up is necessary. Then, once health conditions have been ruled out or identified — and if your child is still struggling to get the sleep he needs to feel healthy — you might want to discuss melatonin with your pediatrician.

*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 her on Facebook and Twitter @DanniSullWriter, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.*

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# Don't label my child!

Accepting the diagnosis and services for your child with special needs

BY DANA CONNELLY

**T**o observe your child lag behind his peers is a pressure-filled, insecurity-fueling experience. Every parent needs to be aware of the appropriate developmental milestones of children, for which there is a plethora of information.

Any child-care program worth its accreditation and its tuition should be monitoring your child's progress through these milestones, noting any red flags in development and behavior, and reporting them to you, as the parent or caregiver, in a timely and professional manner.

## Fear of labels

Rather than balk at the suggestion of having your child evaluated, though, understand that these professionals want not only what is best for their program, but also what is best for your child. So why do so many families hold off on having their child evaluated for fear that the child will be "labeled?"

The reality is that everyone is labeled something everywhere they go. Maybe you're the so-called "funny" member of your family or the "tough one" at work. Of course, there is so much more to you than that. It is the same when your child is given a diagnosis.

If your child is displaying symptoms of autism, for example, but we called it "Puzzle-Head Syndrome," does it change what your child's struggles are? It's so important to focus more on the goals that the evaluations outline versus the label. These goals will bring your child closer to age-appropriate levels.

Without accepting the diagno-

sis and services, your child will continue to struggle and will be labeled something regardless. Is it better for your child to be known as "the one who doesn't talk," "the kid who cries a lot," or "the bully," rather than get the help he needs?

## Parents in denial

In speaking with a parent, a registered nurse who struggled with accepting her son's diagnosis of mild-moderate autism, she confessed the following:

"I would have felt less scared and hopeless had they told me my child had leukemia."

This sounded insane and awful to me at first, but then she explained.

Leukemia has a course of treatment that she could understand. And he could potentially be cured. I could see her point.

It's interesting how, if a child has a cold, asthma, or allergies, we as parents are on top of it, making the doctor's appointments, contacting every specialist, and filling the prescriptions.

So why is it that when our children display troubling behaviors, learning disabilities, or developmental delays, we hold off on having them evaluated and



Without accepting the diagnosis, your child will continue to struggle and will be labeled something regardless. Is it better for your child to be known as “the one who doesn’t talk,” or “the bully,” rather than get the help he needs?

reject the services that are offered (for free, through the Board of Education)?

Many parents feel that it is a reflection of their parenting skills. Perhaps they feel a sense of insecurity about the time or opportunities that they can provide for their child. Maybe they blame themselves for an incident the child has endured.

Denial is what grows from such insecurity and is a common reaction to learning that a child will need special educational services, but the inaction of the parent far outshines the difficulties that the child is displaying. While it seems harsh, it is the denial that will have you judged as a parent.

Another concern of parents during the evaluation and diagnosis process is that they do not want their child to be part of the system.

The reality, though, is that if your child has a Social Security number, then he is already part of the system, a system that is designed and regulated to help your child achieve developmental milestones, age-appropriate skills, and future academic success.

The evaluation process is confidential and every report, consent form, and Individual Educational Plan is accessible by only the appointed parties involved in your child’s case.

Even if your child requires services throughout his educational career, goals such as college, future employment, and living independently are not unattainable simply because he has been evaluated at some point in his life.

### Neglecting needs

An important consideration is that, prior to first grade, educational services are not mandatory, but if your child requires services after first grade and, as a parent or caregiver, you do not follow through, it could be considered educational neglect.

Section 1012 (f) of the Family Court Act identifies a neglected child as a child less than 18 years of age whose physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as a result of the failure of his parent or other person legally responsible for his care to exercise a minimum degree of care; in supplying the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or education in accordance with the provisions of part one of article 65 of the education law, or medical, dental, optometric, or surgical care, though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so.

As an evaluation representative for a New York-based agency, I come into frequent contact with families who are in denial of their children’s developmental delays. At times, meetings have ended in threats, insults, and even tears. It is OK to feel discouraged, and it is tempting to feel like in some way you have failed as a parent, but it’s essential to shelve those impulses and take a more proactive approach to helping your child grow and develop.

The evaluation process is comprised of multiple standardized tests that determine the functioning level of your child. According to the New York City Board of Education, a child must present with a 33 percent delay in one developmental area, or a 25 percent delay in two developmental areas to qualify for services.

By initiating a proper evaluation for your child, the worst thing that can happen is that your child will get the help that he needs.

For more information, visit [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov).

Dana Connelly holds dual Master’s Degrees in Education and Special Education, working as an educational evaluator for a New York-based agency. She specializes in Applied Behavior Analysis and is the proud single mother of a 5-year-old boy.

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# Finding a hobby

The value of hobbies for special-needs children

BY REBECCA MCKEE

**I**n the cold months of winter, discovering novel adventures and activities can pose a challenge. It is during these moments when many of us spend time shaking off the chill indoors by working on projects, co-zying up with a good book, and seeking out other forms of fun.

People with autism spectrum disorder, or other unique personalities, meet with difficulties managing their leisure in a productive manner. Their free time is not something naturally filled with hobbies. Unstructured minutes and hours lead to practicing undesirable behaviors. How to partake in recreation skills is something that needs to be taught, scheduled, and reinforced. Winter is a perfect season to teach the skill of hobby development and maintenance, as it is the natural time of year for family and friends to spend more time close to home.

Since hobbies take place for most people outside of work and school, families and residential support teams should tackle the task of developing hobbies for a person with autism. All people involved, including the individual with special needs, family and support circles, should articulate and develop hobbies that are preferred and teachable. Keep in mind, as is the case for us all, that hobbies must fit within our daily schedules. As you create on behalf of those who may not enjoy change and combustion, select hobbies that will last throughout the years.

Hobbies that have longevity meet these criteria:

- It is a socially acceptable activity for children, teens and adults.
- It is something that one gravitates towards naturally.



- It is something that is simple to schedule.

- It is something that can be started, enjoyed, and completed alone.

Some socially acceptable activities that will grow throughout childhood to adulthood may include collections, such as sports memorabilia, coins, or stamps. A regularly scheduled physical hobby can consist of an exercise activity, as in Wii, bike riding, yoga, and meditation, or simply taking a daily walk. Pet care and dog walking would be beneficial for those who have a keen interest in animals.

Those who enjoy the arts may be attracted to hobbies that comprise of pottery, musical instrument les-

sons, music appreciation via an iPod, scrapbooking, painting, photography, or keeping a journal. Food lovers may enjoy gardening and planting, and taking that hobby further to cooking and preparing food.

Bringing your family member on board with his hobby development will increase the chances that he will enjoy leisure skills independently. It also heightens the chances that he will grow with this hobby, expand on it, and bring it to new levels throughout his life. Hobbies should not cause internal anxiety to himself or external disruption to others. Hobbies fill free time and are to be enjoyed. They bring structure and a sense of accomplishment. Enjoy!

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Founded in 1992, The Gillen Brewer School is a New York State approved non-public school, which provides a family oriented early childhood program for children ages 2.8 years through 10 years old with developmental, language, learning and emotional disabilities. We offer a year-round program that provides

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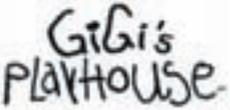
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# Fun Thanksgiving crafts for kids



BY DENISE YEARIAN

**Y**ou're busy this month planning and preparing your Thanksgiving feast, so give your children a few holiday activities they can sink their teeth into. When completed, these items can be used as decorations for your table and home.

## Turkey taters

Items needed: thin cardboard or card stock; white construction paper; pencil; markers; scissors; straight pins; potato.

Lay your hand down on a piece of cardboard. Spread your fingers apart. Use a pencil to draw around each finger and thumb, making the hand outline a little larger than your hand is. This will be the feathers.

On white construction paper, draw two round eyes, a triangular beak, and a teardrop-shaped wattle.

Before cutting anything out, color the feathers and facial features. The feathers can be a blend of hues. The eyes should have a black center for the pupils, the beak yellow, and the wattle red.

Now, cut out all of the turkey features. Take the potato and slice off a small section of the bottom so it will stand without falling. Carefully attach the eyes, beak, wattle, and feathers with straight pins.

## Notable natives

Items needed: two empty toilet paper rolls; orange, pink, black, and yellow construction paper; scissors; glue; pencil; black marker; ruler.

Cut two of each of the following from construction paper: 4- by 6-inch orange paper (Native American body); 2- by 6-inch pink paper (face); 3- by 4-inch black paper (hair); 1- by 6-inch orange paper (headband); small feather shapes from yellow paper.

Wrap an empty toilet paper roll with the orange paper and glue in place.

Draw a face on the pink paper. Wrap the pink paper around the top edge of the toilet paper roll to form the face and head. Glue in place. Cut the black construction paper in long, narrow strips, so it makes fringe for the hair.

Glue hair around the sides and back of the head. For headband, draw zigzag lines or another design across the long orange strip. Glue two or three feathers on the backside of the headband. When dry, wrap the headband around the Native American's head and face making sure not to cover the eyes. Glue in place.

Repeat instructions for the second Native American. Add more feathers for the boy, and draw a beaded necklace on the girl.

## Brim and buckle napkin rings

Items needed: empty toilet paper roll; black and yellow construction paper; scissors; glue; ruler; large jar or cup 3 1/2- to 4-inches in diameter.

Cut each of the following from construction paper: 3- by 6-inch black paper; black circle measuring 3 1/2- to 4-inches in diameter (use the mouth of the jar or cup as a guide); 2-inch square yellow construction paper.

Measure 3 inches on the toilet paper roll, and cut it down to

## Seasonal books

To enjoy a Thanksgiving-themed story time with your child, check out these books at your library:

“Albert’s Thanksgiving” by Leslie Tryon

“The Candy Corn Contest” by Patricia Reilly Giff (sound recording)

“The First Thanksgiving” by Lois Lensky

“Squanto and the Miracle of Thanksgiving” by Eric Metaxas

“Thank You, Sarah: The Woman Who Saved Thanksgiving” by Laurie Halse Anderson

“A Turkey for Thanksgiving” by Eve Bunting (book and sound recording)

“Turkeys, Pilgrims, and Indian Corn: The Story of the Thanksgiving Symbols” by Edna Barth

“Turkey Pox” by Laurie Halse Anderson

cut a smaller yellow square on the inside so it is hollow in the center. This is the buckle of the hat. Glue it onto the hat, close to the brim. The napkin fits into the top of the hat. Repeat directions until you have enough for all of your guests.

### Thankful tree

Items needed: red, green, brown, yellow, and purple construction paper; large brown paper bag or roll of brown paper; scissors; tape; pen.

Cut apart a large brown paper bag and use it to make the trunk and branches of a tree. Hang this on the refrigerator door or another door in your home. As family and friends arrive at your house on Thanksgiving Day, ask if you can trace their hands on a piece of construction paper. Have them write something they are thankful for on each handprint. When they are finished, cut out the hands and attach them to the tree, so they look like leaves.

### Cornucopia of candy

Items needed: large waffle cones; candy corn and pumpkins; other small candies.

Lay cones on their side and fill with candy corn and pumpkin mix, or other small candies.

This can be a small table centerpiece, or a favor at each person’s place setting.

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



that size. Roll black paper around the toilet paper roll and glue in place. This is the body of the hat. On one end, cut six small tabs around the bottom.

Take the black circle and stand the toilet paper roll on one end in the center.

Trace around the roll to form an inner circle. Cut out this inner circle to make a donut shape. Slip the donut shape down over the toilet paper roll to form the brim of the hat. Fold the tabs on the bottom of the roll so they are underneath the brim. Put a dab of glue on each tab and secure to the brim.

Take the yellow square and

A vertical advertisement for the New York City Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker". The top half features a large, decorated Christmas tree against a blue sky with a crescent moon. A woman in a white dress sits on a blue bed-like structure that is part of the tree's branches. The title "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker" is written in a stylized, glowing font across the middle of the tree. The bottom half of the ad is dark blue with white text. It reads: "NEW YORK CITY BALLET", "NOVEMBER 23 through DECEMBER 30", "Including 2 PM Wednesday Matinees", "Best-Priced Seats 11/29, 12/4, 5, 6, 11, 12 Mat & Eve", "Visit [nycballet.com/publicprograms](http://nycballet.com/publicprograms) for information about pre-performance children's workshops.", "Tickets Start at Just \$29", "[nycballet.com](http://nycballet.com) or 212-496-0600", and "David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center". There is also a logo for "AMERICAN EXPRESS PREFERRED SEATING" and a small disclaimer: "TERMS, CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS APPLY".

# Calendar

NOVEMBER



## Taking wing at the Museum

**L**ike swallows returning to the San Juan Capistrano mission, the “Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter” exhibit has returned to the American Museum of Natural History.

This is the 15th year that the museum’s vivarium, kept at a constant 80 degrees Fahrenheit, has hosted more than 500 butterflies (from monarchs to swallowtails) as they flit through blooming, lush vegetation. Budding Lepidoptera enthusiasts interact with the butterflies inside the 1,200-square-foot exhibit, while winding along the pathway that’s surrounded by tropical plants

and vibrant blossoms. Powerful lamps shine down from the ceiling, like sunlight through a tropical rain forest canopy.

The magical setting, which provides a warm respite from winter, is both educational and enjoyable for children and adults.

The exhibit is open daily, from 10 am to 5:45 pm, now through May 28, 2013. Museum admission is \$24 for adults; \$14 for children; and \$18 for seniors and students.

*American Museum of Natural History*  
[Central Park West at 79th Street in Manhattan, (212) 769-5200, [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org)].

## Submit a listing

Going Places is dedicated to bringing our readers the most comprehensive events calendar in your area. But to do so, we need your help!

Send your listing request to [manhattancalendar@cnglocal.com](mailto:manhattancalendar@cnglocal.com) — and we'll take care of the rest. Please e-mail requests more than three weeks prior to the event to ensure we have enough time to get it in. And best of all, it's FREE!

## FRI, NOV. 2

**Fall Colors Collage:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; [www.cmom.org](http://www.cmom.org); 1 pm; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger make a collage of orange, brown, and red materials.

### The Ideal School of Manhattan

**Gala:** The Ideal School, 1356 Broadway at W. 36th Street; (212) 769-1699; [www.theidealschool.org](http://www.theidealschool.org); 7 pm; Tickets start at \$250.

Annual gala includes cocktails, dinner, dancing, a raffle, and live and silent auctions to support the non-profit independent school and helps raise critical funds towards scholarships for students in need.

**"Mojo":** The New Victory Theater, 209 W. 42nd St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues; (646) 223-3010; [www.newvictory.org](http://www.newvictory.org); 7 pm; \$14-\$38.

Objects take new forms and spring to life in fantastical and funny ways in this collage of puppetry, illusion, dance and live music, for everyone over the age of 5 years old.

## SAT, NOV. 3

**Fox and Branch:** Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 11 am; \$13-20.

Dave Fox and Will Branch play a timeless kind of music for families as part of the Just Kidding Saturday series.

**Hands-On Nano Demos:** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; [www.sonywondertechlab.com](http://www.sonywondertechlab.com); 1-3 pm; Free.

Children ages 7 years and up uncover the fascinating world of nanoscience and nanotechnology.

**Channel Thirteen Poster Making Workshop:** Museum Of The City Of New York, 1220 Fifth Ave. at 103rd Street; (212) 534-1672; [www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org); 1:30-3 pm; \$10 admission; children 12



Photo by Mike Peters

## Adventure for a 'princess'

**"T**he Little Princess" is a feel-good play about a princess and a mean headmistress, with a happy riches-to-rags-to-riches ending. The best part? It arrives just in time for the holidays at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center on Nov. 11, courtesy

of the ArtsPower National Touring Theatre production.

Children ages 3 to 9 will enjoy the story of spirited Sara Crewe who goes from having it all to losing it all when her doting father disappears and leaves her in the clutches of the evil Miss Minchin.

But all's well that ends well, and Sara's father's friend returns and provides for her once again.

*"The Little Princess" at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center [199 Chambers St. between Greenwich and West streets in Tribeca, (212) 220-1460; [www.tribecapac.org](http://www.tribecapac.org)]. Nov. 11, 3 pm. \$25.*

and under are free.

In celebration of Channel Thirteen/WNET's 50th anniversary, children ages 6 to 14 years old use memories of their favorite Thirteen kids programming and artistic talent to create posters wishing Thirteen a happy 50th anniversary.

**Draw Your Fruits and Veggies and Eat Them Too:** The Morgan Library and Museum, 225 Madison Ave.; (212) 685-0008 X 560; [www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org); 2-4 pm; \$8; \$2 for children.

Eileen Gunning, President of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators, leads families in observing, drawing, and eating their fruits and vegetables. Appropriate for ages 6 to 12 years old.

**"Mojo":** The New Victory Theater, 209 W. 42nd St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues; (646) 223-3010; [www.newvictory.org](http://www.newvictory.org); 7 pm; \$14-\$38.

Objects take new forms and spring to life in fantastical and funny ways in this collage of puppetry, illusion, dance and live music, for everyone over the age of

5 years old.

## SUN, NOV. 4

**ING NYC Marathon:** Starts at Verazano Bridge, Staten Island Side; [www.nyrr.org](http://www.nyrr.org); 9 am-5 pm; Free.

Come and watch the 43rd running of the world-wide event through the five boroughs of New York City where more than 47,000 runners will compete. The course begins in Staten Island, and goes through Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, ending at Central Park.

**Bubble Do Beatles:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; [www.92y.org](http://www.92y.org); 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

Bubble performs faithful adaptations of the Fab Four to audiences ranging from six months to 64 years old, covering everything from "A Hard Day's Night" to "Abbey Road."

**Sunday Story Hour Elections:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna

Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; [nyhistory.org](http://nyhistory.org); 11:30 am; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13 \$10.

Children enjoy imaginary presidential responsibilities, challenges, and benefits, and then visit the Voting Pavilion to learn even more about elections.

**"Mojo":** The New Victory Theater, 209 W. 42nd St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues; (646) 223-3010; [www.newvictory.org](http://www.newvictory.org); 7 pm; \$14-\$38.

Objects take new forms and spring to life in fantastical and funny ways in this collage of puppetry, illusion, dance and live music, for everyone over the age of 5 years old.

**Rebecca Stead:** Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; [www.symphonyspace.org](http://www.symphonyspace.org); 1 pm; \$15 (\$12 members).

The Newbery Medal-winning author of "When You Reach Me" discusses her new novel about the challenges of sev-

*Continued on page 26*

# Calendar

Continued from page 25

enth grade.

## Reading Into History Book Club:

New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 3:30–5 pm; \$15 admission, children ages 7 to 13 years old, \$10.

Children discuss "Same Sun Here" by Silas House and Neela Vaswani.

## TUES, NOV. 6

### Election Day One Day Camp:

TADA! Youth Theater, 15 W. 28th Street between Broadway and Fifth Avenue; (212) 252-1619 X 4; www.tadatheater.com; 9 am–5:30 pm; \$100.

Children explore the world of acting, singing, and dancing in a special one-day camp that focuses on core elements of Musical Theater.

**Election Day Soccer Camp:** Jewish Center, 131 W. 86th St. between Amsterdam and Columbus avenues; (212) 877-7171; www.supersoccerstars.com; 9:30 am–noon.

Keep your children active, kicking and having a blast while school is out this Election Day.

### "Elmo's World Wild Wild West":

SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free.

Elmo learns how to ride a horse and kicks up his heels at a hoe down.

**Crayon Creations:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; 11:30 am & 2:30 pm; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger make squiggles, lines and dots with colorful crayons on paper and have fun learning Kindergarten Readiness Skills.

**Musical Rainsticks:** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon; \$5.

Children learn about the tradition of the rainstick, and then build and decorate their own to take home.

## WED, NOV. 7

**Stroller Tours:** The Morgan Library and Museum, 225 Madison Ave. between W. 36th and W. 37th streets; (212) 685-0008; www.themorgan.org; 10:30 am; \$15, \$10 children.

New parents and family caregivers enjoy adult conversation as docents lead them on lively one-hour tours of the museum. For parents and family caregivers with children ages 0–18 months.

**Free Trial of Tots and Tunes Music Class:** Rutgers Community Programs,



Photo by Heuben Reading

## An old-fashioned hoedown

**G**rab your partner, do-si-do, and come on down to an old-fashioned hootenanny at the Living Room when Astrograss promenades into town on Nov. 18 for a special Thanksgiving hoedown.

Sing-a-longs, hands-on instrument demos, and dance contests are but a few of the events to welcome the audience to this family concert. Fans can expect favorite

tunes about food, American history, animals and holiday meals, and table manners.

Tweens and adults sing along to the eclectic mix of bluegrass and original songs.

Astrograss at The Living Room, Nov. 18, 2 pm. Admission is \$10. All ages welcome.

*The Living Room [154 Ludlow St. at Stanton Street in the Bowery, (212) 533-7237, www.livingroomny.com].*

236 W. 73rd St. at Broadway; (212) 877-8227, X 212; www.rutgerschurch.org; 1:15 and 2:15 pm; Free.

For children ages 3 to 5 years old.

## THURS, NOV. 8

### Roadmap to College Admissions:

The Princeton Review, 594 Broadway between Houston and Prince streets; (800) 273-8439; www.princetonreview.com; 7 pm; Free.

An admissions expert will advise students and parents on the college admissions process including topics such as admissions factors, selectivity, college searching, standardized tests, and timelines.

## FRI, NOV. 9

### 15th Annual Chocolate Show:

The Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 W. 18th

St. between Sixth and Seventh avenues; boxoffice@chocolateshow.com; chocolateshow.com/accueil.aspx; Tickets start at \$35; first two children 5-12 free; additional children \$8 each; under age 4 free.

Yummy doesn't even begin to describe this much-loved annual event. Samples include chocolate bars, wines, chocolate sculptures, unbelievable chocolate baked goods, and more.

## SAT, NOV. 10

**15th Annual Chocolate Show:** The Metropolitan Pavilion. See Friday, Nov. 9.

### Treasured Stories by Eric Carle:

Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am and 2 pm; \$15–\$25.

The award-winning Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia presents a colorful glow-in-the-dark production as part of the

Just Kidding Saturday series.

### Dora the Explorer Double Feature:

SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free.

Children enjoy two shows, "Dora Saves the Mermaids" and "Save the Giant Tortoises."

**Veterans Day Celebration:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11 am–5 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13, \$10.

Celebrate the holiday with the Army Air Forces Historical Association.

**Animation Creations:** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am–1 pm; \$6.

Children unleash their inner animator and create their very own digital animation.

**Flaubert Frog and Friends:** Bryant Park, 42nd Street and Avenue of the Americas; (212) 768-4242; www.bryantpark.org; 1 pm; Free.

Children 3 to 11 years old sing songs, read stories and play games with Bryant Park mascot Flaubert Frog at Le Carrousel in Bryant Park.

**Pajama Havdalah:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 5:30–6:30 pm; Free.

Children come in pajamas to a Shabbat good-bye party.

## SUN, NOV. 11

### Second Sunday Family Tours:

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. (at 89th Street); (212) 423-3587; www.guggenheim.org; 10:30 am–noon; \$15 per family, \$10 members, free for Family and Kids Club Members and Cool Culture families.

Families with children ages 5 to 10 years old explore the exhibitions through family-oriented tours and hands-on gallery activities.

### Brady Rymer and His Little Band That Could:

92nd Y Tribeca, 200 Hudson St. between Laight and Canal streets; (212) 601-1000; www.92y.org/index.aspx; 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

It's "Bring Your Own Kid" and Brady Rymer brings his all-American roots rock with a feel-good R&B foundation to the 92Y.

**Veterans Day Celebration:** 11 am–5 pm. New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum. See Saturday, Nov. 10.

**H Is For Honor:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History

# Calendar

Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; \$15 admission, Children 7-13, \$10.

Sunday Story Hour honors those who have served, teaches children about the people that give never-ending support to veterans—their families.

**Le Carrousel Magique:** Bryant Park, 42nd Street and Avenue of the Americas; (212) 768-4242; www.bryantpark.org; 1 pm; Free.

Stellar magicians performs their sleight of hand at Le Carrousel in Bryant Park for children (and adults) of all ages!

**Lettuce Rejoice! Featuring Yellow Sneaker:** Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Pl. at First Place; (646) 437-4202; www.mjhnyc.org; 2 pm; \$10, \$7 children 10 and under museum members: \$7, \$5 children 10 and under.

Interactive puppet show featuring songs of celebration and crafts to follow, for ages 3 to 10 years old.

**"A Little Princess":** Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. between Greenwich and West streets; (212) 220-1460; tribecapac.org; 3 pm; \$25.

Spirited Sara Crewe goes from riches to rags when her doting father disappears, leaving her in the clutches of the evil Miss Minchin, for ages 3 to 9 years old.

## MON, NOV. 12

**15th Annual Chocolate Show:** The Metropolitan Pavilion. See Friday, Nov. 9.

**Veteran's Day One Day Camp:** TADA! Youth Theater, 15 W. 28th Street between Broadway and Fifth Avenue; (212) 252-1619 X 4; www.tadatheater.com; 9 am–5:30 pm; \$100.

Children explore the world of acting, singing, and dancing in a special 1-day camp that focuses on core elements of Musical Theater.

**Meet Our Tutors:** The Princeton Review, 317 Madison Ave. at 42nd Street; (800) 273-8439; www.princetonreview.com; 7 pm; Free.

Sit down one-on-one with an expert tutor and come up with a plan for your child's standardized test preparation needs.

## TUES, NOV. 13

**Crayon Creations:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; 10 am; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger make squiggles, lines and dots with colorful crayons on paper and have fun learning kindergarten readiness skills.



## Hot air America

**T**urkey day would be ho-hum without the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and its adoring flotilla of prancing inflatables.

Mom, dad, and the kids can par-

ticipate in an 85-year-old tradition by watching the dazzling dirigibles slowly brought to life in the streets around the American Museum of Natural History during a pre-parade balloon inflation revel that's

sure to get the festive juices — and the "oohs" and "aahs" — flowing!

*Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloon inflation [79th Street and Columbus Avenue on the upper west side]. Nov. 21, 3-10 pm*

## WED, NOV. 14

**Mural Wall Painting:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; 11:30 am; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger mix paint on the PlayWorks Mural Wall with friends.

## THURS, NOV. 15

**Geometric Masterpiece:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; 10 am; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger use shape stampers and colorful ink to create a geometric masterpiece.

**Digital Storytelling:** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon; Free.

Children dive into a wonderful interac-

tive story. Call to make reservations.

## FRI, NOV. 16

**Sneak Peek:** TADA! Youth Theater, 15 W. 28th St. between Broadway and Fifth Avenue; (212) 252-1619 X 4; www.tadatheater.com; 7 pm; \$35; \$25 children.

This original musical revue features a sneak peek of selections from the upcoming season.

## SAT, NOV. 17

**The Gustafer Yellowgold Show:** Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am; \$15-\$25.

This annual blockbuster returns.

**Junior Detective:** New York City Police Museum, 100 Old Slip; (212) 480-3100; www.nycpm.org; 11 am–2 pm; \$8 admission, \$5 children, under age 2 free.

Children and teens use crime scene investigation techniques and perform experiments in the lab.

**Sweet Dreams:** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon; \$5.

Learn about the tradition of Native American dream, and then make dreamcatchers.

**Flaubert Frog and Friends:** 1 pm. Bryant Park. See Saturday, Nov. 10.

**Sneak Peek:** 2 and 5 pm. TADA! Youth Theater. See Friday, Nov. 16.

## SUN, NOV. 18

**Mitzvah Day:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 10 am–2 pm; Free.

Toddlers to teens make a difference and create hands-on projects benefitting those in need in the community around us and abroad.

**Sunday Science Spectacular Chemistry:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-

*Continued on page 28*

# Calendar

Continued from page 27

5500; www.92y.org; 10 am–2 pm; \$40 adult/\$20 child.

Children use common kitchen materials to make concoctions and learn about chemical reactions.

**The Suzi Shelton Band:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

Everyone's favorite children's band combines catchy tunes and hip musical sensibilities to "Bring Your Own Kid."

**Sunday Story Hour Macy's Parade:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13, \$10.

Children learn about the first Macy's Parade and how immigrants living in New York City helped shape a unique tradition that Americans still enjoy today.

**Artie Bennett Reading:** Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112 St. at Broadway; (212) 678-1654; www.bankstreetbooks.com; 1 pm; Free.

The author of the best-selling "The Butt Book" reads his new book, "Poopendous!" Everyone gets a free "Butt Book" coloring-and-activity book.

**Le Carrousel Magique:** 1 pm. Bryant Park. See Sunday, Nov. 11.

**A Thanksgiving Family Hoedown:** The Living Room, 154 Ludlow St. at Stanton Street; (212) 533-7237; livingroomny.com; 2 pm; \$10.

Astrograss, the city's premier bluegrass band for all ages, ushers in the holiday season with a special family Thanksgiving show.

**Baby Got Bach:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 3 pm; \$18+.

Live classical concert where children sing and play along with the musicians.

**Sneak Peek:** 3 pm. TADA! Youth Theater. See Friday, Nov. 16.

## MON, NOV. 19

**Stroller Tours:** Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street; (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org; 3–4 pm; \$15.

Stroll around the ramps with your baby in tow as museum educator (and new mom) Jackie Delamatre leads an engaging one-hour tour.

## TUES, NOV. 20

**Playful Playdough:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; 10 am; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger roll,

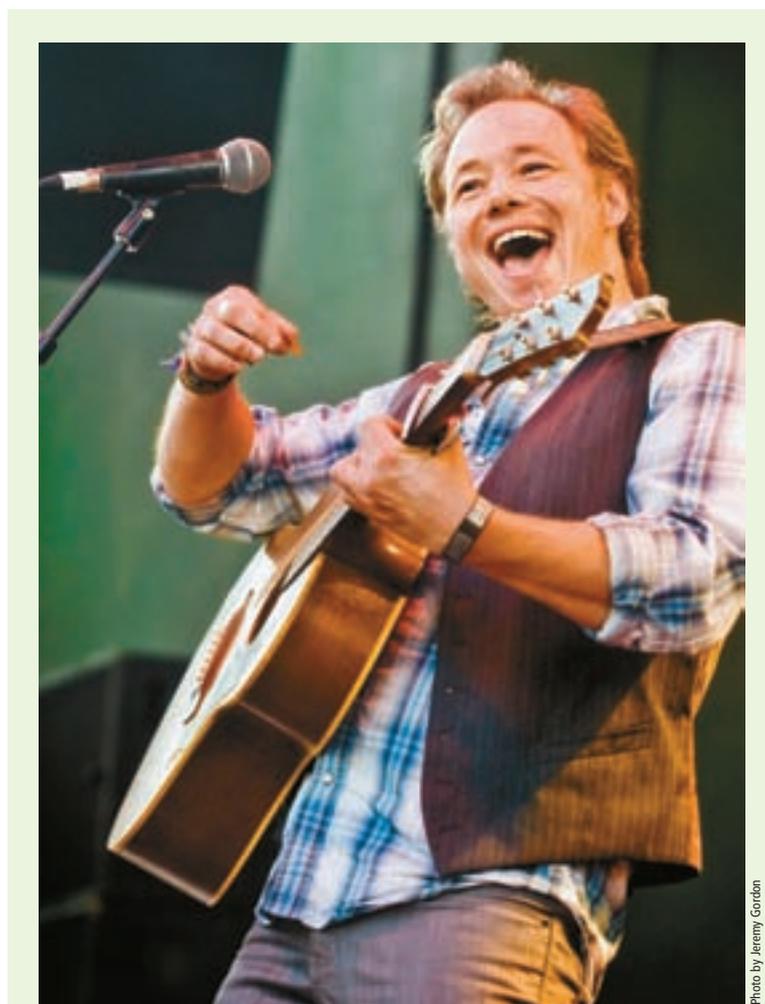


Photo by Jeremy Gordon

## Bring your own kid

**G**rab the kiddies, get out your dancing shoes, and rock and roll to a feel-good R&B rock concert on Nov. 11 at the 92nd Y Tribeca.

Brady Rymer and his Little Band That Could brings their own brand of foot stompin', finger-snapping, get-up-in-your-seats-and-cheer music to their concert, Bring Your Own Kid, for a rollick-

ing good time that is suitable for children of all ages.

Bring Your Own Kid, the Brady Rymer concert on Nov. 11 at 11 am at the 92nd Y Tribeca. Admission is \$15, babies under 2 free.

92nd Y Tribeca [200 Hudson St. between Laight and Canal streets in Tribeca, (212) 601-1000, www.92y.org/index.aspx]

twist and experiment with playdough.

## WED, NOV. 21

**"Elmo's World" Screening:** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free.

Join the "Sesame Street" gang to learn about the world through songs, stories and guessing games.

**Tree of Thanks:** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; Noon; \$5.

Children use crayons, markers, and stickers, create and decorate their own "Tree of Thanks" as they learn what makes family and friends so special.

**Thanksgiving Eve Balloons:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park

West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 6 pm.

Family-friendly Thanksgiving Eve event, an exclusive sneak peek of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade balloons, games, scavenger hunts and more. Must be family member to attend.

## THURS, NOV. 22

**86th Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Parade:** Kicks off at 77th St. and Central Park West; www.macys.com/parade; 9 am; Free.

The annual family tradition ushers in the holiday season with floats, balloons, performances, and of course, Santa!

**Cross Stitch Circle:** 3:30–5:30 pm. New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum. See Thursday, Nov. 1.

## FRI, NOV. 23

**Living History Days Celebration:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 10 am–5 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13, \$10.

Join the Army Air Forces Historical Association for a celebration of history.

**Scavenger Hunt:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11 am–4 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13, \$10.

Families travel through the museum discovering objects related to the natural world in the city.

**"The Ugly Duckling" and "The Tortoise and the Hare":** NYU Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. between W. Third Street and Washington Square South; (212) 998-4941; nyuskirball.org; 2 pm; \$28.

Two classic tales come to life in this one-hour performance for children 3 year old and up.

## SAT, NOV. 24

**Living History Days Celebration:** 10 am–5 pm. New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum. See Friday, Nov. 23.

**"The Wonder Pets":** SONY Wonder Technology Lab, 550 Madison Ave. at 56th St; (212) 833-8100; www.sonywondertechlab.com; 11 am; Free.

Double feature screening of "Save the Chameleon, Save the Platypus" and "Save the Sheep, Save the Hermit Crab."

**Scavenger Hunt:** 11 am–4 pm. New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum. See Friday, Nov. 23.

**Animation Creations:** 11 am–1 pm.

SONY Wonder Technology Lab. See Saturday, Nov. 10.

**"The Ugly Duckling" and "The Tortoise and the Hare":** 11 am. NYU Skirball Center. See Friday, Nov. 23.

**Flaubert Frog and Friends:** 1 pm. Bryant Park. See Saturday, Nov. 10.

**Families Tell Stories:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 2 pm; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13, \$10.

A storyteller and videographer will guide family members young and old through the process of group storytelling and then record your family's story to share again and again.

## SUN, NOV. 25

**Scavenger Hunt:** 11 am-4 pm. New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum. See Friday, Nov. 23.

**Living History Days Celebration:** 11 am-5 pm. New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum. See Friday, Nov. 23.

**"The Ugly Duckling" and "The Tortoise and the Hare":** 11 am. NYU Skirball Center. See Friday, Nov. 23.

**Building Manhattan:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; 11:30 am; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13, \$10.

Children learn how Manhattan has changed in the past 400 years and see how building a city is an everlasting commitment.

**Le Carrousel Magique:** 1 pm. Bryant Park. See Sunday, Nov. 11.

## TUES, NOV. 27

**Colorful Magic Noodle Sculpture:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; 1 pm; \$11 admission fee.

In Little Scientists, children ages 4 and younger use water and colorful magic noodles to create a unique sculpture.

## WED, NOV. 28

**Chalk Painting:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; 11:30 am; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger mix chalk and water to create a unique work of art.



## 'Velveteen Rabbit' hops into town

**"O**h, to be a real rabbit," laments the Velveteen Rabbit. Find out if his wish comes true when the production comes to the DR2Kids Theater from Nov. 16 to Jan. 27, 2013.

The play is based on the children's classic by Margery Williams and tells the story of the testament to a child's imagination and the love of a favored toy.

Now, the tale comes to life in this creation by Kevin Del Aguila. With a little bit of nursery magic, three actors and their sim-

ple props transform into a wise, old rocking horse, a cavalcade of mechanical playthings, a kind-hearted fairy and, of course, a stuffed rabbit who is transformed by the love of a young boy. Suitable for children 4 to 8 years old.

"The Velveteen Rabbit," Fridays at 5 pm and Saturdays and Sundays at 11 am, 1pm, and 4 pm from Nov. 16 to Jan. 27, 2013. Tickets are \$39.

*DR2 Kids Theatre [103 E. 15th St. at Union Square East in Union Square, (212) 239-6200, www.dr2kidstheatre.com].*

## FRI, NOV. 30

**Mural Wall Painting:** Children's Museum of Manhattan, 212 W. 83rd St. between Amsterdam and Broadway; (212) 721-1223; www.cmom.org; Noon; \$11 admission fee.

Children 4 years old and younger mix paint on the PlayWorks Mural Wall with friends.

**"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out":** The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza; (212) 465-6741; www.thegarden.com; 5 pm; Tickets start at \$45.

DJ Lance Rock and everyone's favorite cast of colorful characters invites fans to get ready to jump, shake and shimmy on the new tour.

## SAT, DEC. 1

**"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out":** 11 am, 2 and 5 pm. The Theater at Madison Square Garden. See Friday, Nov. 30.

**Flaubert Frog and Friends:** Bryant Park, 42nd Street and Avenue of the Americas; (212) 768-4242; www.bryantpark.org; 1 pm; Free.

Children 3 to 11 years old sing songs, read stories and play games with Bryant Park mascot Flaubert Frog at Le Carrousel in Bryant Park.

## SUN, DEC. 2

**Music for Aardvarks:** 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. at E. 91st Street; (212) 415-5500; www.92y.org; 11 am; \$15, babies under 2 free.

David Weinstone entertains with the electro-funk of Big Boom Whacker and the whimsical blues of 'Belly Button Song' performed live.

**"Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! Get the Sillies Out":** 11 am, 2 and 5 pm. The Theater at Madison Square Garden. See Friday, Nov. 30.

**Le Carrousel Magique:** Bryant Park, 42nd Street and Avenue of the Americas; (212) 768-4242; www.bryantpark.org; 1 pm; Free.

Stellar magicians performs their sleight of hand at Le Carrousel in Bryant Park for children (and adults) of all ages!

**Winter Family Day:** The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Ave.; (212) 685-0008 X 560; www.themorgan.org; 2-5 pm; Admission fee \$15 Adults; \$10 Teens (13-16); \$10; children 12 and under free.

Peter Rabbit, Jeremy Fisher, Jemima Puddle-Duck, and some of their most mischievous friends join forces with Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, and the Ghost of Christmas Present to sweep families into a whirlwind of exuberant fun as they

*Continued on page 30*

# Calendar

Continued from page 29

enjoy puppets, an art workshop, strolling characters, a costume photo shoot, and more. For ages 3 to 12 years old.

## LONG-RUNNING

**Hava Nagila, A Song for the People:** Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, 36 Battery Pl.; (646) 437-4202; www.mjhnyc.org; \$10, \$7 children 10 and under.

This exhibition transports listeners through memories of celebrations across generations. Now through spring 2013.

**WWII and New York City:** New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; \$15 admission, kids ages 5-13, \$5.

The exhibit explores the impact of the war on the metropolis, which played a critical role in the national war effort, and how the city was forever changed. Runs through May 27, 2013.

**Big Apple Circus Legendarium:** Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park, 62nd St. between Amsterdam and Columbus avenues; (888) 541-3750; www.bigapplecircus.org; \$25 and up.

The Big Apple Circus Legendarium invites you to witness the nostalgic thrills of bygone Big Tops and get a first-hand view of beauties, daredevils, and clowns from another era.

**Fair:** Soho, 100 Varick St. (914) 295-4794; varicksflea@gmail.com; www.meetup.com/varicks; Daily, 10 am-4 pm; Now - Sat, Dec. 29; \$55/Space.

Enjoy shopping and schmoozing in the all day market.

**Picasso Black and White:** Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street; (212) 423-3587; www.guggenheim.org; Daily, 10 am-5:30 pm; Now - Wed, Jan. 23, 2013; \$18 (\$15 students).

Picasso Black and White marks the first major exhibition to focus on the recurrent motif of black and white throughout the artists's career.

**Winged Tapestries Moths at Large:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; \$24(\$14 children, \$18 seniors and students).

This exhibition features 34 images of moths, displaying the arresting beauty and surprising diversity of moths from Ottawa-based photographer Jim des Rivières. Runs through September 2013.

**Creatures of Light:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; awang@amnh.org; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; Now - Sun, Jan. 6, 2013; \$24, \$14 children, \$18 seniors and students.

This interactive exhibit explores organ-



## 'Poopendous' author speaks

**I**t's the one, it's the only, it's the greatest book around — it's "Poopendous," the "number one" book on everything "number two."

Author Artie Bennett brings his scatological tome to the Bank Street Bookstore on Nov. 18.

Whether you like it or not, poop happens, and children want to learn about it. Bennett's newest book teaches kids all about doo-doo, from the droppings of animals big and small to how humans in different cultures make

use of waste.

So bring your little ones, ages 5 to 7 years old, and share some giggles with Bennett's rhyming rap about ca-ca, doo-doo, flop, guano, scat, and dung.

Artie Bennett at the Bank Street Bookstore on Nov. 18 at 1 pm. Everyone gets a free "Butt Book" coloring and activity book. Admission is free.

*The Bank Street Bookstore [610 W. 112th St. at Broadway in Morning-side Heights, (212) 678-1654, www.bankstreetbooks.com].*

isms that produce light, from the flickering fireflies to alien deep-sea fishes.

**The Butterfly Conservatory:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; awang@amnh.org; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; \$24, \$14 children, \$18 seniors and students.

The annual exhibition, "Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter," returns and celebrates its 15th year.

**"Hansel and Gretel's Halloween Adventure":** Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater, 79th and West Dr; (212) 988-9093; Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30am and noon, Wednesdays, 10:30am, noon, and 2:30 pm, Saturdays

and Sundays, 1 pm, Now - Sat, Nov. 3; \$8, \$5 children under 12.

This show picks up where the original Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre production leaves off, with the pair's pet swan Samantha flying the children back to their humble home after their wild escapade in the forest.

**"Ring A Ding Ding":** The New Victory Theater, 209 W. 42nd St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues; (646) 223-3010; www.newvictory.org; Thursdays, 10:30 am, Fridays, 10:30 and 2:30 pm, Sundays, 10:30 am, 12:30 and 2:30 pm, Now - Sun, Nov. 11; \$20.

When Alice demands that her dog stop chasing his tail "right now," he runs

away, sending her into a tricycle-riding tizzy. This imaginative work of participatory theater is recommended for children ages 3-5.

**"Fancy Nancy":** The McGinn/Cazale Theatre, 2162 Broadway at 76th Street; (212) 579-0528; vitaltheatre.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am and 1 pm; 3:30 pm after Nov. 17, Now - Sun, Jan. 13, 2013; \$29.50 regular; \$49.50 premium.

The musical shows Fancy Nancy and her friends, Bree, Rhonda, Wanda, and Lionel perform in their very first show, "Deep Sea Dances," but will she and Bree will be picked to be mermaids?

**"The Very Merry Holiday Musical":** The McGinn/Cazale Theatre, 2162 Broadway at 76th Street; (212) 579-0528; vitaltheatre.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am and 1 pm; 3:30 pm after Nov. 17, Now - Sun, Jan. 13, 2013; \$29.50 regular; \$49.50 premium.

Angelina Ballerina and her friends are planning an absolutely positively spectacular holiday dance pageant - the best in all of Mouseland.

**"Pinkalicious":** The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. between Lafayette and Mott steets; (212) 579-0528; www.iseats.net; Saturdays, 1:30 pm, Sundays, Noon, \$29.50 regular seats/\$49.50 premium seats.

In this musical Pinkalicious can't stop eating pink cupcakes despite warnings from her parents, and ends up a terrible hue.

**Sunday Storytime in Mr. Morgan's Library:** The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Ave.; (212) 685-0008 X 560; www.themorgan.org; Sundays, 11:30 am and 2:30 pm, Sun, Nov. 4 - Sun, Jan. 27, 2013; \$15 admission fee, children \$10.

This one-hour drop-in program offers families a refresher on the beloved tales before viewing the exhibition Beatrix Potter: The Picture Letters. Appropriate for ages 2 and up.

**Little New Yorkers:** New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street; (212) 873-3400; nyhistory.org; Tuesdays and Fridays, 3:30-4:15 pm, Tues, Nov. 6 - Fri, Nov. 30; \$15 admission, kids ages 7-13, \$10.

Each class includes story readings, time with historic toys, free exploration, a special Little New-Yorkers hello song, and time in DCHM OR a craft project.

**"The Velveteen Rabbit":** DR2 Kids Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. at Union Square East; (212) 239-6200; www.DR2KidsTheatre.com; Fridays, 5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 am, 1 and 4 pm, Fri, Nov. 16 - Sun, Jan. 27, 2013; \$39.

This classic tale comes to life for a whole new generation in this wonder-filled production created by Kevin Del Aguila.

# New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

## Vote Barbie

It's never too early to get little women excited about Election Day!

With Mattel's Barbie I Can Be... President B Party Doll, your child can imagine she's giving a speech about what she might do to make her school better if she was elected to student government, or what she would improve if she was elected president of the United States of America!

The iconic platinum haired doll sports a suit — in Barbie's signature pink, of course — that's trimmed in patriotic red, white and blue ruffles and adorned with a campaign button.

Kids can check out Barbie's progress as she glam-paigns for the Pink House, by visiting [barbie2012.com](http://barbie2012.com), where they will be prompted to "B inspired," "B confident," "B a dreamer," "B involved," and "B informed."

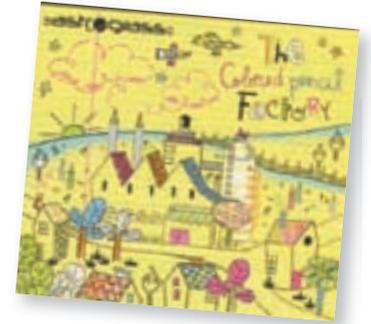
Now, go vote for Barbie.

*Barbie I Can Be... President B Party Doll, \$13.99, [www.barbiecollector.com](http://www.barbiecollector.com).*



## String theory

If you're finding your energy level running low this holiday season, just play Astrograss's latest album "The Colored Pencil Factory" and watch as your whole family vainly attempts to repress happy smiles and tapping toes. This contemporary bluegrass CD, thrumming with the sounds of guitar, fiddles, banjo, and mandolin, is a delightful way to introduce American folk music to a new generation of listeners. The band, which proudly recorded its spirited, acoustic music in Brooklyn, is equally adept at writing clever, often humorous lyrics (They've rhymed "encyclopedia" with "Wikipedia"! ). Mixed in with the original songs

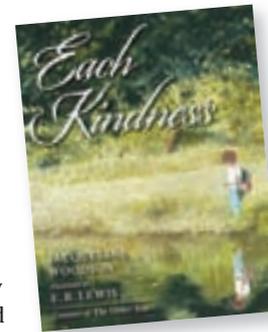


are new arrangements of childhood favorites like "Shortenin' Bread." One of our favorite Astrograss tunes, especially as it grows perilously close to deadline, is the lightning fast finger-picking fiesta that is "Freak Out."

*"The Colored Pencil Factory" CD by Astrograss, \$15, [CDBaby.com](http://CDBaby.com).*

## Bully finds her heart

Jacqueline Woodson's "Each Kindness" (Nancy Paulsen Books), introduces to young readers (ages 5-8) how a good deed "makes the whole world a little bit better." Woodson writes the story from the point of view of Chloe, a bully who regrets her missed opportunities to be a



friend to the new girl in school. This book, with lovely watercolor illustrations by E.B. Lewis, is an opportunity to start a conversation with your child about being inclusive and having compassion toward peers.

*"Each Kindness" book, by Jacqueline Woodson, \$16.99.*

## S'more to love

Tane Organics stylishly reminds parents of babies and toddlers to give some thought to quality, purity, and environmental impact when they buy clothing

for the generation that will inherit the earth.

Tane, which translates to "seed" in Japanese, has created a winter collection inspired by the sweet concept of enjoying the great outdoors on a family camping trip.

Part of this "wilderness luxe" line, this soft, felted, alpaca wool kimono jacket is crafted from yarn that is 60 percent alpaca and 40 percent wool and crafted to offer the comforting warmth of a camper blanket.

The attention to detail, like the charming, functional, covered buttons and tiny pocket, adds to the charm. Available in two colors: pebble or charcoal.

*Felted Kimono Jacket by Tane Organics, \$163, [taneorganics.com](http://taneorganics.com).*

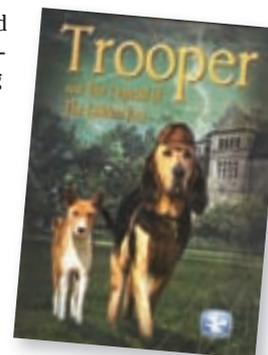


## Paws for comedy

Warning: If your child has already been pleading for a dog, watching "Trooper and the Legend of the Golden Key" may obliterate your resistance.

The family-friendly film stars Guich Kooch as the voice of Trooper the bloodhound, the film's wise, Texas-accented narrator and main character.

Trooper, along with a chihuahua, Dash, are adopted by the new kid in town, Tommy (Joey Roberts), and the trio go off with magnifying glass



in hand in search of a valuable treasure rumored to have been hidden by an eccentric collector. Along the way, many funny and suspenseful moments are unleashed as they save the town's beloved bookstore from destruction by the evil plotting of the greedy mayor. This dog and child actor have such chemistry, we wondered if they would team up again for another tail, er, tale?

*"Trooper and the Legend of the Golden Key" DVD, \$14.98, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).*

# A love of arts

The director of the Lincoln Center Institute on how arts education can change children's lives

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

**R**ussell Granet is a Manhattan dad and the newly appointed executive director of the Lincoln Center Institute, which “plays a pro-active, dynamic part in the preparation of young minds for the world of adulthood and the demands of the workforce,” by utilizing imaginative, art-based teaching methods to train teachers, partner with schools within New York City, and host students on its New York campus. Five years ago, Granet created Arts Education Resource, an international consulting practice, following nine years as Director of Professional Development for the Center for Arts Education. I spoke with him recently about his career, his new position, and his vision for arts education.

**Risa Doherty:** What is the goal of the Lincoln Center Institute?

**Russell Granet:** Our goal is to help young people develop their minds to think like artists, not necessarily to become artists themselves. As students are exposed to the arts, they learn to forge their own mission statement and acquire core values, such as integrity, perseverance, and analytical skills, which are instrumental in any profession, and prepare them for success in the world ahead in the 21st century. There is great richness and “capacity” around a work of art. Every artist is faced with a problem: a visual artist has a blank canvas and an actor has a stage in an empty theater. Through arts education, students learn to problem solve and approach larger issues in a different way.

In one study, 60 percent of students referenced an arts experience as the most impactful experience of their education, whereas only eight percent of those students became artists. Arts education enlists them to become full citizens and learn how to work in a group (e.g. through collaborative performance). Lincoln Center Institute provides programs which help keep kids in school, changing their entire perception of learning.

**RD:** What age groups does Lincoln Center Institute work with?

**RG:** Kindergarten through 12, and college students training to be teachers. We also work with private schools, but they are not our primary mission.

**RD:** Are children ever too young for arts education?

**RG:** They are never too young. We want to be a part of the early childhood education movement, since preschoolers at 2, 3, and 4 can mesh play and education like no other time in their lives. It is a perfect opportunity to build imaginative minds.

**RD:** Which disciplines within the arts are included, and which ones are most effective in a pedagogical sense?

**RG:** All four disciplines are included: dance, music, theater, and visual art. No single one is most effective: they all have a place. The most effective will depend upon the goals and objectives for a specific program.

**RD:** Can you describe to me one of your programs?

**RG:** This fall, students from pre-K to fourth grade at PS-1S 499 in Flushing participated in an eight-week dance performance unit entitled “Fiesta Flamenca,” where they learned about how dance gestures can evoke emotion, and created their own rhythmic dance and vocal sequences, facilitated by a teaching artist. The students then attended a live performance, followed by text study in the classroom.

**RD:** How has an exposure to the arts affected you, personally?

**RG:** Exposure to the arts was the factor which kept me engaged in school. I would be a different person if I was not exposed to the arts as a child. At a very young age, theater was my entry point and positively informed all the years of education that followed. My background in theater has had an immeasurable effect on the 22 years I have spent in my current field. I developed a skill set as a result of a lifetime in the arts.

**RD:** Is there an ideal model for your vision which you look to?

**RG:** Our vision at Lincoln Center Institute is based on where we will be tomorrow. We are constantly building on the impressive work accomplished in the first 35 years of our program, as well as influential programs, such as the one at the Kennedy Center, and the other leading arts organizations throughout the world. I say “we” because I believe strongly in working with colleagues: this is a collaborative effort. It is important to be able to sustain the program and not just rely on one person’s or one organization’s ideas.

**RD:** Did you have an “aha” moment when you recognized a need in the field of arts education and knew this was a path for you?

**RG:** When I returned to New York after studying at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, I became a “teaching artist,” which is someone who works for a cultural institution and teaches in the public schools. Teaching artists partner with public school educators and work with teachers to see how the arts can support the subject taught. They help students think about what they are learning in a subject, as well as what they are learning about themselves. When I started working as a teaching artist in a poor neighborhood, I was more often than not given the advice “good luck, nothing works with these kids,” which I found incredibly depressing and more importantly, wildly inaccurate. When I saw how arts education helped those kids gain self-esteem and a sense of their place in their school and in their world, I recognized how profoundly impactful the arts can be.

**RD:** How has your experience at Center for Arts Education working with children with disabilities affected your outlook on arts education in general?

**RG:** Our goal should always include exposing exposing kids with disabilities to all kinds of arts fields. There are as many learning styles as there are kids. Different kids with different disabilities have different entry points for learning. We needed



to find a hook or a doorway to learning for those kids who might struggle with traditional entry points. For some of those kids, the arts are a great entry point and an opportunity for them to excel. I watched kids who normally struggle write and articulately deliver organized pieces on stage, and for me this was a defining moment. Similarly, general-education teachers need to engage children and discover their entry points. For many it is the arts. We are committed to offering all kids a complete education.

**RD:** How far have we come in the field of arts education?

**RG:** We have progressed in fits and starts. The New York City Department of Education is doing its best for 1.2 million children: it is an enormous system with equity issues. There is no “secret sauce” here at Lincoln Center Institute, and we cannot solve it alone, we need to educate parents. We need to broaden the definition of arts education: everyone has a part to play and someone needs to help orchestrate it. Because of my position, I have a unique platform afforded me by Lincoln Center Institute and it’s recognition for quality. Lincoln Center is the largest cultural institution in the world: kids

belong here.

**RD:** What advice do you have for parents who would like more of the arts at their children’s school?

**RG:** I would tell them to advocate for their children, attend school events, invite local politicians to events, and volunteer to help arts educators, no matter how small the task. I would tell them it is okay to notify a school when it does not meet the New York State mandate, requiring 20 percent of the school day be devoted to arts education. In addition, children who choose the arts need to learn that there are more opportunities than just first-

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“Exposure to the arts was the factor which kept me engaged in school. I would be a different person if I was not exposed to the arts as a child.”

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chair violin or prima ballerina. For every prima ballerina there are 300 people around her, supporting her, from stagecraft to marketing. We hope children will learn the value of working for an organization whose mission matches their own mission in life.

**RD:** How can you open the eyes of certain parents to the value of arts education, if they believe their children are not artistic and that the time is better spent on perfecting “core subjects” as a means for gaining entry to a top college?

**RG:** I would explain to them the full value of arts education, as part of a complete education, as a valuable interest to foster for life and as a vehicle to cultivate their child’s ability to think perceptively, innovate, and analyze situations. Parents need to know that the arts can help our young people become competitive in this generation in the field of their choice.

**RD:** You are the father of a 4 year old. How do you incorporate the arts into her life and how has being a parent influenced your approach to work?

**RG:** My daughter has already received the kind of exposure to the arts, in small as well as profound ways, that some kids won’t get in a lifetime. I do my best to help her not to take any of these opportunities for granted. Knowing the opportunities she has had and the importance of the arts in her development makes me even more passionate about bringing the arts to the kids who might not have the same type of access. I believe to my core that exposure to the arts is a right possessed by all children; it’s the driving force behind all that I hope to accomplish.

*Risa C. Doherty is an attorney and award-winning freelance writer. Read more at [www.risadoherty.com](http://www.risadoherty.com).*



# Holiday staycation

There's no place like home when New York City celebrates this season

BY STACEY ZABLE

**V**isitors know that December is one of the best times of year to come to New York City, when shops and attractions dress up and show off with special activities, events, and retail wonders. Luckily for us, it's all just a ferry, train or bus ride away. This holiday season, use your days off to take in some of the festive fun listed below — and maybe even top it off with an overnight stay in Manhattan.

## Sights and activities

**Window shopping:** The inside of the stores may be a treasure trove of great gifts, but the first stop for anyone exploring New York City this season is to see the famed holiday windows of Manhattan's iconic shops. Favorites include Bloomingdale's on

59th Street and Lexington Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman on 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, Saks Fifth Avenue on 49th Street, Lord & Taylor on 38th Street and Fifth Avenue, and Macy's on 34th Street at Sixth Avenue.

**Rockefeller Center:** Is there really any other Christmas tree when compared to Rockefeller Center's soaring spruce? The beautifully decorated, massive tree is lit up in all its glory and surrounded by other holiday decor starting Nov. 28. Get in the true spirit and take a spin on the ice at the skating rink, or get tickets for Radio City Music Hall's "Christmas Spectacular," celebrating its 85th anniversary of the Rockettes performing in New York City. The show runs Nov. 9-Dec. 30.

*Rockefeller Center (Rockefeller Plaza between W. 49th and W. 50th streets in Manhattan, rockefellercenter.com);*

*Radio City Music Hall [1260 Sixth Ave. between W. 50th and W. 51st streets in Manhattan, (212) 247-4777, radiocitychristmas.com]*

**Holiday Train Show:** This New York Botanical Garden annual event features model trains that ride through more than 100 replicas of city landmarks, including the Brooklyn Bridge, Yankee Stadium, and the George Washington Bridge. Takes place from Nov. 17 through Jan. 13, 2013.

*New York Botanical Garden [2900 Southern Blvd. in Belmont, Bronx, (718) 817-8700, www.nybg.org]*

**Bryant Park:** Combine skating and shopping at Bryant Park. The City Pond at Bryant Park rink features free ice skating, rental skates, skating shows, and special events and activities. The Holiday Shops at Bryant Park, individual booths boasting unique gift items, surround the skat-



(Above) The first stop for any one exploring New York City this season is to see the famed holiday windows of Manhattan's iconic shops, including Macy's on 34th Street. (At left) There's plenty to do in Rockefeller Center — there's the beautifully decorated, massive tree is lit up in all its glory and surrounded by other holiday decor; ice skating; or Radio City Hall's "Christmas Spectacular."

ing rink through Jan. 6, 2013.

**Bryant Park** [41 W. 40th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues in Manhattan, (212) 768-4242, [CitiPondatBryantPark.com](http://CitiPondatBryantPark.com); [TheHolidayShopsatBryantPark.com](http://TheHolidayShopsatBryantPark.com)]

**Gingerbread time:** Going beyond gingerbread men and gingerbread houses, local pastry chefs create large-scale confectionary creations highlighting monuments from around the world at Le Parker Meridien hotel during its annual Gingerbread Extravaganza. They are on display from Dec. 1 to Jan. 3, 2013.

**Le Parker Meridien** [119 W. 56th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues in Manhattan, (212) 245-5000, [parkermeridien.com](http://parkermeridien.com)]

### Hotel packages

Make your holiday shopping time something special with an overnight stay in Manhattan. Below are just a few of the hotels offering special packages; it's up to you if you want to bring the kids or spend some alone time with your significant other. Access the websites or call the hotels directly for rates.

**Affinia Manhattan:** The Miracle on 31st Street package includes accommodations for one night; VIP Ice Skating package at Bryant Park (two skate rentals, VIP access to bypass the line, hot cocoa, bag check, and 10 percent off your final bill at Celsius at Bryant Park); two complimentary holiday cocktails and 20 percent off holiday dinner at Niles NYC Restaurant & Bar; Macy's 10 percent savings pass; in-room

holiday cookies and hot chocolate; in-room DVD of "Miracle on 34th Street" upon request.

**Affinia Manhattan** [371 Seventh Ave. between 30th and 31st streets in Manhattan, (212) 563-1800, [affinia.com](http://affinia.com)]

**Hyatt 48 Lex:** Bloomie's Holiday Shopping package includes a \$50 gift card and an appointment with a Bloomingdale's personal shopping consultant. Guests also receive a leather VIP wallet from Bloomingdale's and a 15 percent off coupon for all Bloomingdale's purchases during their stay, plus free delivery of Bloomingdale's packages to the hotel.

**Hyatt 48 Lex** [517 Lexington Ave. between E. 48th and E. 49th streets in Manhattan, (212) 838-1234, [48lex.hyatt.com](http://48lex.hyatt.com)]

**414 Hotel:** The Magic in the City package for two guests per room (queen room only) includes two gift certificates for \$20 each for ice skating at the Rink at Rockefeller Center. Two-night minimum; mention Magic in the City when booking.

**414 Hotel** [414 W. 46th Street between Ninth and 10th avenues in Manhattan, (212) 399-0006, [414hotel.com](http://414hotel.com)]

*Stacey Zable is an award-winning veteran travel writer and family travel expert who has written about destinations, resorts, and cruise lines around the world. Her favorite trips are those that she shares with her husband and two daughters. Send travel questions and comments to Stacey at [info@familytraveltrails.com](mailto:info@familytraveltrails.com).*

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DEAR  
DR. KARYN  
DR. KARYN GORDON

# Strategies to inspire your teens at school

Dear Dr. Karyn,

While my daughter tries a little at school, my son seems completely disengaged and uninspired. I have tried everything to motivate my kids, and I'm feeling really anxious. Since you work so much with teens, what have you learned that helps to inspire teens (especially boys)?

Dear Parent,

## Strategy one: be the inspiration

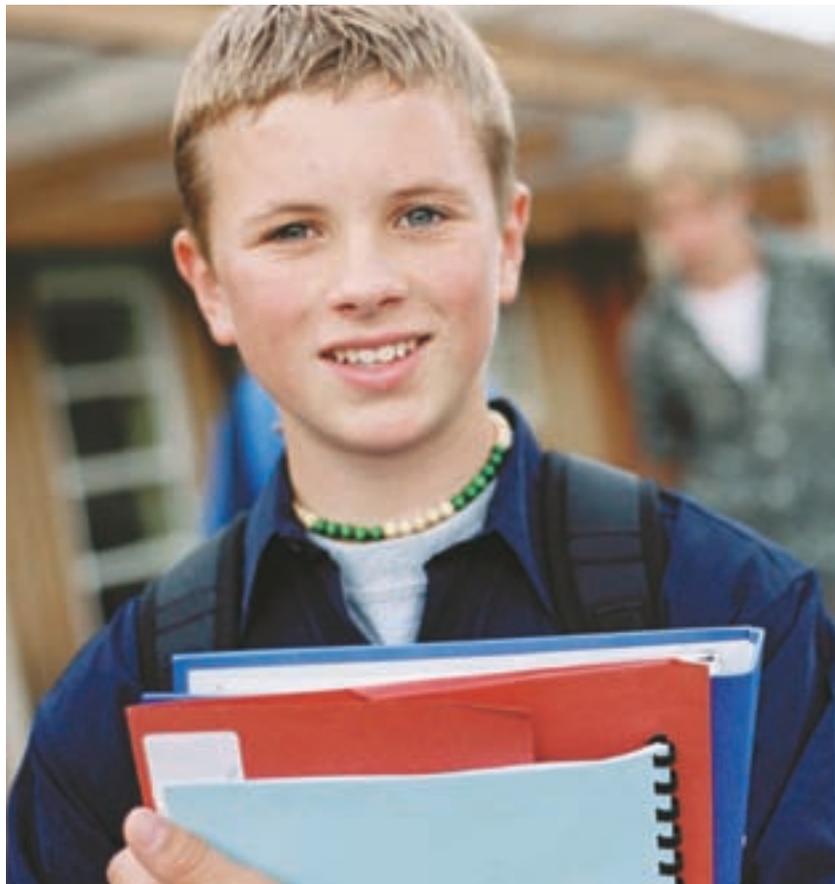
Try to be honest with yourself. Are you an inspiring person? Do you love your life? Do you love who you are? Are you happy with how you are using your gifts? Inspiration is powerful and contagious. Spend time with an “inspiring” person and most of us just feel better, energized, and more alive. The key to inspiring our kids is that we ourselves need to work on inspiring ourselves first. We can preach about being inspirational, but without living it our words are flat, and our teens will tune us out.

So how can we tap into our own inspiration? Be clear about what it is you want to do this year and what character traits you want to work on in yourself. Just last Monday, I decided to dedicate a full day for my dreams and goals for the remaining part of 2012 (I don't do that nearly enough). By the end of the day, I was fully energized, focused, and excited for this fall! It helped clarify what I need to say “yes” to and, more importantly, what I need to say “no” to so I can protect those goals.

Remember that kids and teens love to see their parents love their lives. Your inspiration will be contagious for them!

## Strategy two: talk about dreams (not goals)

Most teens (especially boys) do not like the word “goals” (it reminds



them too much of school). This is one of the key reasons why my popular leadership event for teens is called “Dare to Dream” (and not “Dare to Set Goals”). Many people have dreams — it's the big picture — the snap shot for how they want their lives to turn out. Goals are more specific and too often teens associate goals with a specific subject in school. So try asking your teen about his dreams, such as: “What are some of the dreams you have in your life?”

Ask him about his dreams related to traveling, volunteer work, family, or money. Try to bring up school and career dreams at the end. And while many teens have dreams, some may not (they may be afraid to allow themselves to dream). If so, simply be patient and bring it up again with

them in a few weeks.

## Strategy three: surround him with inspirational people

One of my favorite books is called “The Power of Focus.” In this book, the author talks about the importance of surrounding yourselves with inspirational people, movies, biographies, and books.

So tune into what your teen is interested in. What movies does he like to watch? Who are his role models? Can you get the biographies (TV or video) of one of his role models sharing about their lives' journey? Or do you have aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, or other people in your life that your teen would find inspiring? If so, try to facilitate them spending time together. Something this simple could be all it takes to ignite his inspiration.



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# Good grief

Five tips to help your child cope with the loss of a pet

BY GAYLA GRACE

**T**ears filled my eyes as I watched the veterinarian end the life of our 18-year-old cat, Callie. Insisting on being present, my youngest son, Nathan, clung to my neck. One of my older daughters had already retreated to the car, unable to watch.

Callie had been part of our lives for as long as I could remember, and my heart was breaking for our children, who would dearly miss her.

## Discuss death honestly

The loss of a family pet may be the first experience a child has in dealing with death. It's an emotional event that almost all families encounter and warrants special attention when it happens.

A child's age determines what level of detail to discuss when a pet dies. A preschool child can't understand that death happens to everyone as a permanent event.

The best approach with young children includes a brief explanation with the opportunity for them to ask questions. Refrain from using the words "put to sleep" or "resting in peace." These words are taken literally by children and will cause further confusion. A young child might begin to worry that he, too, will die when he goes to sleep at night or rests at naptime.

## Prepare for the end

School-aged children understand more about death and may want to be actively involved in the last days of their pet's life. Our son, Nathan, was 8 years old when Callie was euthanized, and wanted to be there for the duration, but it can be trauma-



There will still be difficult emotions to combat, but if the child begins the grieving process while the pet is alive, the death feels less traumatic.



tizing for a child to watch the final procedure.

Our 16-year-old daughter wanted to accompany us to the veterinarian's office and say her ending good-byes there, but didn't want to watch Callie's last moments of life. As a parent, you can help your children decide the appropriate way for them to part for the last time. It often works best to explain what will happen and then allow your children time to cuddle the animal and say goodbye at home before you leave alone with the pet for the veterinarian's office.

When a pet begins to move toward the end of life, we can prepare our children for the inevitable event. There will still be difficult emotions to combat, but if the child begins the grieving process while the pet is alive, the death feels less traumatic.

Callie was sick for several months before she died, and we began preparing our children for what would happen. The finality was still emotional, but our children knew what to expect. Afterward, we talked frequently of our memories and let our kids know it was OK to be sad about her dying.

### Allow time to say goodbye

"Pets are members of our families and when our pet dies, our daily family life is changed," says Kris Palazzo, veterinary hospital manager. "Every circumstance is different, but it's important to allow a child the chance to say goodbye to their pet, if possible." Palazzo also said if pets are cremated, the ashes can be returned to the owner as a keepsake, if the family desires.

Pet owner and mom of two, Bridgette McNabb, agrees.

"We had gotten our dog, Suzie, at 6 weeks of age and she had been in our family for 13 years," says Bridgette. "My husband, Mike, and I knew her days were short, so we started talking to the kids about Suzie not being with us much longer. The day Suzie

was to be euthanized, we brought her in, told the kids what would be happening, loved on her, took pictures with her, and said our goodbyes through lots of tears. Then, Mike took her to the vet. Our last memories at home — with Suzie licking on the kids — were the best."

Allowing the children special time with their dog on her last day of life was a beautiful gift the McNabbs gave to their children.

### Allow emotions to process

The loss of a pet that occurs because of a sudden accident or illness is harder on a child (and you as a parent), emotionally.

You will spend more time consoling your child and working through your own feelings about the loss.

Children can't process their feelings like adults do and may resort to acting out or withdrawing as a result of the loss. Encourage your children to express their feelings and be sensitive when they're feeling sad or angry. Spend extra time nurturing them when possible. And refrain from replacing the pet immediately. It's important to grieve your loss before attempting to move forward with a new pet to love.



Losing a family pet is never easy. As parents, we struggle with our own feelings surrounding the loss, in addition to helping our children cope.

But the loss of a pet offers a great opportunity to begin talking to your child about death, an inevitable part of life. When we explain the process of what's happening and offer our children a sensitive spirit and a willing heart to help them process their feelings, they will adjust to life without their pet and be prepared to love another pet at an appropriate time.

*Gayla Grace is a wife and mom of five children in her blended family. She ministers to stepfamilies through her website, [www.stepparentingwithgrace.com](http://www.stepparentingwithgrace.com).*

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## MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SERADOVA

# Narrowing my focus

## Multitasking mom needs quality time with child

I've really been trying to focus on giving Olivia my undivided attention. Parents, you know how it is; you're "playing" with your kids while trying to answer some e-mails, prepare dinner, or tackle whatever needs to get done at the moment. It's not that I don't enjoy spending time with my daughter, but, like most parents, I have a million things to do and very little time in which to do them.

This morning, when I walked into the office and overheard a co-

worker say that he had watched three movies the day before, I gasped and nearly fell off my chair. How is that possible? I can't remember the last time I had more than 20 minutes of downtime, and the last time I attempted to watch a movie, I didn't get past the opening credits before I fell asleep. (In case you're wondering, this co-worker is single with no kids.)

Watching movies, going to a movie, or even watching one hour of uninterrupted TV is definitely a luxury in our household. Whenever I do have a few minutes to spare, there's always something that needs to get done.

I've realized that in trying to be the best mom, employee, wife, friend, etc., I'm very rarely being present in what I'm doing. And I try to be in-the-now most when I'm spending time with Olivia. Sure, she can entertain herself with all her toys or with the dog and the cat (her favorite play dates), but I'm also aware of how important it is for us to just sit and play together.

My husband is great at this. When he cooks, he gets her involved. He plays with her, and you can tell that he really isn't thinking about anything else. In that moment, it's all about her.

I take for granted that she doesn't realize when I'm immersed in other things while still trying to play with her. But kids are a lot smarter than we think. There's a time and place for multi-tasking, right? While I play with my daughter, dinner is on the stove, I'm folding laundry, checking e-mails, and try-

ing to throw in some squats in there, too. I'm simultaneously planning the rest of the night: eat dinner, clean-up after dinner, clean-up toys, bath time, bedtime, pack Olivia's bag for daycare, prep food for tomorrow, spend quality time with husband, walk the dog (or should we go for a run?). The list goes on.

I think back to an Oprah show I saw recently (while I folded the laundry and cooked dinner). Guests of the show were stressed-out moms who made careless, and even fatal, mistakes. One mother, a respected assistant principal in an Ohio school, accidentally left her 2-year-old child in the backseat of her car while she went to work. When she got to the car it was too late, and her daughter had died. Recounting the 2007 event, she discussed how she was overwhelmed with work, raising two small children, and wasn't thinking clearly. Hearing her, I felt sympathy, not judgment, and thought how this really can happen to anyone. Part of her healing is being present, focusing on the now, and not letting things overwhelm her.

The mother's to-do list really never ends, or like my mom always says, "A woman's work is never done." Maybe I just have to realize that and remind myself more often that Olivia is growing up faster than I'd like to admit. Yes, she'll appreciate a clean and organized home, but she needs some quality mommy time, too.

Yesterday I dedicated my free day just to hanging out with Olivia. We made all of our meals together, went for a walk, and played with dolls. I even laid down with her at naptime and stared at her while she slept, one of my favorite parenting moments. My e-mails were answered at my leisure, and needless to say, the house didn't fall apart. As she gets older, I realize how important it is for her to feel a connection with me, a real, solid connection where she knows I'm there, not just physically, but supporting her in what she does. She really is my biggest priority. Next on my to-do list: get a mother's helper.



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# Time to play!

Playworks helps kids reap the benefits of recess

BY CANDI SPARKS

**W**hen I was a kid, recess was a time to talk with my friends about boys, run, scream, and let off some excess steam before returning the humdrum of reading, writing, and arithmetic. These days, recess is not just a “break” between the morning and afternoon sessions at school, it is also where all the action takes place. Bullying, fights, teasing, exclusion — they all play out during recess.

Unfortunately, these happenings have an effect on what children learn at school because problems at recess often spill into the classroom. Teachers can lose valuable teaching time if they have to stop a lesson to resolve behavioral problems that spawned in the schoolyard every day. During the course of a year, that time can really add up.

“Recess and the transitions to and from lunch are the toughest part of the day,” said a teacher at PS 20

in Brooklyn who asked to remain anonymous. “The students become disorganized, hyper, and difficult to manage. Going from a free-for-all to focused learning is tough on them, and on me.”

This teacher’s comment reminded me of the day when my own child came home with a chipped tooth from playing football in the schoolyard. Another parent reported that their child was being bullied at school, so the staff changed the children’s seats so they’d be further apart. When that didn’t work, the children were put in different reading groups. Ultimately, when the classroom issue couldn’t be resolved, one child transferred out of the school. No parent wants her child coming home from school injured, but, as shown, it is difficult for schools to deal with problems that fall in the gray area between a school problem and a social one.

Enter Playworks., a national nonprofit based in California that en-

gages elementary school students in playgrounds. The organization provides a structure to help the children have fun, learn inclusion through teamwork, and engage in constructive conflict safely.

The games include everyone and focus on teamwork rather than on competition. Playworks levels the play to an appropriate amount of physical activity and combines thinking and self-control with fun games. Many of the Playworks games and instructions can be downloaded from the company’s website. For games like tag (but not called tag), where touching is required, it is to be “as light as the wings of a butterfly.” There is never pushing or shoving. It is a great way to teach children self-control and help them burn off excess energy.

These improvements better the school community, the individual child, and their academic success. The organization is currently engaging students at recess in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, and the list is growing.

“Children do need to play, but many of them do not know how to play,” says Adeola “Ola” Whitney, a Brooklyn mother of two and executive director of Playworks Greater Newark and New York area. “Many kids are not privy to go to a safe park after school. Neighborhoods and schools may not have expansive resources to give kids the healthy recreation that children need.”

Most parents know what she means. Sitting around pushing buttons on an electronic box (AKA a video game console) is not “really” playing.

Roberta Davenport, the principal of PS 307 in Brooklyn, brought the Playworks program to her school to help children develop social skills that have been forgotten in modern academia such as empathy, sharing, respect, and inclusion. The result was improved grades. According to Whitney, the principal wanted a program that would help with the transitions from schoolyard play to schoolwork.





Photos by Roger Tully

“It is a great inclusion program,” says Taina, a parent at PS 3 in Brooklyn, where the Playworks program has organized recess play to include children who were being left out. “It was tough for my child, who has experienced pushing, hitting, and name-calling by a classmate in the yard, and then to come back to class and be forced to sit right next to the person.” The problem not only affects the student who is being bullied and their bully. The tension and frustration of a recess incident can negatively affect an entire class.

Which means that sometimes teachers need an adequate break during the long school day, too. And the Playworks program is flexible. It can either dispatch its own “coaches,” or train staff at schools, to organize the playtime.

But does it matter who runs the Playworks recess?

“Absolutely! A great teacher is a great teacher in the classroom. When those skills don’t translate to outdoor play, we help with crowd control, leadership, and managing the playtime in a safe way,” says Whitney.

The program strives to improve the overall tone of the play and of the school. There is no yelling or “punishment” for rule breakers. The coaches model respectful behavior and want to offer opportunities for everyone to participate in the games safely. No yelling at lunchtime? I am already impressed!

Gallup poll research shows that a positive school climate improves social, emotional, and academic outcomes for youth. Rather than cutting out recess, let’s improve it for the sake of children’s health and happiness.

*Playworks is available nationwide and is currently in 23 major cities, including schools in our area: Voice Charter School in Long Island City, The Anderson School on the Upper West Side, and Children’s Storefront School in Harlem. It’s also in several schools in Brooklyn: PS 59, PS 12, PS 11, PS 309, PS 307, PS 11, PS 3, and PS 20. For more, visit [www.playworks.org](http://www.playworks.org).*

*Candi Sparks is the author of “Can I Have Some Money?” a children’s money book series which includes “Max Gets It!,” “Nacho Money,” and other titles. She is the Brooklyn mother of two. Find “CandiSparks’s Blog” on Wordpress, and follow her on Facebook (Candi Sparks, author) and Twitter (Candi Sparks, author), or on [www.candisparks.com](http://www.candisparks.com).*



THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

## An inspiring read

Even though your child is young, you can bet she's listening to conversations she hears. Surely, she knows that healthcare is a big issue these days. If it's piqued her interest and she wants to learn more, she may enjoy a new book about a little girl who helps her family and village receive better healthcare.

"Mimi's Village" by Katie Smith Milway tells the story of Mimi Malaho, who worries about her pregnant mother after a baby in her village dies. Her family has been lucky — until Mimi's little sister, Nakkissi, drinks some dirty water from the river, and get sick that night.

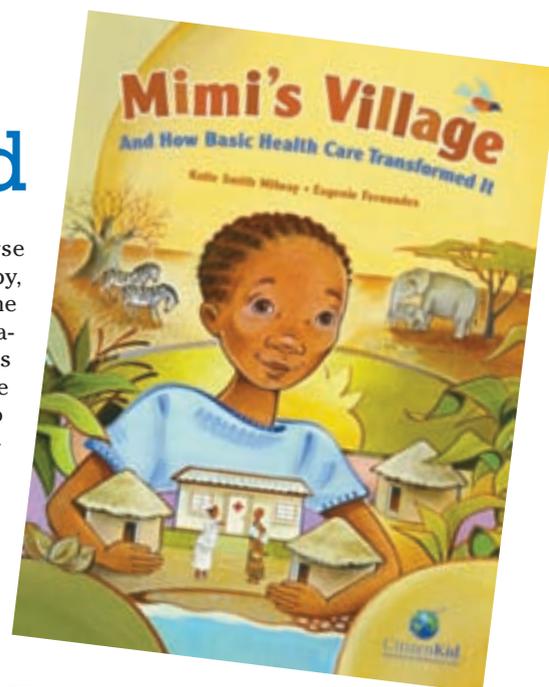
She moaned and couldn't keep anything in her tummy, so Ma and Pa wrapped her in a blanket and put her in their cart. The whole family walked an hour to the next village, where there was a clinic.

The next morning, Nurse Tela took care of Nakkissi and all the other babies lined up for help. As

Mimi watched Nurse Tela weigh each baby, she learned that the next day was vaccination day. The Malahos decided to spend the night at the clinic so they could get vaccinated.

When she got home, Mimi heard her father talking about malaria, which was making lots of the village's children sick. That night, Mimi had a dream that led to an idea, which led to a project that helped her whole village!

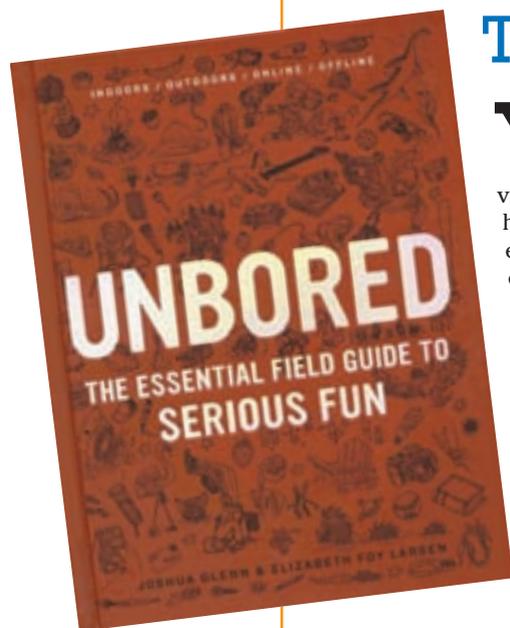
Inspired by real events and real people, the story explains a grown-up issue in a kid-friendly way, and children will definitely identify with a girl like Mimi. Smith gives kids information about Zambia healthcare workers and healthcare in general. Aided by Eugenie



Fernandes's illustrations, young readers learn that they can help make life better for other children around the world.

Recommended for 5- to 8 year olds who love making a difference, this is a book you'll feel good about your child reading.

"Mimi's Village," by Katie Smith Milway [32 pages, 2012, \$18.95].



## Tips for banishing boredom

Your child has mastered every video game in the house, watched every movie, and clicked through every cable channel several dozen times. He's managed to tease his sister and torment his brother, then turns to you and says, "I'm bored." Instead of

channeling your father — by telling him you'll give him something to do! — give him an entertaining book that will make him forget the "B" word.

"Unbored: The Essential Field Guide to Serious Fun," by Joshua Glenn and Elizabeth Foy Larsen, might single-handedly save your

whole family from complete craziness.

If it's a holiday, a weekend, or just some sort of break from school and your child doesn't know what to do with his time, that's where this book comes in — it's filled with pages of excellent ideas.

There are a lot of games in this book, including ones that don't require a board or dice. He can learn, for instance, some farting games, or different kinds of games that use jacks. "Unbored" will help him learn how to get freaky-fit with friends and learn "parkour" (military obstacle course training), which can be done in the backyard — even in the snow!

The book will teach him how to rock out — from what he'll need to build a band, to a quiz to help figure out which instrument is best for him and a few good movies about music he can watch.

It'll teach your child how to turn the bathroom into a spa, redecorate his bedroom, or organize it.

He can find some new crafts, learn how to cook, read a food label, and conserve water.

With all kinds of activities for both indoors and out, "Unbored" keeps children busy with information, ideas, get-outside movement, and downtime that doesn't involve anything electronic. There are pages for quieter readers and an equal amount for kids with a streak of renegade in their blood and restlessness in their feet.

The nicest part about this book is that it's great for sharing — and you'll want your kids to do just that. Add these great activities to downtime, and 9- to 15 year olds will find "Unbored" to be crazy fun.

"Unbored: The Essential Field Guide to Serious Fun" by Joshua Glenn and Elizabeth Foy Larsen [352 pages, 2012, \$25].

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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# Key to compromise

## Understanding needs and interests in mediation

Consider the story of two men quarreling in a library: one wants the window open and the other wants it closed. They bicker back and forth about how much to leave it open — a crack, halfway, three quarters of the way. No solution satisfies them both.

Enter the librarian. She asks one why he wants the window open. “To get some fresh air,” he replies. She asks the other why he wants it closed. “To avoid the draft,” he answers. After thinking a minute, she opens a window in the next room, bringing in fresh air without a draft.

This illustration of “positional bargaining” as discussed in “Getting To Yes: Negotiating Without Giving In,” by Roger Fisher and William Ury says a lot about how most of us deal with conflict, including in the matrimonial area.

Just as in the library example, we want or demand something — let’s say, it’s the house. We are unable to look past our demands any more than the bickering men could look past the window.

Speaking about mediation recently at the Queens Chapter of the New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, I thought of this story, as well as a much more serious situation involving war and peace, life and death:

In 1978, Egypt and Israel successfully negotiated a peace agreement. Previously, they had fought numerous wars; their history was bitter and bloody. Yet, they made peace. How did this happen? And what can the answer possibly mean to you?

In talks between Israel and Egypt, also discussed in “Getting To Yes,” the parties started with incompatible positions:

[Background: In the 1967 war, Israel had captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.]

Egypt’s position: Israel must return all of the Sinai; every inch.

Israel’s position: Israel must keep at least part of the Sinai.

If the discussions had gone no further — if the parties had only been able to look at the window, so to speak — negotiations would have



quickly broken down. So what happened? How did longtime enemies move forward in their talks?

Like the librarian, negotiators and mediators asked questions, in particular, “Why?”

Egypt asked Israel, “Why do you need part of the Sinai?”

Answer: “Security. As long as Israel holds the Sinai, Egyptian tanks will be far from our border. In case of a conflict, having the Sinai will allow us time to mobilize, and if necessary, to fight in Sinai rather than on Israeli territory.”

Israel asked Egypt, “Why do you need to have all of the Sinai back? Why every inch of that desert?”

Answer: “Sovereignty. Sinai is part of Egypt. It belonged to Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs. After domination by other powers, Egypt has once again become a sovereign country. Having land occupied by Israel is a loss of prestige and unacceptable.”

Understanding both parties’ underlying needs and interests created the possibility of developing options to meet their mutual needs.

The results: All of Sinai was given to Egypt; Egypt regained full sovereignty, and its needs were met. Much of Sinai was demilitarized; Egyptian tanks remained far from the Israeli border, and Israel’s need for security was met.

Now, getting back to you.

Do you both want the house? Obviously, you both can’t have it. There is only one, and you can’t cut it down the middle.

So get beyond your positions, and ask yourselves, and each other: “Why do we each want the house? What does it mean to each of us?”

The husband might say, “I have nowhere to go.”

The wife might say, “I grew up in this house. My ties are here.”

If the husband’s underlying concern is having a place to live, maybe he would be willing to part with the house, if his needs for security can be met. If so, the spouses will no longer be fighting over the house. Instead, they can create options allowing the wife to keep it, while allowing the husband to have his own place.

Mediating involves understanding needs and interests. Israel and Egypt did it. Can you?

*New York City and Long Island-based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin, Esq., helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without going to court. Contact him at [lee\\_chabin@lc-mediate.com](mailto:lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com), (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/home>.*

Disclaimer: All material in this column is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Discussing your particular case and circumstances with a legal professional before making important decisions is strongly encouraged to safeguard your rights.

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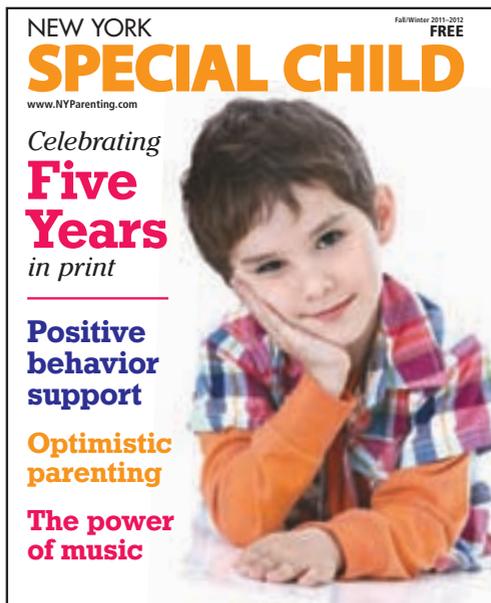
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