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* Interested applicants please fill out the above information, tear off and mail to: **415 89th Street - 5th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11209** QF

Family January 2013

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Letter from the publisher

Keeping the children safe

We send our children off to school and hope we are leaving them in a safe place. We trust that the teachers and staff are capable of protecting them and keeping them nourished in a variety of ways and that we will see them later in the day.



For generations parents across our nation have done this and it has been fine. Sometimes there was a storm or a blackout or a hurricane or something like that for the educators to deal with and there were drill systems set up, like in case of fire, to help evacuate if needed. When I was growing up in the Midwest we had tornado drills and air raid drills. It was scary sometimes, but

we grew used to it and nothing happened. We were safe.

Suddenly, we have crazy stuff to deal with. We have people stealing airplanes and steering them into skyscrapers and we have other people outrageously armed with a cache of weapons who commit genocide and then suicide. We have seen a day care center in Oklahoma City blown to bits and now yet another school mass shooting. It is unbearable to all of us, as citizens and as parents. It is unbearable to think of the mindset that made that young man shoot his mother and then the innocent victims in the elementary school.

We don't have all the answers. There are massive amounts of weap-

ons throughout our country and we are told that after the shooting, more assault weapons were sold than ever before. My contention is to stop manufacturing and dispensing ammunition. Who then would care if the guns were there? They would be rendered largely harmless. But even if we could accomplish that and get anyone to agree to anything anymore within a consensus, there is still the matter of the disturbed minds that would do such a thing. We still have to deal with that issue and that's a biggie.

As a parent and as a neighbor, I know we can't just forget about this. We can't just wait a few weeks and move on without doing some things to set a plan in motion. We need to continue the dialogue, the outrage, the mourning so that we don't forget, so we don't get complacent and it be-

comes business as usual. We need to seek out answers from professionals and we need to identify the troubled souls among us and try to help them before they strike.

We need to act and continue to act before any more children are lost. This must be our highest priority. We must put politics aside and find answers before more lives are snuffed out in the horror of these violent acts. We all need to listen to each other and find a way to keep the children safe.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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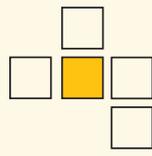
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From our readers

The homework conversation

Dear editor:

Homework is a battle I continue to face on a daily basis, so I enjoyed the many points of view expressed in your November article, ("Homework: A conversation with parents

and experts").

As a working parent, I sympathize with parents and their children, but as an educator I understand the reason behind the madness. Homework should be carefully thought out in order to review new concepts learned, but also, and more importantly, indicate where your child needs help. Homework re-enforces basic skills, comprehension, time management, and discipline.

It is not the responsibility of parents, caregivers, or teaching assistants to get homework done. Parents who take charge of homework and parents who ignore it do incredible damage to their child's ability to achieve through success and to learn powerful lessons through mistakes. It is up to parents and teachers to have faith in each other, their methods and

judgment, and to work together to make homework and school a valuable experience for all children with all types of needs.

If academic achievement and self-esteem is the common goal for our children, then homework, including tutoring and extra help, should be the first, and most important, activity after school. Once this routine has been established, other activities, such as sports, music lessons, etc., can follow. It becomes engrained that after one's work is done, and done well, there is time to play. A well-balanced day combining school, homework, and enrichment activities creates strong, independent children, and a better opportunity for families to enjoy and share free time together.

*Alicen Harrad, After School Director
Rhineland Children's Center*

EDUCATION

HOMWORK

A conversation with parents & experts

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

BY RICK C. COBBETT
Parents and educators are often at odds over homework. Some parents believe that homework is essential for their children's learning, while others see it as a burden. Experts offer different perspectives on the benefits and drawbacks of homework.

Is homework worth it?
Research shows that homework can improve academic achievement, especially in middle and high school. However, too much homework can lead to stress and burnout. Finding a balance is key.



High school in an over-populated city.

Parents speak up
Parents who speak up about their children's homework habits can help educators understand the challenges they face.

Teenage smoking

Dear editor:

I was very pleased to read your October issue on teenage smoking ("Teenage Smoking," October, 2012). I was alarmed to read that one third of smokers who begin smoking as teens will die prematurely due to a smoking-related illness.

I am in agreement with lung cancer specialist Shahriyour Andaz,

who said that it is very important to be proactive in preventing teen smoking.

I have been working with teens for almost 10 years at the YM-YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood. I believe that parents could do more to act as role models for their children. As they say, education starts at home. Without this kind of familial support it is difficult for an adolescent to understand the harmful effects of smoking. After all, we're working to counteract a tobacco industry that spends billions of dollars on marketing.

There are currently 11,500 licensed tobacco retailers in the city that are located within 1,000 feet of a school. What bothers me the most is that pharmacies that are supposed to promote healthy habits, sell tobacco products. We should follow the model of other counties like Canada and Ireland, where tobacco products are banned from pharmacies. These countries have seen a decline in youth tobacco use.

I think communities have a responsibility to educate our parents and youths about tobacco marketing. It is also important to educate them on the solutions being proposed to reduce the impact of tobacco marketing, such as reducing the visibility of tobacco products or removing tobacco advertisements in store fronts.

The teen group I work with has done work to this effect. In addition, in collaboration with the Manhattan Smoke-Free Partnership, I have presented at Community Board 12 in Manhattan, regarding raising awareness and educating the public about the impact of tobacco.

Despite the great steps we have taken and the reductions in tobacco use we have seen, our work is not over. There is still much to be done in order to protect our children from the impact of tobacco use and keep them tobacco-free.

*Abraham Palma
Teen Director, YM-YWHA of
Washington Heights and Inwood.*

Teenage smoking

Six helpful tips for parents trying to prevent teens from taking up a bad habit

Find out more...

- [Parents' Guide to Helping Your Teen Quit Smoking](#)
- [American Lung Association's Smoking Cessation Services](#)
- [The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Quitting Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Smoking](#)
- [The U.S. Surgeon General's Office's National Tobacco Use and Dependence Prevention Campaign](#)
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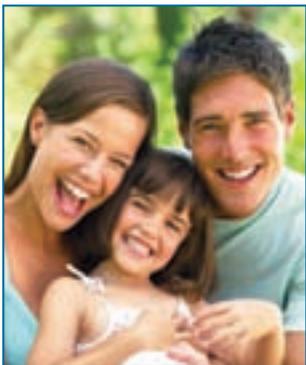
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Children & tragedy

When the unthinkable is in the news, what do you tell your kids?

BY GAYLA GRACE

The horrific scene from the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in Connecticut flashed across TVs for days, broadcasting terrifying images for all to see.

Making sense of what happened didn't surface quickly, and kids and adults were left to speculate why a 20-year-old would go into a school with the intent to kill defenseless children; 27 people dead, 20 of them first-grade students cut to the heart of every parent.

As our children begin asking questions in the aftermath of tragedy, the subject must be broached.

What do you say? How much emotion do you show? How do you help your child make sense of the senseless?

There are no easy answers, but there are a few dos and don'ts to help your child when tragedy strikes. The biggest consideration revolves around how we, as parents, react to the event. Our children watch and take cues from us.

"If you make it seem like it is something

that needs to be discussed, the more your child will get the idea that it is something that they need to be upset or distressed or fearful of," says family psychologist Shannon Bruno, Ph.D.

Here are other suggestions to help your child cope in the aftermath of tragedy:

- Monitor media coverage. Young children can't process media replay of tragic events and may begin to think the event is happening repeatedly. There is nothing gained from allowing children to watch media

coverage of a tragedy. If older children are curious and look to the TV for information, monitor how much they watch and be ready to discuss what they see.

- Be honest and specific about the event. Don't try to hide what happened. Our children need to understand the world they live in, based on their developmental age. But don't over explain, or dwell on the details of the tragedy. Answer questions honestly and give your children the freedom to ask whatever they need to defer their fears.

- Embrace their emotions. Allow your children to "feel" their feelings. It's OK to feel sad. It's natural to feel some anxiety. Acknowledge their feelings with expressions such as, "I understand this event makes you feel scared. I feel sad about what happened also." Offer words of comfort to relay their fears or sadness.

- Be available and offer reassurance as often as necessary. Let your children know they're safe. Recognize their needs and respond accordingly — some children need more reassurance than others. My oldest daughter was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder when she was 5 years old. Throughout her childhood, she was likely to respond to difficult circumstances with more anxiety than our other children, and my husband and I knew to always be available for her during challenging circumstances. Children are also more vulnerable if they've recently experienced difficult events, such as a parent's divorce, re-marriage, death of a family member, or another stressor.

- Recognize what feelings look like in children. Younger children may regress to behavior they've grown out of, such as sucking their thumb or soiling their pants, when troubled. Older children are more likely to show their feelings through a defiant attitude or irritability. Children don't have the ability to process feelings like adults. Watch for anything unusual in your children that could indicate they are experiencing high anxiety or fear.

- Keep routines as normal as possible.

Children thrive with routine. When tragedy strikes, it's especially important to keep a sense of normalcy with school, meals, and bedtime schedules. Children may have trouble sleeping or eating, which can help alert a parent to troubling emotions your child is experiencing.

- Depending on your religious practices, it may be helpful to pray with your child regarding the tragedy. After the Connecticut shootings, my 11-year-old son and I prayed for the families affected by the tragedy and the residents of Newtown. It can be reassuring for a child to pray and ask for God's help for a distressing situation.

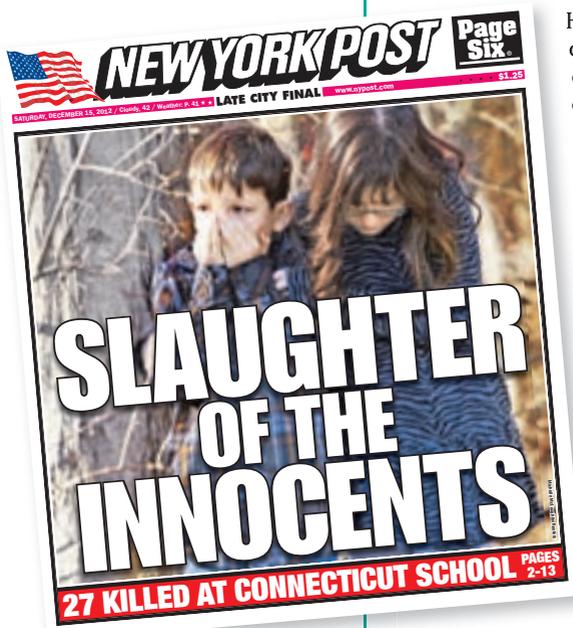
- Suggest doing something with your child that shows compassion or offers help for those affected. Many families have sent cards to Sandy Hook Elementary School to offer their thoughts and prayers for those families. Some lit a candle for each child represented. Children experience a sense of well-being by showing compassion and offering help in a situation that appears hopeless.

- Seek professional help for your child if troubled emotions don't subside after a period of time. Mental health professionals are trained to help children of all ages cope with difficulties. Depending on the level of exposure to tragedy or other challenges children are dealing with, they may get stuck in their anxiety or grief and unable to move forward. Don't hesitate to find help sooner than later if this happens.

Tragedies such as the Sandy Hook shootings carry a weight heavy to bear. They're especially difficult for young children to make sense of or cope with.

Helping our children process their emotions, while shielding them from graphic details, offers them healing and the gift of hope to continue on their young journey with renewed strength in their ability to cope with life's next challenge.

Gayla Grace is a freelance writer, wife, mom and stepmom to five children in her blended family.





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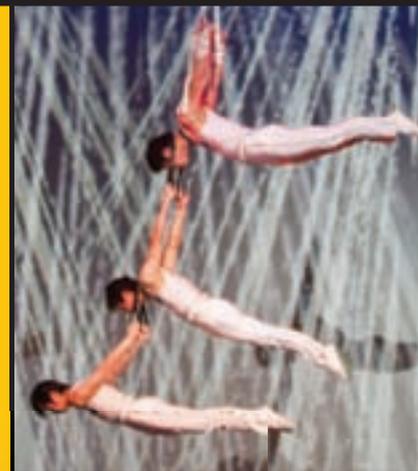
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Stop the violence

A parent and teacher tries to make sense of the Sandy Hook Elementary shootings

BY GREGORY KEER

As hard as it is, the only way for me to sort through what happened in Newtown, Conn., is to put myself in the middle of the tragedy.

Because I am a parent, I imagine I am the perpetrator's mother who looks at her son in the instant before he shoots her. I die before I can even think.

I am a teacher, and I shudder at what runs through my mind in the last minutes as I sacrificed my life in a desperate attempt to stop a madman.

I am a child in one of those first-

grade classrooms. Perhaps I have a fleeting blip of time to fear this man. Maybe I am the first to die, or maybe I am one of the other 19 children. In this case, I think, will he shoot me? Can I run away? He hurt my friend! Will someone save me?

Now, I am a parent who hears my child has died. I feel blinding pain, hopelessness and anger, among so many other emotions — all of them searing. I think: my child is gone forever? I sent my child to school, and he never came back. How can that be? How can I keep breathing? Please tell me this is not real.

By the grace of God, I am none

of these participants. Yet, I am still a parent, a teacher, an American, a human being. And I feel so many things.

As I write this, the news is still horrifyingly fresh. There are so many unanswered questions. Some things we will never know. What could have been in the mind of a young man, barely out of his teens, that would prompt him to slay 20 innocent children, six staff members, and himself at Sandy Hook Elementary?

Even though we may never understand, I feel motivated, more than ever, to work to prevent this kind of tragedy from ever happening again. I

We have to turn the discussion around so that we are not just acting to prevent tragedy but working to promote goodness.

fiercely believe this requires long-term thinking, and I worry too many people lack the patience and dedication to commit to that. Already we are caught up in debates over whether better gun control will stop the demented from doing what they want to do. I believe we must improve background checks before selling guns to anyone, but I want to focus on something we can all agree on.

As adults, we have a duty to fashion a world that is safer and healthier for our children. We must make things better.

We have to care more about the well-being of people than we do now. We may never be able to stop a lunatic hell-bent on destruction, but we can try much, much harder to do better as a society. We have to turn the discussion around so that we are not just acting to prevent tragedy, but working to promote goodness.

I know that to some this may sound Pollyanna. I know I am flirting with idealism and optimism.

So be it.

What good is constantly reacting defensively to what is wrong in the world? Let's go on the offensive to crush the kind of disconnection that makes outcasts of the mentally ill and socially misfit. We do woefully little to help those we cannot understand, and then we cry and shout when they hurt us.

Among the strategies is making mental health check-ups as normal as physical check-ups. They need to be affordable and not stigmatized. As a society, we are so averse to having anyone question whether we're equipped to handle the ups and downs of life. We're still supposed to fight through it without well-trained health professionals, and that's not working — especially in an age where the resources exist but are not nearly as accessible or socially accepted as they should be.

Then, there are even more painstaking tasks we, as parents, must tackle with a firm commitment. As President Obama said days after the shooting, when he announced an interagency federal effort to combat violence, "Any ac-

tions we take must begin inside the home and inside our hearts."

On a regular basis, we need to talk with our kids about their friends. We need to teach them how to be fair and caring. We must work with them on the nuances of resolving conflicts and understanding each other's feelings. We must help them recognize and reach out to those who seem alone, and educate them about physical and mental differences that make people unique, but no less worthy of our attention. In these ways, we might help our kids at the ground level and improve society's connectedness.

We need to speak with the parents of our kids' friends and classmates about their children. We should take notice when they are in need of support. We often get so wrapped up with our own needs, we fail to reach out the way our parents or grandparents did when society seemed smaller and more manageable. We have to create a village-like atmosphere where we help each other so that no parent or child feels outside the circle. If we encounter parents or children who resist social connection, then we should seek counsel or assistance to ascertain what might be causing it, and do something to assist them.

We must rely on each other and on the professionals who can make our lives better, and be willing to seek help. Children come with a wide range of emotional and physical challenges. What matters is that we be proactive. This may result in our children needing therapy or medication — or even in us needing those things ourselves. If we make the effort to get help and act in our children's best interest, we will not only be aiding them and ourselves, but the society around us.

It could take years, even decades for these strategies to take effect. But I have to believe that if we work together, we can create a better world for our children. The alternative is just too horrible.

Gregory Keer is an award-winning columnist, teacher, and publisher of a fatherhood website, www.familyman-online.com.



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Time to rework HOMEWORK

Part two
of our
discussion of
homework

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

When my high schooler started coming home without social studies homework, my first thoughts were, “Why would a teacher not assign homework on a regular basis?” and “Is the teacher really teaching anything in class if there is no homework?” I subsequently discovered that this teacher had the students actively involved in learning in the classroom so that they were voluntarily motivated to engage in ongoing, substantive discussions after hours. “Homework” was not assigned, but the students were engaged and learning more than ever. I was beginning to understand how effective a thoughtful educator could be.

Much has been said about “the homework wars:” some claim it is excessive and none of it is necessary, and others say it is an important component of educational success. Still, most people agree that if homework is given, it should be meaningful, appropriate, and necessary.

Healthy homework guidelines

Last spring, homework activists submitted the “Healthy Homework Guidelines” petition to the National PTA, recognizing the damaging effects of homework, including sleep deprivation, stress, and compromised mental health, noting “homework lacks many of the benefits commonly attributed to it,” and it encroaches on parental rights, family time, unstructured time, and outside activities.

As a result, the guidelines encourage teachers to reduce homework, and only give assignments that advance the spirit of learning, are student-directed, and promote a balanced home and life schedule.

Their aim is to improve teachers’ approach to designing and assigning homework.

Whether or not the guidelines are adopted as a position by the National PTA, schools around the country are beginning to address homework issues individually. Maryland’s Gaithersburg Elementary School adopted a no homework policy, finding that homework worksheets do not correspond with classroom instruction and instead encourage students to read 30 minutes a night, thereby creating a “real reading community.” The principal was quoted as saying that the change has sparked students’ maturation and motivation.

According to San Diego’s North County Times, students at Cardiff Elementary School are routinely not assigned homework, unless there is a clear purpose for it with regard to student learning. The principal there distinguished this from a no homework policy, hoping instead to impact the quality of the assignments.

If more schools replace their homework policies with Healthy Homework Guidelines, supporters hope for a ripple effect as more schools recognize the benefits for their own populations.

Foreign language exception

Many more issues still swirl around the homework debate. Parents who agree that rote homework in math or English may not be worth the incursion into family time, may still believe that foreign language homework is necessary.

Faith Garfield, who has taught foreign language in Queens schools, asserts that language homework “reinforces the knowledge students acquire in school, which will be lost

otherwise, as it is a cumulative endeavor.” She says that when students practice writing in a foreign language for homework, it helps them begin to think in the new language, as class time is limited and teachers use it to teach structure.

Some anti-homework activists would include foreign languages in their general ban. One proponent remarks that language proficiency is never obtained from mere school study.

Alfie Kohn, author of “The Homework Myth,” opposes rote foreign language homework, but would support some homework in that area, so long as it is “in a context and for a purpose.” He differentiates between the way a child becomes proficient playing an instrument or a sport from the way he may learn an academic subject. Continual practice is necessary for the former to achieve more fluid behaviors. Moreover, Kohn warns that rote repetition in academic subjects creates a pattern of sidestepping emphasis on concepts and understanding ideas.

Staggering project deadlines

An age-old issue that persists in middle schools and high schools is multiple assignments and projects, which always seem to be due on the same day. Teachers assign work as if they rule their own fiefdom, without regard to simultaneous assignments in other subjects. Although Kohn categorizes this as a minor point, students continue to suffer. Bennett proposes that teachers coordinate their assignments, using a board in the staff lounge. Etta Kralovec, co-author of “The End of Homework,” tells me it is a larger problem that goes beyond homework, indicative of “the teach-



ers' lack of time to work together to structure aligned, integrated learning experiences and curriculum."

What is 'Partnering With Parents?'

The real question is, "Why is homework assigned in the first place?" Sara Bennett, co-author of "The Case Against Homework," contends, "If parents didn't help, that would be the end of homework in elementary school," noting that continued assistance leads to dependency and children lose ownership of their work. Bennett and Kralovec say that self-disci-

pline and personal responsibility are learned not by the student, but by the systematically supervising parent.

Kralovec also points to programs like Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork programs and the Homelink Initiative, as signs of a growing trend to train parents to help with assignments. Kralovec tells me that homework handed in incorrectly with parental input requires the teacher to unteach and reteach, wasting more precious class time.

Personally, I resented having to master a textbook chapter and re-teach it or learn unfamiliar math for-

mulas late at night, when I had been relying on my children's teachers to cover the material with them.

Bringing homework under control

Even though research indicates little or no benefit from homework, parents continue to believe that it will lead to academic success, and they are resigned to it, according to Kralovec and co-author John Buell.

Unfortunately, Rome wasn't conquered in a day, and it is hard to change any ingrained way of thinking. Parents and teachers continue

to expect homework to be assigned, despite its intrusion into family life. As a result, Kralovec and Buell say that parents are "caught in a state of cognitive dissonance, asking for something that is fundamentally at odds with their own interests."

Experts suggest various ways to ease the homework burden until the issue is fully addressed. Kohn invites teachers to teach a single unit without homework and analyze the comparative results. In a recent conversation, he challenged teachers to offer more than just a "Goldilocks survey" to determine an appropriate homework amount, but instead to ask parents for in-depth feedback about assignments' necessity. Kohn advocates for student participation in homework creation, including how much to give, when it should be due and when to stop, before achieving mastery of the material.

Kohn believes teachers should avoid randomly assigning work right out of a book, telling teachers, "if you didn't design it, you shouldn't assign it." He further recommends teachers learn each student's needs, avoiding a "one size fits all" assignment.

Finally, Kohn is a strong proponent of meaningful, interdisciplinary learning experienced through in-school projects such as "design your own room," which teaches budgeting, area, perimeter, and applied math.

Vicki Abeles, director of the film "Race to Nowhere," encourages educators to re-evaluate the way in which we use the school day. She suggests schools schedule a study hall period daily or set aside one school day per week for supervised study. In this manner, students will have the time to study and receive guidance from trained professionals. She would like schools to designate one person to provide support to students and families by monitoring adherence to homework policies.

Kralovec and Buell stress the need to recognize homework as a public issue — not a private one. Abeles tells me, "It will take some courageous school leaders to eliminate unhealthy homework practices. We have the responsibility to create change, and we need a new and healthy definition of success."

Risa C. Doherty is an attorney, freelance writer, and mother of two. She is a member of the American Society of Journalists and Authors. Read more at www.risadoherty.com.



MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SERADOVA

Foul play in the Park

Recently, my husband and I took our daughter Olivia to Central Park. It wasn't our first time, but I was particularly excited because it was a warm day, and we were headed to the playground for the first time. I remember being a bit nervous upon walking inside the gated playground. As much as I wanted her to run around and explore, I wanted to protect her and make sure she didn't hurt herself. But more importantly, it was one of our "firsts," so I was having an exciting mommy moment.

I glanced around the playground and tried to find a safe zone. The slide? Maybe the jungle gym? I decided on my own childhood favorite, the swings. We headed over to what seemed like an empty swing, but were stopped by a 5 year old who proclaimed that it was HIS swing. It was a baby swing. You know, the ones that have a harness and are for younger children. (He clearly didn't fit inside of the swing.)

I said, "OK," as I looked around for the boy's mother, hoping she would see the teachable moment that had presented itself and show him how to share. She was on the phone and made no sign of coming over to her son, so we headed over to the jungle gym.

There were a bunch of kids there, and I figured it would be fun to "socialize" Olivia. (Yes, just like we did with our dog when she was a puppy.) Her smile was so big as she looked at the other kids and tried to play with them. This playground stuff was fun.

I brought her to the steering wheels of the pretend "boat" on the jungle gym since no one was there. She tried turning the wheel and turned to me and laughed as we steered it together. Then, out of nowhere, a little boy (well, he was a "big kid" at about 6 years old) pushed my daughter out of the way and made it known that this was HIS ship,

and he was playing there first. I was appalled. I looked around for a sign of his parent but got nothing.

My next and final attempt at enjoying our park day was on the slides. A few little girls were going down the slides, so Olivia and I waited until it was her turn. Again, the excitement in her eyes was priceless. I helped her down the slide, she giggled, and just as I was about to pick her up, another little girl slammed into her and pushed her off the slide with her feet.

I'll pause for reaction.

I grabbed Olivia and told the little girl that it was not OK to kick other children.

"She was in my way!" she responded. Again, no mom or dad in sight.

What hurt me most about that day wasn't the rudeness of the kids but the fact that what happened is just a small example of what's happen-

ing with the majority of kids today. When I tell friends this story their reaction is, "Oh, yeah, we get that a lot." With all due respect to my friends, when did this behavior become acceptable? When did parents start becoming such pushovers? Trying to teach your own kid manners and how to interact politely with other people is extremely difficult when other children are not being taught the same. Or worse, their parents are too "busy" to even care.

Angelica Sereda is a working mother and freelance writer. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and 15-month-old daughter, Olivia.



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Value of Catholic schools

Why parents choose this effective alternative

BY CANDI SPARKS

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

Years ago, hundreds of thousands of immigrants came to the New World to have a fresh start. They put in long hours at low-level jobs, striving for greater opportunity and a better life for their children. It was a financial sacrifice for these immigrants to send their children to Catholic schools, rather than through the public school system, but to them, it was well worth it.

The public schools in their working-class neighborhoods were largely overcrowded and not necessarily providing top-notch education. In order to be more assured that their children would be taught their values — including discipline, which was a rigorous part of their children's life at home — they decided to send their children through a parochial school system, even if it meant struggling to find the extra money to pay for it.

In the early days of the immigration wave, it was primarily Irish and Italian immigrants that sent their children to Catholic parochial schools. As the years went by and new immigrants came from more



countries and continents, the demographic shifted and one didn't necessarily have to be Catholic to choose this educational option. As a result, many Catholic schools throughout the city have continued as an integral part of our citywide school landscape.

Currently, Catholic schools serve more than 160 nationalities. With each wave of immigration — Hispanic, Asian, Slavic and many others — Catholic schools offer diversity. These schools are not just racially diverse; there is also religious diversity in the Catholic school system. In fact, non-Catholics comprise about one quarter of the student body.

"Catholic schools are not just meant for the faithful. We are here to grow faith by building community and reaching out to those in need," says Tom O'Brien, of the Brooklyn Diocese, which is involved in raising scholarship funds to help families offset tuition. "But not every Catholic school family is in great economic need. Our demographic is changing. We have seen an influx of middle income families who choose Catholic school because of the class size, excellence in education, and for a safer environment than what most par-

ents think the neighborhood public school would offer."

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

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

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

There is a 99 percent graduation rate for Catholic high schools, followed by a 97 percent college graduation rate for those who graduated Catholic high school. Compared to the 41 percent public high school graduation rate, Catholic school students have a better success rate. They are guided up the ladder of growth and achievement, making a real difference for present and future generations. Overall, Catholic school seems to outperform public school and is a viable, less-expensive sys-

tem of education in the private sector.

In fact, the only two private schools in New York State that were designated by the U.S. Department of Education as Blue Ribbon — a program that honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels, or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap — in 2011 were both Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York. The honorees were St. Ignatius Loyola School on E. 84th Street in Manhattan and St. Ignatius on Mott Street in Manhattan. This year's honorees show the excellence in education and the diverse population served by Catholic schools. The incentives for getting a Catholic school education are different than what they used to be, and this is changing the demographics of Catholic school students.

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

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

"My daughter goes to a school that gives her [education] in both languages," says Patty. "Sure, they speak the same languages in the public school around the corner, but it is unofficial. The public school does not have the same structure." Amber's Catholic school is also closely related to other parish activities and offers bilingual masses, events and service projects for the community. This makes the Catholic school a great way for Patty and Amber to meet people of similar backgrounds and build a community. Parochial schools celebrate the tradition of faith, family and community.

Unfortunately, keeping these schools open has become a challenge. The Catholic school sector is no different than any other, and closings have been publicized. In response, Catholic schools are researching and developing new educational business models. Some Catholic schools have closed their

doors, only to reopen as academies. For example, in South Ozone Park, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School and St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr School closed their doors, only to be succeeded by the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Because the school involves more than one parish, the school is called an academy to differentiate it from a single-parish school. Since 2005, the Brooklyn Diocese has opened many Catholic academies in Brooklyn and Queens.

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

Even though two schools in the Archdiocese of New York have won the 2011 Blue Ribbon Award, the organization is still committed to improving. The Archdiocese has initiated the "Pathways to Excellence" program, aimed at professional development for principals, teachers and staff at schools that already do outstanding work. Because of the diverse population, there is still more than can be done to close the achievement gap. The program is aimed at raising standardized test scores and providing teachers with new classroom tools, such as the digital teaching program for fourth and fifth grade math, "Time to Know," which provides online learning, data collection and feedback for the school.

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

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



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53 chances to keep your New Year's resolutions

BY KIKI BOCHI

We all have the best of intentions on New Year's Day. We're going to exercise more, maybe lose some weight. We plan to work more veggies and wholesome foods into our family's diet. We promise to finally get that

check-up, eye exam, dental cleaning, pap smear, mammogram, or any other health screenings we've been putting off. Those of us who are still struggling with tobacco addiction vow this will be the year we finally quit smoking.

A small percentage of us will succeed. But research shows that

most people will give up long before the year is over. In fact, many of us won't make it through the first week, much less the first month.

That's where the Healthy Monday campaign comes in.

A nonprofit initiative in association with Johns Hopkins, Columbia, and Syracuse universities, the campaign aims to gently remind you of your goals and encourage you to recommit each week.

"We think of Monday as the January of the week," says Cherry Dumaul, the spokesperson for the organization. "That's the beauty of Monday. It's very forgiving. We get 52 Mondays a year — and actually, this year we have 53 Mondays. It's a chance to start fresh every week."

If you deviate from your goal, you don't have to throw in the towel. The campaign aims to get you back on track with weekly reminders such as this one: "Incorporating new habits into your daily life takes work, so aim for progress, not perfection! Start with small changes that you can easily fit into your daily routine, and go a little further each week. Swapping a breakfast Danish for whole-grain cereal, having water instead of soft drinks with meals, picking veggies as a side dish, or trying fruit for dessert are all doable actions that will lead to long-term results."

Individuals can sign up for the tips via e-mail, or get support from the Healthy Monday communities on Facebook (www.facebook.com/HealthyMonday) and Twitter (@healthymonday).

"We hope people take advantage of the program by checking in each week, sharing their progress, and inviting their friends, family, and co-workers to join in," Dumaul says. "It's a great way to reach those goals you set for yourself."

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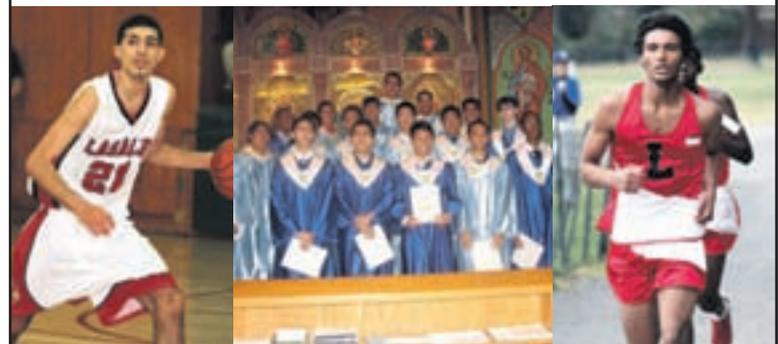
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New year, new you

Every year, we make those familiar inner promises to ourselves — we vow to eat healthier, to make more time for our families, and to cut back on all that diet soda or coffee. But, it really is no secret that every woman has her slip-ups when trying to cling to her resolution. I know I've snuck bites of my sons' chicken nuggets and fries, and sat in Starbucks with a book and a gigantic iced coffee after vowing to cut out some carbs and drink more water. I get it — trust me. It feels inevitable to break those promises. But, if you don't take care of yourself to the fullest and respect your own wishes, you can't possibly be your happiest "you" in 2013.

This is your year, DivaMoms — and this year is going to bring great things. One of these great things you're going to try is a spin class at Flywheel sports; I can feel it. You're going to take an amazing class with instructor Danielle, and you're going to love it. Flywheel's third-floor studio at East 67th Street and Third Avenue on the Upper East Side is humming. This amazing facility features everything that sets Flywheel apart: stadium-style seating, personal performance-tracking technology, and all the extras we don't consider extra — complimentary towels and shoes with every ride! You will not regret making spin class a central part of your new-and-improved 2013 schedule — or, as I like to call it, your "13 Routine."

Every FabUlyss mommy needs to treat herself once in a while to some downtime that includes a lot of pampering. This is why you are going to get an incredibly relaxing, renewing, and rejuvenating facial at Vicki Morav on Madison Avenue, and then get your much-needed haircut at the Roy Teluck salon on East 57th Street with the (in my world) wonderfully famous Olivier. Plus, you will allow yourself to indulge in some true celebrity gossip magazines while you get your locks washed, cut, and colored. Believe me — you need and deserve it!

So, about that family time you

crave: what kid doesn't love to ice skate? Better yet, what mom doesn't? Come on, ladies; we all know you were the star skater in that ice skating class you took when you were 10, just like Jill Zarin! So, grab the kids (and the husband, if he'll oblige), bundle up, and hit the rinks at Bryant Park or the famous Rockefeller Center! We live in New York City, so let's not forget to take advantage of all that we have at our fingertips to make beautiful, lasting memories.

Here's the one you're waiting for: date night! Try visiting one of the DeLysscious Felice restaurants (Felice 64, Felice 83, or Felice 15 Gold Street). Hire your favorite babysitter, kick back, and enjoy some wine, good food, and music.

Whatever you do this year, think of yourself. You are a mother, and that automatically qualifies you for Divahood. And, of course, remember the wise, wise words of everyone's best girlfriend, Madonna:

"No matter who you are, no matter what you did, no matter where you've come from, you can always change, become a better version of yourself." Happy New Year!

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Paws for health

How to tell if your favorite four-legged friend is sick

BY MARY HELEN BERG

If your four-legged friend is looking at you with big, sad eyes, he may be asking for help. Animals tend to be stoic and don't always whine or act out when they don't feel well. As a pet owner, you need to know your animal's routine and be alert when it changes from the norm.

Here are a few symptoms that may indicate health problems and warrant a trip to your veterinarian.

Weight loss

Just like humans, animals will drop pounds if they exercise more, or if they cut down on snacks and extra helpings of people food. Unexpected weight loss, however, may indicate a serious health problem. If your pet has not been on a diet but is losing weight, visit your vet to rule out cancer or another grave illness.

Low energy

All pets have a quiet time of the day and as pets age, they tend to sleep more. Sometimes, however, things can get a little too quiet. If your dog or cat seems otherwise healthy, but is sleeping more than usual or doesn't greet you

at the door with his usual enthusiasm, pay attention. It's possible that your pet's subdued behavior is the result of an internal infection that you can't see.

No appetite

Even animals can tire of the same, old routine and demand a change of menu. One day, your cat may turn up her nose and decide that her favorite food is suddenly the equivalent of stale cafeteria fare.

Some animals, however, may abruptly stop eating if they are ill, or emotionally upset. For example, if you are traveling and board your pet at a kennel or leave him home with a caretaker, he may stop eating, because he is confused, or because he misses you. If your pet goes on a hunger strike, switch his food to tempt them with other tastes.

Animals may also stop eating due to problems with their teeth or gums. Check inside your pet's mouth for bleeding gums, tartar on the teeth, and broken or loose teeth. If he seems otherwise healthy, see your vet. If your pet lacks appetite and has diarrhea, your pet may have giardia, a parasite found in contaminated food or water. Severe cases of giardia can be fatal.

Unquenchable thirst

After a long game of fetch or when the thermometer rises, your pet may drain the water bowl. However, if you fill the water bowl many times each day, be suspicious. Drinking too much water may be a sign of kidney disease, diabetes, or other health problems. Be aware that some medications may increase thirst, so if your pet is medicated, ask your vet if excessive thirst is a side effect.

Convulsions

This is one of the most frightening signs that your pet is sick. One





As a pet owner, you need to know your animal's routine and be alert when it changes from the norm.

minute your dog seems perfectly normal, and the next, he begins to quiver and shake, and falls to the floor, unable to control his body.

This fit, or convulsion, may cause your pet to lose bladder control and may leave him exhausted or ravenous, but otherwise unharmed. Seizures such as this may be a one-time occurrence or may be a sign of epilepsy, a brain tumor, or other problem. Seizures should be reported to your vet and monitored closely.

Growths

Just as in humans, an unexpected lump on the body can be cause for alarm. Animals are particularly prone to growths as they age. Lumps can appear anywhere on an animal's body, and they may be perfectly harmless or they may be a sign of cancer. Your vet should examine all lumps.

Itchy ears

Ear infections are a common health problem for many dogs, especially those with floppy ears that can trap moisture. Those floppy ears can also hide the goopy discharge and sour smell that indicate an infection.

If your animal tries to rub its ears on the carpet or whines when you touch its ear, take a closer look. If you gently lift the ear and look inside, you may see the dark residue that indicates an ear infection.

Hot spots

A hot spot is an area of inflammation on your pet's skin that is so irritating that he may lick his skin until it bleeds. Hot spots are usually caused by an infection or allergic reaction and can appear anywhere on the animal's body. These wounds need to be treated, since they can become sites of infection. It may be worth investing in an Elizabethan collar (the

plastic cone) to keep your dog from licking the hot spot while it heals.

Coughing

If your dog has a persistent cough that sometimes sounds like he is choking, he may have contracted kennel cough. Kennel cough, often caused by a bacterium called bordetella, is contagious among dogs. The illness may resolve by itself within a few weeks but can require antibiotic treatment. The most serious cases of kennel cough can result in pneumonia.

Let's talk insurance

When my dog was a puppy, I needed to visit the vet every other week. He had ear infections, eye infections, skin allergies, giardia, kennel cough — you name it. When my vet advised me to get pet insurance, I thought she was kidding; I didn't even know you could get health insurance for animals.

But my puppy's medical bills were costing me a fortune, so I looked into a couple policies. Pet insurance, like health insurance for humans, does not cover everything, but may be worth it, depending on your pet's problems. My dog's insurance covers vaccinations, well care exams, X-rays, and many other things, but does not cover pre-existing conditions. So, for example, because my dog had ear infections before he had health coverage, I can't be reimbursed for any treatment of ear infections.

The bottom line is that any physical or personality change in your pet may be a sign of illness. Consult your vet if you suspect your pet is not himself. Professional help may be the only way to get your pet standing firmly on all four legs.

Mary Helen Berg is a freelance writer and the owner of Boomer, an epileptic labradoodle.



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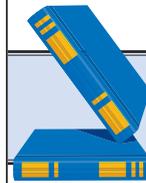
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Anne Frank's legacy

Children can learn about her history, courage, and hope, right in Manhattan

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

There's a place in Manhattan where kids and teens can learn a thing or two about tolerance, courage, hope, and strength of spirit in the face of adversity — and even a bit of history.

It's the Anne Frank Center at Park Place and Church Street, where young visitors can find out who this special girl was and what the world was like during WWII, when six million Jews were wiped out by a plague called the Holocaust — driven by hate and racism.

Through various programs, interactive workshops, and exhibits, the center offers visitors a memorable, multi-dimensional experience.

"A lot of our visitors are from foreign countries and different cultures. Anne is very hard not to like and identify with. Her words are true and stay with the reader forever," says Yvonne Simons, executive director. "Her diary has been translated into 68-plus languages, emphasizing its global relevance."

These days, with so much happening in our country and the world, Frank's story is especially meaningful to young people who seem to

relate very strongly and personally to her ordeal.

Although it has been in the U.S. for 35 years, the center only recently opened its beautiful new gallery, which put it on the map in the city with educational and public programming.

According to Simons and Robert Levin, director of education, for many young people who visit the center and discuss Anne Frank at school, Anne's story is their first exposure to the Holocaust. The center carefully differentiates how it presents this history, depending on visitors' ages.

For younger children, Frank's bravery in hiding, how she dealt with uncertainty and isolation, why she loved to write, and what she taught us about goodness and hope, is emphasized.

At the middle grades, the center provides more historical background about the Holocaust, but continues to place Frank's story at the center, including her specific accounts of conditions in hiding and in the war-torn outside world, what she gradually came to know about the concentration camps, her insights about good and evil, and her

growing identity as an independent, young thinker.

High school-age students are fascinated to combine what they have learned about the Nazi period with broader issues of discrimination, intolerance, hatred, and the prospects for peaceful resolution of conflict.

Anne Frank

Tolerance, courage, hope, strength of spirit. These powerful words still ring true today, as they did when Frank wrote them in her diary back in the early 1940s, when she and her sister Margot, and their parents spent two arduous years in Amsterdam hiding from Nazi soldiers in the Secret Annex behind a warehouse. The family fled Germany for the Netherlands after anti-Jewish laws went into effect. Tragically, in 1944 they were put to death in concentration camps after they were betrayed and caught. Otto, the father, survived. Eventually, he made his daughter's wish come true by having her diary published.

Between 1942 and 1944, the Franks and another family learned how to get by in cramped quarters, eating meager meals while they heard sounds of destruction and violence everywhere. How does a young girl make sense of this chaos? On July 5, 1942 Frank received a diary for her 13th birthday. It was her salvation.

According to Levin and Simons, Anne's authenticity, bravery at expressing character dilemmas we all face, especially during adolescence, resonate with children and teens. Anne, they say, had a talent for language that brings the events of the Holocaust to the present. She expresses herself as a typical, ordinary teen caught up in a horrific cultural cataclysm.

Today's kids

So, what do parents tell their children when violence shatters the calm of everyday life, and when schools become vulnerable to unexpected attacks by shooters? When you hear stories of students suddenly faced with the threat of death? How do you talk to your kids about good vs. evil?

The story of Anne's diary

The story behind Anne Frank's diary rising from reject pile to best seller — with more than 30 million copies sold worldwide — is a fascinating one, filled with serendipitous events.

More than 60 years after Frank's father published, "The Diary of Anne Frank," in Amsterdam in the summer of 1947, it has become the world's best-known memoir of the Holocaust.

"The founder of the Anne Frank House, Otto Frank, the only person of the group in hiding at Prinsengracht 263 which survived the Holocaust, lived in Manhattan as a young man. His friend, Nathan Strauss, invited him to work in his family's department store company,

Macy's," says Simons.

The ties between Otto Frank and New York were strengthened in 1959 when he founded the American Friends of the Anne Frank House, based in Manhattan. He lived in Switzerland at the time. This organization was incorporated in 1977 as the Anne Frank Center U.S.A. and has been a 501(c) three nonprofit since that time.

"Anne delivered a strong, core message: justice comes from personal commitment. Strong communities are built from strong individuals. Anne Frank encourages individual consciousness and action," says Levin.

Simons feels that Frank's writing was wise beyond her years,

and her words and thinking can be applied to questions all of us have, making the application of her words ageless.

"One message rings clearly in 'The Diary of a Young Girl' — individual character and consciousness are keys to halting intolerance and hatred," she says.

Additional programs at the center will focus on women journalists covering war and recovery from war correspondents, scholars, and diplomats engaged in peacemaking initiatives, and young people making a difference in the world.

"I still believe, in spite of everything that people are truly good at heart," Frank wrote.

All programs are open to the public, with a modest admission charge that includes touring the museum.



Photo by Yvonne Simons

Students use information on life in the attic on iPads in a simulation of Anne's bedroom.

Like Anne, kids and teens live in a confusing world that is, at times, scary and violent. Eventually, they come to understand that bravery is not relegated only to the battlefield, but that ordinary, daily living takes bravery, adds Simon, especially in big cities like New York, and even in unexpected places like small, peaceful towns way out in Newtown, Conn.

For teens and children who are old enough to understand the tragedy that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School — what better example of bravery by ordinary people than this horrific event? — there's sad but valuable lessons in heroism beyond the battlefield: beloved teachers and a principal were killed as they tried to defend innocent students, and the courage of parents who must cope with devastating loss as they go about their daily lives.

Perhaps our children can learn from Frank that there are times when we all need to find that strength of spirit — until things get better. And, that hope and faith are valuable during challenging times.

There are many lessons to be learned from Frank's horrific experience and her coping abilities: she once said she was able to shake off all her cares when she wrote in her diary — and that's how she dealt with her reality.

Levin and Mike Clary, marketing manager at the Center, both agree that young people are ready and

eager to stand up for justice and fairness once they have an opportunity to get beyond headlines and worrisome stories, know that their own insights matter, and find avenues to pursue action.

They may discover this in school, church, in community or educational groups, or at home — there are many outlets.

And there are excellent organizations teaching tolerance and encouraging action. Levin explains that the center's approach is to use the beautifully-recorded experiences and ideals of a profound young writer who began with a simple, day-to-day diary, but whose work became an international example of confronting difficult issues and seeking solutions.

What are the results of people taking action against injustice and intolerance?

"It's amazing to see how a conversation with a Holocaust survivor about having endured personal intolerance during WWII resonates with students today in regard to issues that they can identify with," says Simons. "We talk to students about the importance of each individual making a difference — 'change' begins with you — the individual. Do not be a bystander and have your voice not be counted."

She believes that action works, and "at the very least it begins dialogue, moves questions and issues into the public eye and awareness, and actions do move the needle."

Simons and Levin are both convinced that because Anne is straightforward and bares her soul, young readers take the events destroying her world, very personally.

According to Levin and Clary, strong leaders, teachers, parents and role models counteract lies and misinformation across the Internet, for example. Anne Frank remains one of those role models. Programmed hatred, propaganda and misinformation can be best combatted and shown for what they are by trusted, unbiased sources, they state.

"Anne was after all one voice; her words impact people all over the world," says Simons. "The fact is that her voice is that of a teenager asking adolescent questions about life that resonate with children her age — 13 through 15-year-olds."

"At the same time, younger and older audiences connect to Anne," adds Levin.

'Conversations'

On a recent Saturday the most active audience participant at a center event called "Conversations with Anne," was an 8-year-old boy, brought by his mother for his first orientation to Anne Frank.

He was totally focused on the 40-minute production and asked the most and the best questions during the talk-back," says Simon.

"Conversations with Anne" is the Center's signature, one-actor show

that draws directly from Frank's diary. It speaks directly and personally to all audience ages. The theme changes monthly; in December it was "A World of Gifts," as Frank observed the holidays in captivity, but also thought deeply about the meaning of gifts and gift-giving.

On Saturday, Jan. 12, there's a new two-person "Conversations" show, honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and called "Letters from Anne and Martin." The performance is based on text from Frank's diary and Dr. King's letters from a Birmingham jail, followed by a discussion led by educators who are passionate about this theme. As with all shows in this series, "Conversations" travels off-site; "Letters from Anne and Martin" has already been booked by a local college in February.

School programs

The Center offers a vibrant series of Artist-in-Residence and Writer-in-Residence programs to schools and community groups throughout the year. In "The Art of Self Discovery," students in the upper elementary and middle grades study appropriate sections of her diary, with a special focus on how she matured and developed her sense of self.

Each participating school or organization then hosts one of its visual or performing artists, or writers, for a five-to-10-week residency to guide students toward such expressive projects as portrait-making, murals, sculpture, photography, oral history, poetry, or playwriting. Students typically present their projects at celebratory community events in their neighborhoods, and the most exemplary projects are honored at the center.

Preparations are also underway for a special Art of Self Discovery outreach to students in the city's hardest-hit areas of Hurricane Sandy's path, and will be able to offer selected schools this program at no cost in March, April, and May 2013.

The Anne Frank Center, USA [44 Park Pl. and Church Street in Manhattan, (212) 431-7993 X 301].

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based writer and journalist who has interviewed and profiled many interesting people, including several celebs. She has been covering arts and entertainment in New York City, but also enjoys sharing her insightful articles with NY Parenting readers. As a mom, she has lots of parenting experience under her belt, having raised a bright and independent teenage son (in college), and his older brother, who is a super-talented actor and comedian.



DEAR
DR. KARYN
DR. KARYN GORDON

Kids & friendship

Dear Dr. Karyn,

My 11 year old seems to make friends easily, but my 5 year old has no friends at all, which concerns me. What should I do to help my daughter, and when should parents worry about this?

Dear Parent,

Developing friendship skills are important for kids of all ages to learn! That being said, some kids find it easier to make friends than others. So focus on setting up play

dates with other children and parents so that your kids are getting “practice” socializing, sharing toys, and spending time with others. If you notice your kids are not being good friends (for instance, not sharing their toys, interrupting, constantly talking about themselves), gently talk with them about this after the play date.

Also, try to get them plugged into activities in which they will meet other kids who share their interests. For example, if your child is highly artistic, she may not easily connect with kids who are heavily into sports. Finally, remember to invest in your own friendships, because modeling healthy friendships is the best way to teach these skills to our kids! Don't shy away from talking about the benefits of your friendships and what it takes to develop them — your kids will be listening!

When should you worry? Only after you've tried the suggestions above and the many tips from Dr. Michele's book, “Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me: The Top 25 Friendship Problems and How to Solve Them.” Developing friendship skills is a process, so remember to be patient as your child learns them.

•••

Dear Dr. Karyn,

I really need your help, since I do not like who my teens are hanging out with. I'm sure deep down they are good kids, but to me they are rude, inconsiderate, and constantly put each other down. I've tried to raise this with my son, but he rolls his eyes and tunes me out. Any suggestions for how to get through to him?

Dear Parent,

Developing healthy friendships is one of the most important (and diffi-

cult) tasks for a young person, so here are three tips to understand about friendships and adolescence.

Understand that kids choose their friends

It's important to understand that kids choose their friends! Often, parents focus on the poor qualities of their kids' friends instead of understanding that our kids have chosen that person for a reason! The saying “Friends are a mirror of ourselves” is important to remember.

At an unconscious level, we are drawn to people who have the same self-esteem and level of confidence as we do (so if I have low self-esteem, I'm often going to be drawn to others with low or false self-esteem). So instead of focusing on the “bad” friends as the problem, focus on developing your child's confidence! When kids and teens feel good about themselves, they are drawn to friends (and dating partners) who will treat them well!

Discuss, don't dictate

When you don't like your teen's friends, try to discuss this with him. Do NOT dictate or forbid him to hang out with them. (Often, this creates a “Romeo and Juliet” situation where teens do it behind their parents' backs.) Find out why your teen is drawn to certain people. What are the qualities about them that he likes and admires? You can voice your concerns, but be very careful in how you word it. (Teens are extremely protective of their friends, as they see them as an extension of themselves.)

Make your home teen-friendly

Get to know your teen's friends! Sometimes parents have placed judgments on their teen's friends without really getting to know them. And the best way to get to know these friends (and even your kids) is to make your home “teen friendly.” If possible, create a space that is just for them. Make yourself available, but be careful to give them plenty of space, and be friendly to their friends without asking hundreds of questions.





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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

They don't call 40 fabulous for nothing

I am on the edge of hitting the biggest milestone of my life, chronologically speaking. As I write this, I'm still in my 30s, and I wonder if I'll ever get used to being, let alone saying, that I'm not a 30-something anymore. Yet, whether I like it or not, on Jan. 25 at exactly 10:26 am, I will turn 40.

There, I said it.

Forty holds so many connotations. I mean, the over-the-hill cards at Hallmark start at 40, don't they? It's strange, to say the least, especially because I feel like I'm about 28 on most days and probably about 18 on really good days.

Is that what happens when you get

old? You find a stray gray hair or two while realizing that the songs you loved back in high school are suddenly appearing on the classic rock channel, yet, in your mind's eye, nothing else has changed? I know there are a lot of us out there who are contemplating life while riding out the last bits of our 30s. Hello to all of you 1973ers. Great year, wasn't it?

I always hated it when women lied about their ages, because it seemed that they were denying who they were and what they went through. If we all live long enough, we'll each gather enough stories, teaching moments, and straight-up fantastic memories that have each in their own way helped usher us along

to where we now are. If I said I was 35, I'd not only start twitching under the sheer fabrication of it all, but I'd be denying what these past five years have brought to my life, which is a whole lot. (Also, my friends would say, "Hey, weren't you 35 five years ago?")

I used to have a colleague who turned 37 each year on her birthday. We'd gather in the kitchen area, sing her "Happy Birthday," ask how old she was, and she'd say 37 with a straight face. She turned 37 four times since I knew her. It wasn't just weird, but flat-out crazy — and you know what? No one in the office called her out on it, either. We'd simply grab a slice of cake and trot away down the hall, whispering, "Wasn't she 37 last year ... and the year before that?"

When I was in my 20s, one of my relatives was turning 40 and she confided in me that she had never felt better in her life. In fact, she felt the most confident and joyful approaching her fourth decade. It was inspiring, but seemed so far away for me, personally, that it didn't mean much to me at the time. Now, it seems like that was yesterday.

When I think of how I've changed in the last 20 years, I know that every challenge and setback fully prepared me to move on to the next step, both personally and professionally. I "wouldn't trade nothing for my journey now," as my hero, author Maya Angelou, says.

I am so much more willing to take chances, embark on new endeavors, and not hesitate to say "goodbye" to things (and even people) who bring stress to my life. That is something I have only recently learned. It's a terrible affliction — the need to please — not to mention an overwhelmingly female condition. As a mother, I wish I had learned much of what I know now when my kids were babies, but it seems that as they have grown, I have developed along with them. And I hope to continue to flourish in new ways each decade.

Forty is gonna be great, I can feel it. Bring it on.

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 @DanniSull-Writer, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.



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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

When it's more than morning sickness

When it was announced that Kate Middleton was pregnant and hospitalized with morning sickness, the media was quick to jump on the story portraying a diva attitude. Many stated that nearly every pregnant woman experiences morning sickness at some point in her pregnancy. Then, it was determined that the Duchess of Cambridge was suffering from hyperemesis gravidarum, a very serious condition that only certain pregnant women experience.

"I almost thought I was dying," says 34-year-old Manhattan mom, Dana Goldberg, who also suffered from the condition. The mom of 2-year-old Bryson says that merely hearing about Middleton's story made her feel queasy, because it brought her right back to the days of her pregnancy when she couldn't keep even a tiny sip of water down. "I threw up 12 to 15 times a day ... every day. I felt completely depleted."

Most pregnant women get nau-

seous at some point in the first trimester, but hyperemesis gravidarum is an entirely different situation. So how do you know when it's just normal pregnancy nausea or a serious condition?

Dr. Joanne Stone, professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences at Mt. Sinai Medical Center, and director of the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine and Perinatal Ultrasound, points out that "with hyperemesis, the degree of nausea and vomiting is severe. Patients feel weak, often have significant weight loss, and when seen by their healthcare provider, they are dehydrated. They are often tested for the presence of ketones, which is a sign of severe dehydration and starvation."

Dr. Stone — who along with Dr. Keith Eddleman, wrote, "My Pregnancy and Baby, The Pregnancy Bible and Your Second Pregnancy" — says it is vital to seek help if you think you might have it.

"If you are constantly vomiting, unable to keep food down, feel de-

hydrated and are losing weight, see your doctor and go to the emergency room."

"Next time, I would ask — no, demand — help sooner and not just chalk it up to normal pregnancy symptoms," says Goldberg. "I think, as women, we are so reluctant to speak up for ourselves. It took me until I was physically unable to leave my bed to convince my doctor that something was very wrong."

There is no need to suffer silently. Now, there are several treatments available.

"Some treatment options involve non-pharmacologic therapy, such as acupressure or P6 wrist bands. Lifestyle changes, such as trying to eat small, frequent meals, bland foods, and avoiding spicy foods, may be helpful. Ginger supplements of 250 milligram tablets four times a day is worth a try," says Dr. Stone. "If the nausea and vomiting is persistent, trying various combinations of medications may be successful. Pyridoxine, 25 milligrams every six to eight hours, plus Doxylamine once a day, can do the trick.

If this doesn't work, stop the Doxylamine and substitute another antihistamine. You can also try other agents, such as Metoclopramide. Many women find Ondansetron (Zofran) a real lifesaver, taking four to eight milligrams every eight hours. Some studies show steroids given by IV may work for some women."

For Goldberg, a mix of Zofran, ginger supplements, and a lot of rest, eventually helped lessen her symptoms.

Luckily, in most cases, hyperemesis gravidarum improves by the 12-week mark, although rare cases have been reported in second and third trimesters.

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 @DanniSull-Writer, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.





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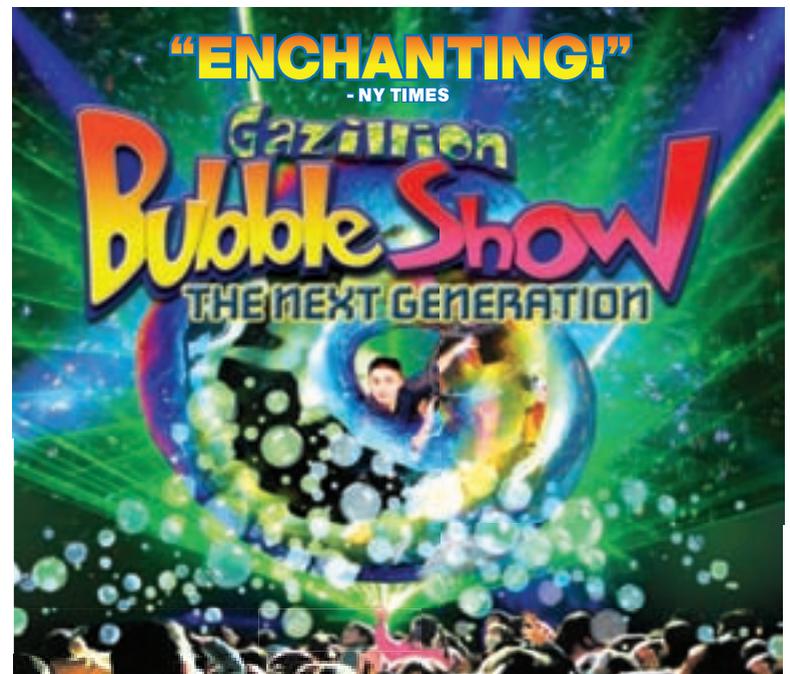
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Night fright

Tips to help
your child
catch some
ZZZZ's

BY KIKI BOCHI

There's a shuffle in the darkness that wakes you from a deep sleep. You're afraid to open your eyes. You don't want to know what lurks at the foot of your bed. And then that chilling wail comes.

"Mommmmmmm, I had a bad dream..."

Not again.

Nightmares are common among children, especially elementary ages and younger. But what should you do if your child says he is too scared to go to sleep? The National Sleep Foundation offers these suggestions:

- Listen. Try to understand your child's fears, and don't dismiss or make fun of them.

- Be comforting. It is important to reassure your child if he is afraid. Communicate the idea of safety over and over again.

- Seek simple solutions. Many families use "monster spray," air freshener or water that can be sprayed under the bed and in closets to soothe bedtime fears. Some children are comforted by having a pet nearby for nighttime company—even a fish tank may help. Whenever possible, have your child be actively involved in coming up with solutions to help him gain a sense of mastery and control.

- Security object. Help your child become attached to a secu-

rity object such as a stuffed animal or blanket. This can help your child self-soothe and feel more relaxed at bedtime and throughout the night.

- Light and love. No matter what your child seems to be afraid of, a nightlight can help. Also, try leaving the bedroom door open so that your child doesn't feel isolated.

- Check in. If your child is anxious about you leaving, check on him frequently. It is better to check on him on a predictable schedule, every five or 10 minutes, so that your reassuring him is not based on him crying or calling out for you.

- Back to bed. Don't encourage your child to get out of bed. He should stay in bed to find out for himself that he really is safe. If your child gets up in the middle of the night and comes into your room, it is better to take him right back and gently tuck him back in.

- Face fears together. If your child is too frightened to stay in his room alone, it is OK to occasionally stay with him until he falls asleep. However, don't do this too frequently, as he may come to depend on your presence.

- Switch the focus. Some children get reinforced for being scared at night by getting lots of attention for being afraid. If this is the case, switch the scenario. Tell him how proud you are of him for being brave. Set up a star system, so he can earn stars for sleeping on his own. After earning a certain number of stars, he can turn them in for a treat, such as watching a favorite video, going to the park, or baking chocolate-chip cookies.

Kiki Bochi, an award-winning journalist, reads hundreds of health reports monthly to bring readers the best advice and latest developments in family health and child development.





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Road to success

New book on parenting gives tips for raising emotionally healthy kids

BY ALLISON PLITT

A new book from psychologist, mother of three grown sons, and author Madeline Levine emphasizes ways to parent children so they can become independent adolescents with a strong sense of identity and values.

In “Teach Your Children Well,” Levine’s first book to follow her 2006 New York Times bestseller “The Price of Privilege,” she writes about her belief that schools spend too much time praising students’ SAT scores and grades. She admonishes schools that she says have become so competitive that they only acknowledge and commend the top academic students, while ignoring students with no less estimable talents in art, music, or the savvy ability to work with others. Levine says there are other factors to consider when looking down the road to a child’s success later in life.

“A major study conducted by IBM found that the single most sought after trait in CEOs is creativity,” she writes. “There are many different ways to be ‘smart,’ not all of which lend themselves to paper and pencil evaluations. Many of the characteristics that lead to success, particularly interpersonal skills and a robust sense of self, are never assessed in school.”

Another trend that Levine says she sees among families is the increasing amount of time parents devote to raising their children, instead of developing their own interests, friendships, and professions. She argues that when parents spend endless hours watching their children’s sporting events, sit next to them every night doing their homework, and spend money on prep courses and tutors instead of on a family vacation or a weekend away with a friend or spouse, they are teaching their kids that “the moon and stars revolve around them.”

“Entitled children are the inevitable outcome of time and resources that are wildly and disproportion-



Madeline Levine, PhD, is the author of “Teach Your Children Well.”

ately assigned to the children and not the adults in the family,” adds Levine.

Young children

Levine writes in depth about the emotional development of three different age groups. In regard to the elementary school years (ages 5 to 11), parents should focus on teaching children to be more in control of their impulses, emotions, and behavior. For example, parents often find themselves admonishing their child for eating cookies before dinner or telling their child to apologize to a sibling for breaking a toy. She also advises parents to limit their child’s screen time, be it a television or computer, to no more than two hours a day.

Elementary school is also a playground for children to learn about making friends, and Levine thinks it is essential that parents help their children navigate their way through friendships.

“Researchers have found that parents who use ‘reflective messages’ with their children have kids who are more socially adept. This means that parents encourage their children to think about the impact of their actions on others as well as on themselves,” according to Levine. As an illustration, she depicts an incident when a parent says to a child,

“When you didn’t thank grandma for her present, how do you think she felt?”

Levine encourages parents to share stories with their children about their own friendships. Parents should remember that children internalize these stories to serve as templates for how they approach their own friends. Children need to be reminded of simple social graces, such as saying “hello,” smiling when they introduce themselves, making an effort not to say mean things, and not shouting when they get angry.

One of the most interesting tips Levine offers for this age group is to explore nature. Parents worry more than ever about their children playing outdoors, but violent crime has decreased by 50 percent during the last two decades, says Levine. Being outdoors takes children away from the computer and the television and gives them a learning environment for unstructured play. Children at this age love to learn from their senses — be it splashing in a puddle or falling into a pile of leaves. Nature also provides a quiet playground where children can escape the busy worlds around them and create their own private space.

Middle school

One of the most tumultuous periods in a child’s life are the middle school years (ages 11 to 14), and Levine insightfully describes the rite of passage that parents dread most — puberty. As these adolescents are experiencing hormonal and brain changes beyond their control, they attempt in other ways to exert influence over their own lives. Most typically, they have power struggles with their parents.

“There will be conflict over clothing, music, curfew, grades, friends, and almost every other aspect of their lives,” describes Levine.

In regard to puberty, Levine believes it is important for parents to maintain open and healthy communication about sex with their children. Parents should let their children know that they are available to

talk, but not to be too pushy if they get no response from their kids, she says.

"Most children will come to you for information and guidance when they're ready," she writes.

Many adolescents can become self-conscious with the inevitable weight gain that puberty brings, which can lead to eating disorders such as obesity, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia. Parents can ease this transition by acting as role models — eating three healthy meals a day and exercising regularly. Levine also suggests parents bring their kids to the grocery store to have them assist in making meals and preparing their own snacks.

In the electronic age of cellphones and laptops, a disturbing new trend among this age group and teenagers is sleep deprivation.

"The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pre-teens and teens get slightly more than nine hours of sleep a night," Levine writes. "And the percentage of teens that actually get adequate sleep? That would be 15 percent, leaving 85 percent of teens sleep-deprived."

Sleep deprivation in adolescents has been attributed to a list of problems, such as poor school performance, depression, a heightened risk of car accidents, and an increased likelihood for eating disorders and substance abuse. Besides lobbying your child's school to push back the start time of morning classes, parents can insist their kids shut off all electronics a half hour before bedtime and fill that time with a relaxing ritual such as taking a bath, listening to music, reading, or writing in a diary.

One of the most daunting tasks a child in middle school faces is navigating peer groups. When adolescents join peer groups, they gain a sense of independence from their families. Parents, nevertheless, should be aware of their children's friends and the social interactions affecting their child. When their child is being mistreated or bullied, parents should take action.

When a parent does confront her child about being bullied, Levine suggests a more personal approach.

"These situations ... that come up during the middle school years are best addressed by respecting

your child enough to bring him or her into the process of figuring out how to solve problems," Levine advises. "This does not mean you give up your authority when your child is endangered; it simply means that in order for your child to learn, as well as to be protected, from an unhealthy or distressing experience, he needs to be included in the process."

High school

After weathering the tumultuous pubescent years, parents can approach the high school years (ages 14 to 18) as their child's final step into adulthood. During this period, teenagers' thought processes become more advanced. They learn to think hypothetically and understand the consequences of their actions.

Teens also have the ability to see their parents as people with their

own strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, says Levine, they learn to self-reflect and to identify themselves as individuals with their own unique qualities. Parents can help their teen make more mature decisions by engaging them in debates, discussions and even arguments.

"One of your teen's greatest accomplishments will be not only to think like an adult, but to behave like one," she writes. Self-control at this age is a big issue and Levine says, "the longer your child abstains from using drugs, the less likely he or she will be to develop a substance abuse problem."

Levine advises parents to let their teens know they are available to talk, but warns against "unnecessary intervention." When parents

intervene unnecessarily in situations, it prevents the teen from "strengthening his coping skills," which will further his "self-control, self-esteem, and self-reliance," she says.

Stating that the average age for first sexual intercourse among teens in the U.S. is between 16 and 17, Levine says "researchers find no negative psychological factors associated with being sexually active at this age. Having intercourse before the age of 16 is associated with a host of concerns." Many younger teens are not comfortable with their bodies and their appearance until they are older and have a more kindly view of evaluating their attractiveness.

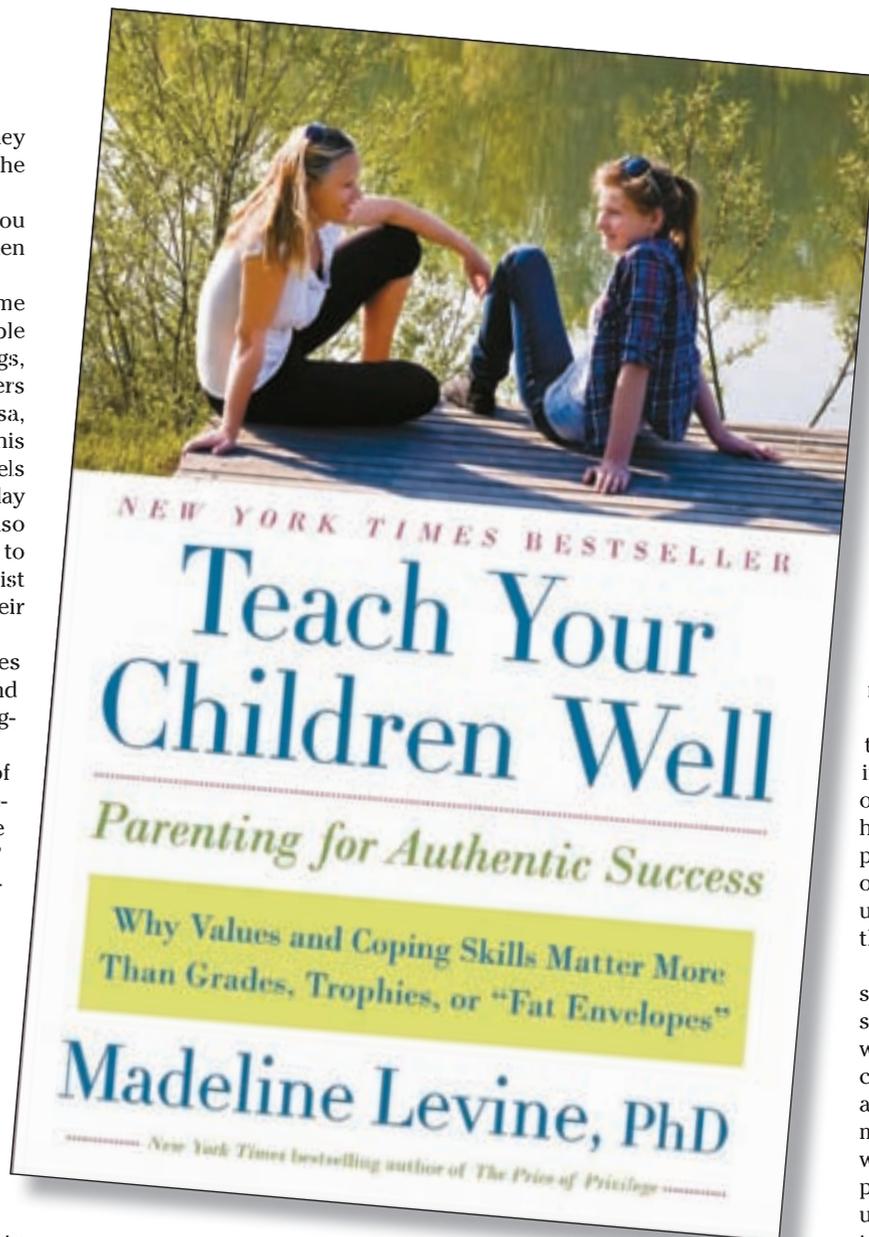
Parents should keep communication open with their children about intercourse and the consequences of their actions. Levine emphasizes how vital it is that teens learn about puberty and sexuality, since about only 60 percent of high school teens used contraception the last time they had intercourse.

Probably a parent's biggest responsibility is giving their child a strong sense of identity and self-worth. Teenagers can receive gratification from a good grade or scoring a goal for their team, but it is ultimately chores, jobs, and volunteer work that provide them with opportunities to contribute something unique and meaningful to them and to their community, explains Levine.

When parents step away from their roles as caregivers and allow their children to pursue their interests with enthusiasm, they can also teach their teens the importance of hard work and setting and achieving goals, she writes. As teenagers reach these goals, they gain self-esteem. It is also the job of the parent to teach children about set-backs and failures but to never give up their hopes and lose sight of their dreams.

As Levine so aptly puts it, "The more coping skills children have at their disposal, the more likely they are to successfully meet the challenges of growing up and finding their own definition of success."

Allison Plitt is a contributing writer for *New York Parenting Media* and lives in Queens with her 6-year-old daughter. Feel free to share your ideas with her about topics for articles or resources for families at allisonplitt@hotmail.com.



Girls & depression



How parents can protect their teenage daughters

BY KIKI BOCHI

It's not your imagination. If your pre-teen or teenage daughter seems more moody than ever, pay attention.

A new government report shows that the number of girls who experience a major depressive episode triples between the ages of 12 and 15, putting them at risk for substance abuse, academic problems, sexually promiscuous behavior, and family issues. Some 15 percent of girls in this age group may have a serious problem with depression, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The teen years, in general, are fraught with risk for girls. An average of 1.4 million adolescent girls ages 12 to 17 experience a major depressive episode each year, according to

the federal agency. In addition, teenage girls in general are almost three times more likely to experience a major depressive episode than their male counterparts — 12 percent versus 4.5 percent.

Depressive episodes can affect a young person's functioning, creating problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image. Teens may withdraw and become difficult, or may express their depression through hostile, aggressive, risk-taking, and self-destructive behavior.

"It is crucial that we provide adolescent girls the coping skills and social supports they need to avoid the onset of depression, and to offer behavioral health services that foster resilience and recovery if they experience it," said Pamela S. Hyde, an administrator with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration, when the report was released. "These efforts are a sound investment in girls' health and well-being, and in our nation's future."

The report indicates that parents may have a tendency to dismiss the possibility of their daughter having a serious issue if she is young. It found older adolescent girls were more likely to receive treatment than younger ones — about two-fifths of girls ages 15 to 17 received treatment, as opposed to only one-third of the girls ages 12 to 14.

Depression can be difficult to diagnose in teens, because adults may expect teens to act moody. Also, adolescents do not always understand or express their feelings well. They may not understand what is happening to them and may not seek help.

The National Mental Health Association recommends parents watch for these symptoms of possible depression, particularly when they last for more than two weeks:

- Withdrawal from friends and activities that she previously enjoyed
- Sadness, hopelessness, and lack of enthusiasm, energy, or motivation
- Anger, rage, overreaction to criticism, and problems with authority
- Poor self-esteem, guilt, or feelings of being unable to satisfy ideals
- Indecision, lack of concentration, or forgetfulness
- Restlessness and agitation
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Substance abuse and a decline in school performance

If you suspect your child — male or female — has a problem with depression, seek help. Start with your child's pediatrician or guidance counselor and ask for recommendations for a licensed mental health counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist. Assistance is available through many local clinics on a sliding fee, based on income. Another resource is the National Mental Health Association, which can be found online at www.nmha.org.

Kiki Bochi is an award-winning journalist who brings readers the latest insights on family health and child development.



THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

‘Pinned’ a good teen read

If your teenager is looking for a refreshing book with no teen-queen drama, she might enjoy Sharon G. Flake’s “Pinned,” about a young woman who is after a boy she really likes, whether it’s a good idea or not.

Not one of 14-year-old Autumn’s friends liked Adonis.

Peaches, her bestie, thought he was stuck-up. She said Autumn barely knew Adonis and could do better. Peaches wanted Autumn to focus on school and their dream of opening a restaurant-bakery. She didn’t want Autumn to think of Adonis at all.

Maybe Peaches was right, but Autumn had her eye on the boy. He might be in a wheelchair, but he was nice and he was smart. Adonis was the wrestling team manager and Autumn was the only girl on the team, so they were together just about every day during practice. She made sure they were together at other times, too.

But Adonis thought that girl was a pain.

If Autumn wasn’t one of the team’s best wrestlers, he’d talk to Coach about her. Adonis himself had told her to leave him alone several times,

but she just didn’t get it. As a freshman in high school, he had his future all mapped out and it did not include some grammar-challenged, rap-singing, fast-talking girl from the bad side of town. She was always talking, always asking him questions.

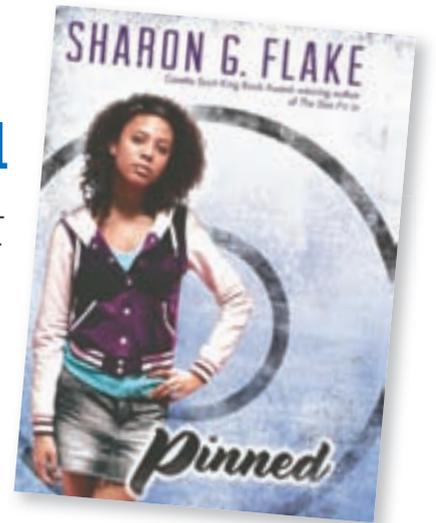
His mama thought Autumn was sweet. She said to give Autumn a chance, but Adonis just wished that wrestling season was over. He’d be glad. Maybe that girl would finally, completely be out of his hair.

But when Autumn’s grades kept her out of championship competition, Adonis regretted his wish. She started to hang out with him more, and she was always crying. He hated that because it made him feel helpless. It made him want to comfort her.

It made him want to kiss her..

Here’s a secret: I hate gushy novels. So imagine how happy I was to see that “Pinned” is a totally different kind of boy-meets-girl story.

First of all, this book definitely lacks attitude and teen-queen drama. It’s not populated with over-the-top rich divas; no, Flake’s characters are just

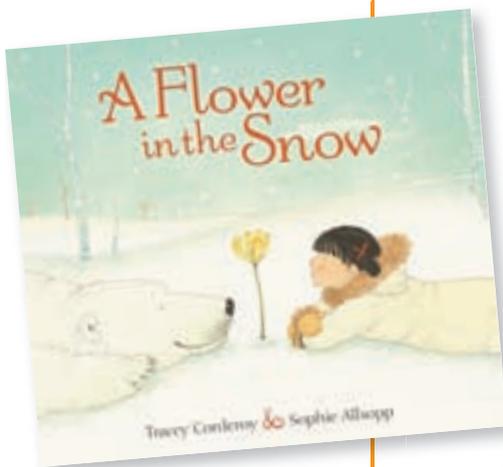


average kids. Autumn is a little street-smart. Adonis is a big jerk. She’s eager to change — first for a boy, and then for herself. He starts to accept his softer side as he learns that vulnerability won’t derail his dreams. That makes this a wonderful first-love story that’s sweet and clean without hearts-and-flowers gushiness.

Ahhhh.

While this book is meant for 12-to-16-year-olds, anyone who loves a good story will find it to be quick and endearing. In lacking a bunch of eye-roll-inducing fluff, “Pinned” is really quite sharp.

“Pinned,” by Sharon G. Flake. [240 pages, 2012, \$17.99].



The greatest gifts can’t be wrapped

Who doesn’t like presents?

Not you! You love getting presents. You love wondering what’s hiding beneath the paper, wrapped up so nicely. You like to tear the packaging in one big RRRRRRIP, pulling the bows off, and plopping them on top of your head. Unwrapping a gift is almost as much fun as seeing the present itself, isn’t it?

You love getting gifts and giving them is great too. So how far would you go to find the absolute best present ever? In “A Flower in the Snow” by Tracey Corderoy and Sophie Allsopp, a friend looks high and low.

Once upon a time, in an icy kingdom up north, there lived a little girl named Luna. It was snowy where Luna lived, and that was okay with her. She loved snow! She liked catching snowflakes on her tongue and

leaving tiny footprints everywhere. But more than snow, Luna loved her best friend, Bear, a big, cuddly-soft polar bear. Bear lived in a snow cave in Luna’s garden, right next to her igloo and they did everything together.

One day, something magical happened — a bright yellow flower popped up through the white blanket of snow. It was very pretty and Bear carefully picked it for someone special.

That made Luna smile. She told Bear that she’d treasure the flower forever, but then it wilted and that made her sad. Nothing Bear did would cheer her up, and that made him sad, too.

Eventually, Bear figured out what he could do to bring back Luna’s sparkle — he would find another flower! He sailed away that night, and searched through rocks and docks. He looked over deserts and jungles, up and down hills, on dry land and wet seas, and he simply couldn’t find another flower for Luna. He sat

and tried to think of more places to look, until a snowflake landed on his nose and he knew it was time to just go home.

If your kid has a bad case of “the give-me’s” this holiday season, “A Flower in the Snow” might show your her that sometimes the best gifts can’t be wrapped.

Author Tracey Corderoy does a great job telling this sweet tale of friendship and longing and Sophie Allsopp’s illustrations are very charming — Luna’s adorable and Bear is delightful — it’s hard not to fall in love. If your have a little kiddo between the ages of 2 and 7 at home who will be unwrapping a book this holiday, then be sure it’s this one.

“A Flower in the Snow” by Tracey Corderoy and Sophie Allsopp [32 pages, 2012, \$16.99].

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.

Calendar

JANUARY



Photo by Matt Cashore

A 'gift' for the family

Simple Gifts" comes to the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts on Jan. 6.

The concert, performed by the Cashore Marionettes, is a series of scenes from every day life set to the music of the great composers, including Vivaldi, Strauss, Beethoven, and Copland.

Through a combination of master puppetry, beautiful music, and

theatrical illusion, the vignettes show what it is to be human. Recommended for children 8 years old and up.

"Simple Gifts" on Jan. 6 at 2 pm. Tickets are \$14 to \$22.

Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at Long Island University [720 Northern Blvd. near Westmoreland Street in Greenvale; (516) 299-3100; www.tillescenter.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 queenscalendar@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!

MON, DEC. 31

"Puss in Boots": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Together with the exhibit of The Art of "The Rise of the Guardians," the museum will screen various animated films.

Claymation workshop: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Monday, Dec. 31, 2:45 pm; \$10 (\$5 members).

Create your own animated creature out of clay. For children 9 years old and up.

TUES, JAN. 1

"Puss in Boots": 1 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Monday, Dec. 31.

Claymation workshop: 2:45 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Monday, Dec. 31.

SAT, JAN. 5

"Shrek 2": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-3 pm; Free with museum admission.

The Green one comes back in this fun sequel in which Shrek has to finally meet the in-laws. The voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, Julie Andrews, and Antonio Banderas reunite.

SUN, JAN. 6

Blood Drive: Temple Tikvah of New Hyde Park, 3315 Hillside Ave.; (516) 746-1120; info@templetikvah.org; www.templetikvah.org; 9:30 am to 1:30 pm; Free.

Give blood, save a life — sponsored by Sisterhood of Temple Tikvah.

"Shrek 2": Noon-3 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Saturday, Jan. 5.

Music for the Christmas Season: St. Josaphat's Roman Catholic Church, 34-32 210th St.; (718) 229-1663; 1 pm; Free.



Associated Press

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in music and words

The life and times of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will be explored at the Long Island Children's Museum in MLK in Music and Words on Jan. 21.

Children ages 5 and older

celebrate and learn about the slain civil rights leader through music, art, and his visions and speeches. Then, aspiring young artists make an inspirational work of their own.

MLK in Music and Words on

Jan. 21 at 11 and 11:45 am. The fee is \$3 with museum admission and \$2 for members.

Long Island Children's Museum [11 Davis Ave. at West Road in Garden City, (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org].

Angelus Choir and guest soloists. Directed by Izabela Grajner-Partyka. All welcome.

"Simple Gifts": Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at LIU Post, Rt. 25A; (516) 299-3100; www.tillescenter.org; 2 pm; \$22.

Cashore marionettes perform this production of touching portrayals and scenes from everyday life. Suitable for children 8 years and older.

"Blue's Clues Live": Queensborough Performing Arts Center, 222-05 56th Ave.; (516) 599-6870; www.plazatheatrical.com; 2 pm; \$12.

Join Steve and Blue on a grand adventure and solve a mystery. Presented by Plaza Theatrical Productions, Inc.

SAT, JAN. 12

Moving Image workshop: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

Video demo: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Introducing Ninja Shadow Warrior by Kaho Abe — a photo booth arcade game consisting of a Kinect camera, a computer, and a hacked close light, which have been built into a custom cabinet. Suitable for children 10 years and older.

Get involved: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Noon-4 pm; Materials fee plus museum admission.

Children learn about sustainability with a hands on workshop based on the exhibit ReGeneration. Make a USB solar charger. Space is limited, small materials fee.

Saltwater stories: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; 12:30-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages explore the maritime culture including fishing, cuisine.

Astronomy safari: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern

Continued on page 42

Calendar

Continued from page 41

Blvd.; (718) 229-4000; 7-9 pm; \$10 (\$12 non-members, \$7 children ages 7-12).

Join with astronomer Mark Freilich for a night of viewing the winter constellations.

SUN, JAN. 13

E-waste recycling: Queens Botanical Garden, 43-50 Main Street; (718) 539-5296; www.queensbotanical.org; 10 am-4 pm; Free.

Bring your old handheld toys, TVs, cameras, unwanted or broken electronics, and dispose of them in an environmentally safe way.

"Shark Tale": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-3 pm; Free with museum admission.

Will Smith is the bomb in this animated classic.

Saltwater stories: 12:30 - 4 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 12.

Zumba to Fight MS!: NY Sportek, 106-06 Queens Blvd. at 69th Road; MSZumbaFundraiser@gmail.com; mszumba.brownpapertickets.com; 1:15pm - 3:15 pm; \$15 advance and \$20 at the door.

Bring your dancing shoes — for a great cause and a good time! Join Liz Murdocca, Angela Mauceri, and Francesco Locatelli and dance towards finding a cure for MS.

Afro-Puerto Rican Bomba and Plena: Flushing YMCA, 138-46 Northern Blvd.; (718) 961-6880 X 128; 2:15 pm; \$12 (\$10 members, \$8 children, \$6 member children).

Juan Gutierrez leads this dance workshop for children.

SAT, JAN. 19

Moving Image workshop: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

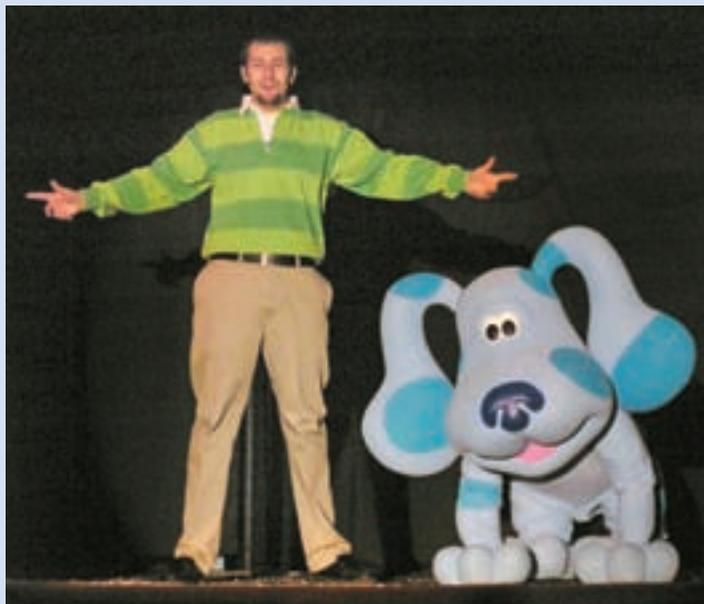
Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

MON, JAN. 21

Martin Luther King celebration: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road; (516) 224-5800 www.licm.org; 11 am and 11:45 am; \$3 with museum admission (\$2 for members).

Children learn about the life and times of the activist, dreamer, and reverend through art. Then create works of inspiration of their own.

Meet Kate Hosford: New York Hall



Get a 'Clue'

We are gonna see "Blue's Clues," we are gonna see "Blue's Clues" — at the Queensborough Performing Arts Center on Jan. 6!

You know what to do: put on your thinking caps with Blue and Steve and, in this show, try to find all the clues that reveal the most spectacular place of all. Steve and Blue bring on the fun in this interactive musical adventure for children ages 3 and older. The man

and his dog know you can do it, because you're really smart!

Bring your camera for the meet-and-greet that follows the performance.

"Blue's Clues Live!" on Jan. 6 at 2 pm. Tickets are \$12.

Queensborough Performing Arts Center at Queensborough Community College [222-05 56th Ave. at Springfield Boulevard in Bayside Hills, (516) 599-6870; www.plaza-theatrical.com].

of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 2:30 and 3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

The author of "Infinity and Me," a picture book for children ages 4 to 12 years, old will read from her book.

SAT, JAN. 26

Moving Image workshop: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

"Bee Movie": Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; 1 pm; Free with museum admission.

The voices of Jerry Seinfeld, Renée Zellweger, and Matthew Broderick join

together to make this little movie about a rebellious bee into a big hit.

Winter snow globes: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd.; (718) 229-4000; 1-3 pm; \$18 (\$24 non-members).

Learn about the concepts of weights, floating and sinking and then create your own snow globe.

SUN, JAN. 27

Winter Wetland Ecology: Queens Zoo, 53-51 111th St. (718) 271-1500; queenszoo.com; 10-11:30 am; \$35 members, \$40 non-members.

Children will investigate the wetland environment, discovering what lies beneath the snow and ice of the zoo's ponds. Encounters with our animals that call the wetlands their home is included.

"Bee Movie": 1 pm. Museum of the Moving Image. See Saturday, Jan. 26.

Mista Cookie Jar: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; 1 and 3 pm; \$4 with museum admission (\$3 for members; \$10 theater only).

Kindie rocker Mista Cookie Jar brings his urban based rock and roll in this great hip hop concert. For children 3 and older.

MON, JAN. 28

CHADD support group: East Meadow Jewish Center, 1400 Prospect Ave.; (516) 932-0903; www.chadd.net; 7:30-8:30 pm; Free.

Children and adults with attention deficit disorder meet to discuss topical issues.

SAT, FEB. 2

Acid Rain: Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd.; (718) 229-4000; 10:30 am.

Learn about acids and bases and their effect on our daily lives.

Moving Image workshop: Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Ave.; (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us; Noon-5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 7 and older accompanied by an adult (12 on their own) visit the museum and learn about moving images.

LONG-RUNNING

Science Playground: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; \$4 per person, plus general museum admission.

Weather permitting. The nation's largest science playground features 60,000-square feet of exhibits for children of all ages. Slides, seesaws, climbing webs, a water play area, drums, mirrors, sand boxes and more allow kids to explore science by playing.

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 striking and dramatic 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; \$24 (\$14 children, \$18 seniors and students).

This interactive exhibit explores organisms that produce light, from the flickering fireflies to alien deep-sea fishes.

Calendar

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.

Laptop time: Hollis Public Library, 202-05 Hillside Ave; (718) 465-7355; www.queenslibrary.org; Mondays - Thursdays, 3 pm; Free.

Teens learn how to use a laptop.

Build it with KEVA: Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave. at West Road; (516) 224-5800; www.licm.org; Tuesdays - Sundays, 10 am-5 pm; Now - Sun, Jan. 6; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages explore the possibilities of construction in Building Boom with KEVA planks. Try a sky scraper, bridge, castle or even a plane. You are only limited by your imagination.

Story time: Barnes & Noble, 176-60 Union Tpke.; (718) 380-7077; Wednesdays, 11 am; Now - Wed, Jan. 30; Free.

Each week children enjoy a selection from a different author.

The buzz on 'Bee Movie'

Buzz on down to the Museum of the Moving Image on Jan. 26 and 27 to see a screening of "Bee Movie."

The voices in this surprising feel-good flick are supplied by Jerry Seinfeld, Renee Zellweger, and Matthew Broderick.

The movie tells the tale of a Barry B. Benson (Seinfeld), who is just not happy staying in the hive. After Barry graduates college he becomes disillusioned with hive living, so he takes goes on an epic journey out of the hive. While on his trek, he meets up with human Vanessa Bloome (Zellweger) — who has a florist shop — and discovers that humans eat honey.

This feel-good movie proves that size doesn't matter, as long as you have the courage to fol-



low your dreams. The showings are Jan. 26 and 27, at 1 pm on both days. Admission is free with regular museum fare.

The Museum of the Moving Image [36-01 35th Ave. between 37th and 36th streets in Astoria, (718) 777-6888; www.movingimage.us].

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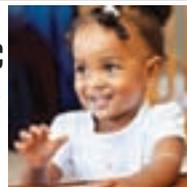
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A TEEN'S TAKE

AGLAIA HO

Being an only child

When I was younger, I hated being an only child. Yet, my friends at school constantly told me how lucky I was not to have siblings.

"You don't have to share your toys," "You can get all the attention you want," and "You get your own room," they would gush jealously.

This was completely baffling to me. I pined for siblings to play with and even asked Santa one year to bring me a little baby sister! Sometimes, it was just too lonely. There were times when I desperately needed someone my own age I could relate to. However, I eventually came to realize that being an only child isn't so bad after all.

Being an only child did not mean much to me when I was very little. This changed when I entered school. During recess, my friends would always complain about their brothers and sisters, or share hilarious stories about their siblings. I felt left out during these conversations and wished I could fume about a nonexistent

sibling, too.

Whenever I had play dates with my friends who had siblings, I got a tantalizing taste of sibling interactions.

One of my best friends had two younger siblings who she played with and took care of. They constantly hugged her and followed her around obediently like baby ducks behind their mother. I was envious. My friend not only had enough people to play tag, hide-and-seek, and duck-duck-goose whenever she wanted, but she also had so much affection and attention from her younger siblings.

At times, I was frustrated of being turned away by my parents when I wanted to play. However, without anyone else to play with, I learned to deal with the occasional boredom, and created my own entertainment and fun. I would traipse around the house, engaging in all types of role-playing games. Without siblings, I took on every role, even enlisting my dog, stuffed animals, and dolls to play along. While playing house, I would pretend to be the mother, my dog would be the

father, and my doll would be the baby. My creativity also provided me with activities I could do on my own — arts and crafts, singing, brainteasers, and puzzles.

Learning to cope as an only child helped to inspire my imagination and creativity. Also, being an only child allowed me to devote time to my own hobbies and interests. In the end, I always found some way to have fun.

Being an only child has led me to develop a sound and loving relationship with my parents. I am fortunate enough that my parents shower me with all their love and attention, especially while I was growing up. Because I do not have siblings, my parents and I spend a lot of time together. When I was little, my mom would play dollhouse with me and my dad would teach me how to make paper chains. Nowadays,

they teach me new things like how to cook or do laundry. We enjoy family weekend outings, having dinner at a restaurant, or biking at the park. They understand that I need them to be a listening ear, sounding board, and just all-around support.

Communication with my parents has been an essential part of my life. I have become very close with my parents. They have always been there for me, giving me their honest advice. Now more than ever, I value being able to talk to my parents so openly. They have helped me cope with stress, bullying, applying for colleges, and navigating high school in general. Maintaining a candid relationship with my parents has really helped me grow.

Additionally, my reliance and relationship with my parents have helped me discover a newfound appreciation for them. They are two of the most important people in my life and I know not to take that for granted. Without siblings at home, I can focus all of my attention on loving and taking care of my parents. I am getting more mature and my parents are getting older. My parents have already started to rely on me to help them out. My dad's memory is growing a little gray and he sometimes needs help remembering where we parked our car. My mom often needs me to carry heavy shopping bags for her.

Being an only child, I will inherit the sole responsibility of caring for my parents. It is a duty I am honored and looking forward to doing.

My perspective has changed about being an only child. I understand that with the occasional loneliness of being an only child there comes some perks. Growing up, my experience has taught me to make the best out of my situation. I have been provided with many opportunities and have learned so much about family. Sure, at times I still wonder what it would've been like to have siblings. Yet, ask me now, and I wouldn't want to change a thing.

Aglaia Ho is a 17-year-old student from Queens who enjoys writing. Her work has been published in Creative Kids, Skipping Stones, Daily News/Children's Pressline, and The State of the Wild.



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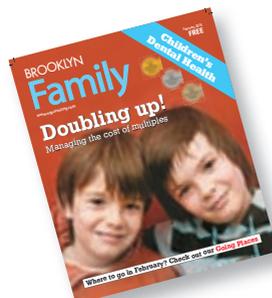
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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Staying married for the children's sake

Many parents in troubled marital relationships ask themselves, "Should I stay married for the sake of the children?" "Won't the kids suffer if we divorce?"

But how confident can parents be that children will be better off if they make sacrifices and remain married?

Obviously, divorce is very stressful. It involves change and uncertainty, which can take a toll on both children and adults.

And divorce is expensive. The costs to litigate can easily run to tens of thousands of dollars per spouse, or even more. Mediation, often costing between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per couple — not including the price of consulting or review attorneys — can save couples a bundle. While comparatively a bargain as contrasted with litigation, such an amount isn't pocket change for most of us.

Additionally, maintaining and furnishing two separate homes usually

costs more than one: an additional rent or mortgage, a second bed, more clothes, toys, etc.

Avoiding these expenses and others, such as having to pay more for health insurance following a divorce, may allow you and the children to be more comfortable than otherwise.

Then again, living in a dead marriage is very stressful.

If you're miserable, the kids know it. They may not know why, and may even blame themselves. Not doing what we need to do for ourselves may translate into our not being fully there for them. Demonstrating anger toward the other parent can be very detrimental to children.

What do we teach our kids by staying in unsatisfying relationships? Are we modeling for them, suggesting that marriage is unrewarding and that this is the best they can hope for? Does the lesson carry over to other areas of life; for instance, are we telling our children, "Don't expect much from your job or career, and stick with it even if you're very unhappy. Life is about settling because you can't do any better?"

If you tell a child years later, "We stayed together for you," know that he may feel burdened, thinking, "My parents were stuck in a lousy marriage and couldn't move on with their lives because of me." He may be more hurt by your lack of honesty than by the divorce itself.

Ask yourself, "How would waiting to divorce serve me and the children?" On the other hand, ask, "What are the advantages of divorcing sooner?"

If your daughter is a senior in high school, postponing the upheaval of divorce until after graduation might help her. Further, it might allow you time to save money you will need, research neighborhoods you might want to live

in, take classes to make you more marketable in the workplace, and learn about mediation versus going to court.

Does an older child handle divorce better than a younger one? Not necessarily. A very young child may have an easier time with the transition than an 8-year-old or a teenager. Children at different developmental stages can be expected to deal with divorce differently based not only on age, but on gender as well.

Surprisingly to many parents, even adult children are likely to struggle when the marriage ends. Reaching the age of 18 — or 28 — doesn't make children immune to the emotions and insecurities that younger kids face.

Regardless of their age, children need to feel safe and protected. Tell them they will always be loved by both parents and, if needed, have a roof over their heads.

Divorcing need not lead to devastation. In fact, children can thrive during and after divorce, especially when parents stop fighting in front of them, using them as messengers, and engaging in other destructive behaviors.

If you choose to remain married, don't use the kids as an excuse. If you, yourself, are afraid to divorce, accept that truth and either work on improving your marriage or strengthening your resolve to leave it. Get stronger, maybe with the help of a therapist.

You'll be better off, as will your children.

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, (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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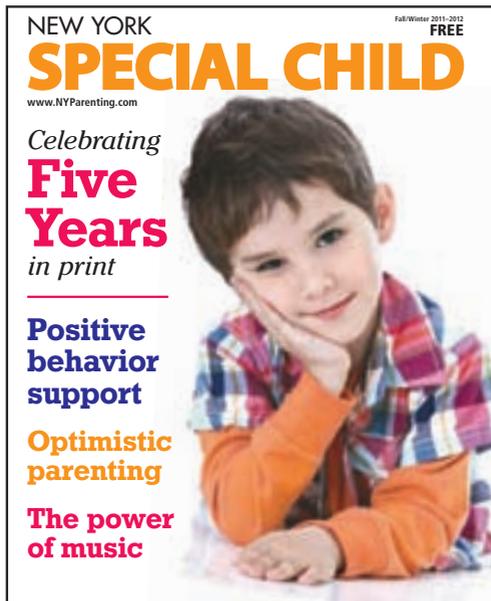
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