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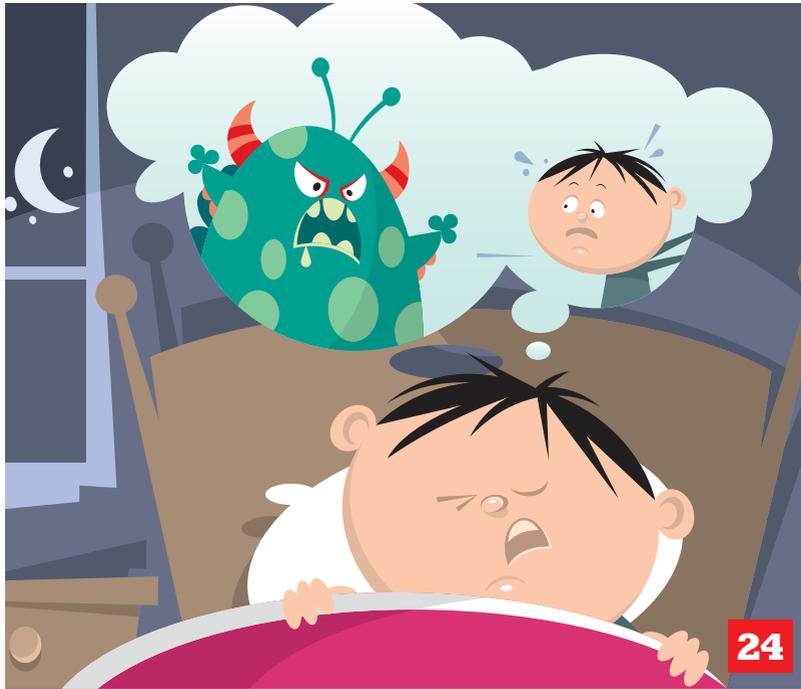
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Letter from the publisher

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

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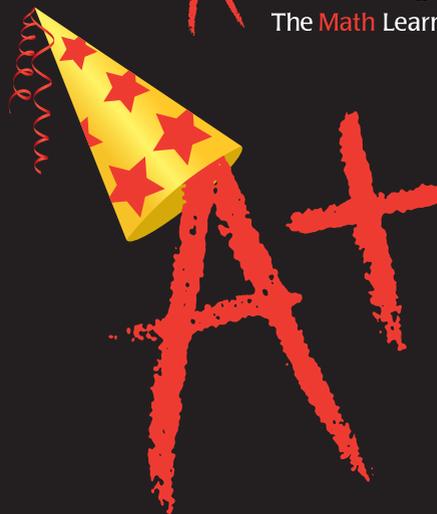
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Children & tragedy

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.

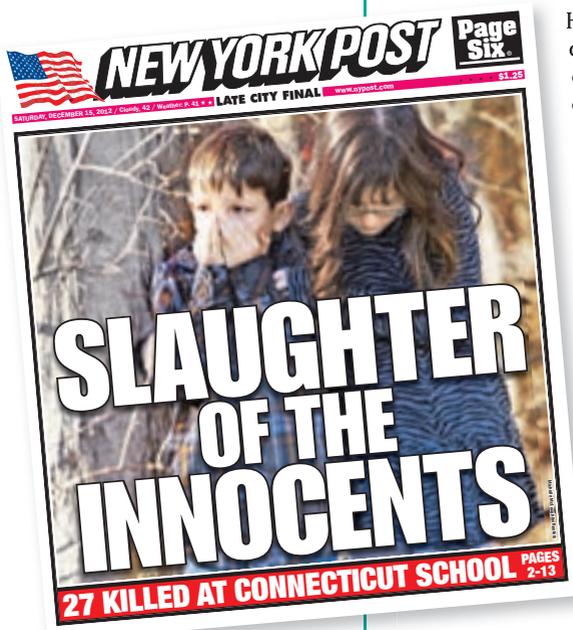
- Suggest doing something with your child that shows compassion or offers help for those affected. Many families have sent cards to Sandy Hook Elementary School to offer their thoughts and prayers for those families. Some lit a candle for each child represented. Children experience a sense of well-being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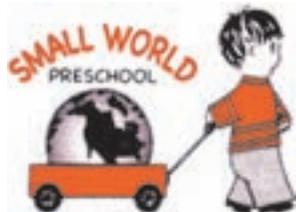
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Stop the violence

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.



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Why is autism on the rise?

More kids are diagnosed with autism today than ever before

BY DANA J. CONNELLY

It used to be one in 500 children. Then, it was one in 110. Now, autism occurs in one in 88 children with four times more prevalence in males. Autism is a spectrum disorder ranging from mildly to profoundly debilitating forms. The question on the minds of many is, "Why is it increasing?" Having worked with individuals with autism for 12 years has given me a certain amount of insight.

Autism, from the Greek word "autos" meaning "self," was first used by Dr. Eugen Bleuler to describe a population of schizophrenic adults. With regards to children, it was first diagnosed in America during the 1930s by Dr. Leo Kanner, who noted similar symptoms in a group of his patients, which involved withdrawn, ritualistic (rigid routines and forms of play), and self-stimulatory behaviors (body rocking, hand flapping, echolalia, and perseverative behaviors). These behaviors were further accompanied by limited language skills, as well as a lack of empathy or awareness of others. This is not to say this is when autism first existed, but merely when it was first formally diagnosed.

Autism has been present for as long as man has been in existence. Interestingly, there is a belief that several renowned figures displayed autistic characteristics without being formally diagnosed, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Lewis Carroll, Charles Darwin, Thomas Jefferson, and Stanley Kubrick.

Autism is not a life sentence of being mentally retarded, insane, or even unsuccessful. It involves the

processing and perception that an individual has of his surroundings.

Population growth

An important consideration when questioning why so many more children are diagnosed nowadays involves probability. Today, there are triple the amount of people on the planet compared to when it was first diagnosed, and that number continues to increase.

More children are diagnosed because, quite simply, there

are more of us in existence. Furthermore, the resources for families to have their children diagnosed are more readily available than they were in the past.

Due to an increased awareness of the red flags in child development, families from all socioeconomic, educational, religious, and cultural backgrounds have better access to appropriate testing for proper diagnosis, leading to better access for treatment.

Older parents

Research has also revealed a correlation between higher rates of



More children are diagnosed because, quite simply, there are more of us in existence. Furthermore, the resources for families to have their children diagnosed are more readily available than they were in the past.

autism and having children later in life. The ideal time to reproduce is age 30 and earlier. When a woman becomes pregnant for the first time after age 35 it is considered a high-risk pregnancy. Furthermore, an expectant mother under the age of 18 is considered a high-risk pregnancy by many western medical professionals. Modern medicine has prolonged life expectancy, and as our life expectancy has clearly increased, so has the rate of re-marriage.

Consideration should be given to the increasing incidence of second life partners and second spouses. A recent study highlighted how men over the age of 50 becoming parents with younger partners is also a population at risk for producing a child with an autistic spectrum disorder, as well as bipolar disorder.

Genetics

As with all ailments, diseases, and disorders, genetics play a frontier role. If there is a member of the family, distant or otherwise, with symptoms associated with autism, future generations run an increased risk of possessing the same. I refer to this as The Faulty Wiring Theory. Imagine a home with all the aesthetic attributes you desire (the child) but the wiring in the home is compromised (the genetic make-up). When you begin to turn on or neglect the appliances in this home (various forms of stimulation) something in the wiring can short circuit (the regression or lack of development of age-appropriate skills). Again, this is a personal hypothesis, and I am working on it.

Toxins

Toxins have been attributed to autism by way of many studies, but one of the most popular was the theory of Dr. Andrew Wakefield, who credited the rise of autism to the presence of mercury as a preservative in vaccinations. This theory was long held by families and professionals and was

recently discredited due to proof that Wakefield forged his data. Further studies yielded test results derived from hair follicle samples of autistic patients implicating the presence of toxic metals. Elements in our ever-increasing industrial and technological times are more present in our environment than ever before. A child at risk of autism (involving genetics) exposed to such elements has an inability to properly eliminate these toxins from his body, causing chemicals to affect brain development.

Dated theories

At one point in time, around the 1950s, autism was attributed to "Frozen Mothers" or "Refrigerator Mothers," terms also developed by Kanner, but spread en masse by the articles of Bruno Bettelheim. The core principles of the theory were that there was a lack of maternal warmth given to the child during infancy and toddlerhood. The theory was argued to be an attempt to place blame on mothers entering the workforce, decreasing their time spent at home child rearing. This, too, is a school of thought that is no longer valid.

The true "fault" that would rest on the parents of an autistic child would be their inclination to deny the struggles that their child is facing and refuse or postpone treatment.

Ultimately, knowing the reason why a child has become autistic is not as crucial as gaining the earliest possible intervention. Of course, one would find comfort in knowing its origin. Especially with it occurring at greater frequencies. The studies of today could very well be tomorrow's punch line, so let's focus instead on how to get a person treatment as soon as possible.

Dana J. Connelly holds dual master's degrees in education and special education, working as an educational evaluator for TheraCare Inc. She specializes in Applied Behavior Analysis and is the proud single mother of a 5-year-old boy.

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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 DeLyssious 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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Side, (212) 327-1217]; Viki Morav [762 Madison Ave. at East 66th Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 744-4753]; Roy Teluck [5 E. 57th St. between East 57th and East 58th streets in Midtown, (212) 888-2221]; Felice restaurants [www.felice-nyc.com].

Lyss Stern is the founder of DivaLysious Moms (www.divamoms.com) and co-author of "If You Give A Mom A Martini ... 100 Ways To Find 10 Blissful Minutes For Yourself."





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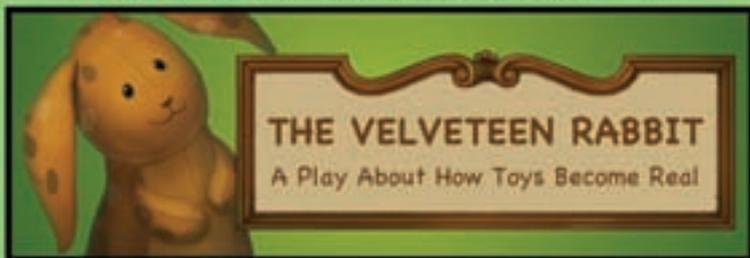
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MOMMY 101

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.



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.

"Mommeeeeeee, 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.





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

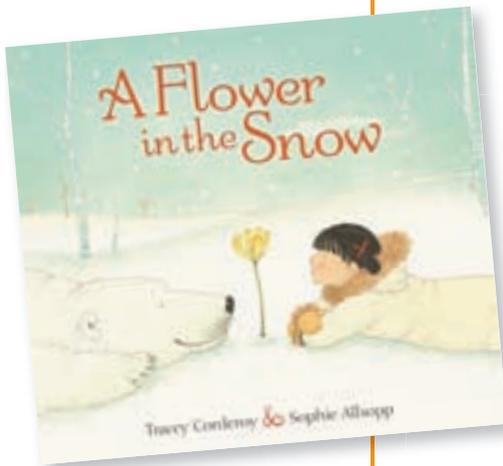


average kids. Autumn is a little street-smart. Adonis is a big jerk. She’s eager to change — first for a boy, and then for herself. He starts to accept his softer side as he learns that vulnerability won’t derail his dreams. That makes this a wonderful first-love story that’s sweet and clean without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

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 bring readers the latest insights on family health and child development.

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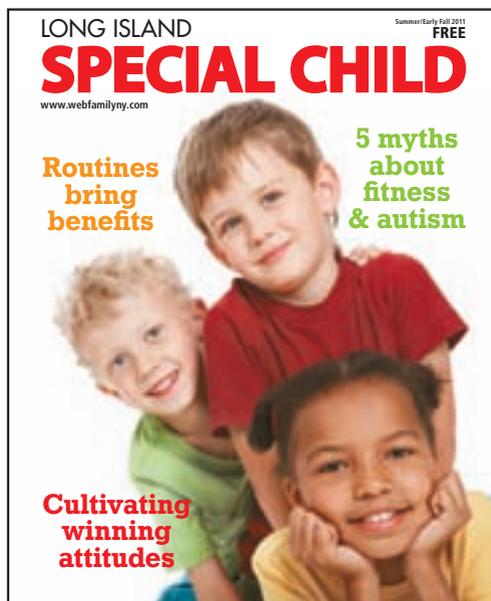
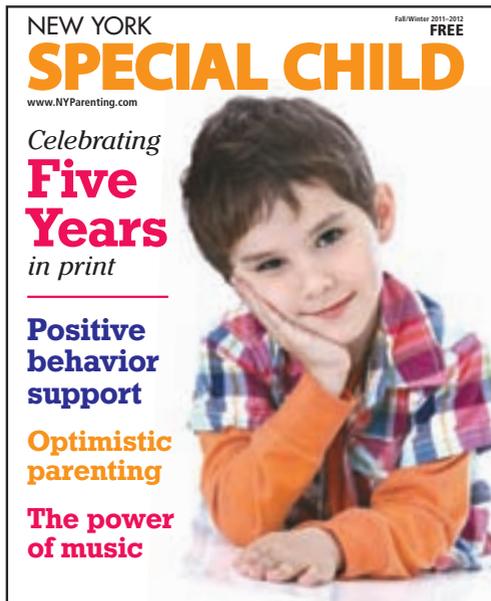
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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Beating winter blues

With winter at my doorstep, I am reminded of the expressions “dead of winter” and “cabin fever.” Many start to get antsy about being cooped up for too long, especially teens who are used to being active every minute of the day. Teens want to get out and get moving, but afternoons spent at the beach or biking through the countryside are distant memories now that the weather no longer cooperates.

Some people are affected by seasonal differences more than others. The colder temperatures and fewer hours of sunlight can affect a teen’s mood or even lead to depression. The key is to keep energy levels high and creative ideas flowing.

Basics for a positive winter season

Healthy eating is important to keeping a teen’s energy up.

Megan Fendt, RD, CDE, of the Friedman Diabetes Institute at Beth Israel Hospital in Manhattan, suggests, “When the winter months get dreary, think color. A plate full of bright-colored food can perk [up] your mood just by looking at it. The vitamins and minerals in fruits and vegetables can help you think more clearly. Getting more brain food can be as easy as grabbing some baby carrots or a green apple.”

Teens often eat on the run, but these energy snacks will keep them going: citrus fruits, granola bars, yogurt, raisins, or nuts.

Dory said it best to Nemo, “Just keep swimming...just keep swimming.” In an age where hand-held electronics and video games are common pastimes, exercise sometimes takes a backseat.

“When it comes to exercise, the perception is often a drill sergeant and a miserable experience. It doesn’t have to be that way,” says Jason Stella, a certified personal trainer and fitness expert with Lifetime Fitness Centers. “Think about a time that you played without worrying about judgment. Typically, you felt great when you were participating in the experience, even if it was difficult and caused you to lose your breath.”

Keeping Stella’s advice in mind, teens should look for creative ways to exercise. For instance, meet friends at an indoor pool and plan some races. Sledding is also a great workout. Once you go down, you have to climb back up!

Worst case: seasonal depression

Does your teen seem to be more affected by the winter than she should be?

Seasonal affective disorder is a form of depression that occurs during the winter months when days get shorter. Symptoms include excessive eating, excessive sleeping, decreased energy, difficulty concentrating, and weight gain. A craving for carbohydrates is also characteristic.

How does a parent realize it’s more than mild “cabin fever?” Angelos Halaris, MD, PhD, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral neurosciences at Loyola Medical Center in

Maywood, IL, offers, “SAD has a seasonal pattern. It usually sets in during early November, gets progressively worse during the course of the winter months, and begins to lift by itself in late March or early April.”

Cases can range from mild to severe, but SAD is treatable.

“If at all possible, get outside during winter, even if it is overcast. Open drapes and blinds to let in natural light. SAD can be effectively treated with light therapy, antidepressant medication, and psychotherapy,” Halaris advises.

Cool options for cold months

Besides energy-packed foods and a good dose of exercise, suggest these clever ways teens can keep their energy levels up:

- Take it outside: Snap some beautiful winter landscape photos while hiking or decorate an evergreen. (It doesn’t have to be Christmas!)
- Indoor options: Take a class and meet new friends (i.e. cooking or photography).
- Get creative: Don’t watch a movie — make a movie!
- Revitalize a space: Change the look of your bedroom.
- Serve the community: Volunteer in a soup kitchen for the homeless. Teens feel good about being needed.

Tips and tales

“My friends and I plan Wii Zumba or Just Dance parties. It brings us together in the months we can’t get outside. It’s really fun and is actually a workout, too!”

Nicole Armeno, Staatsburg, NY, age 17

Share your ideas

Upcoming topic: Tips for how to save money on the prom.

Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to myrnahaskell@gmail.com, or visit www.myrnahaskell.com.

Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist and author of the newly released book, “LIONS and TIGERS and TEENS: Expert advice and support for the conscientious parent just like you” (Unlimited Publishing LLC); for details: www.myrnahaskell.com. Also available at Amazon.com.





GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Food that can keep the doctor away

When Chicago area resident Venessa Tornabene felt under the weather as a child, her mother soothed her with chicken noodle soup or honey-sweetened hot tea. Today, she serves her own two daughters Grandma's homemade minestrone soup recipe — loaded with fresh vegetables — whenever they show signs of any illness.

During these dark winter months, it's not uncommon for multiple children — or even the entire household — to fall sick with a nasty cold or the flu. What if there are foods that can treat or even prevent illness?

There are many plant foods that can boost your immune defense, says registered dietitian Sharon Palmer, author of "The Plant-Powered Diet."

"Plant foods have potent phytochemicals — plant compounds — that appear to offer particular healing properties," she explained.

It's not only the phytochemicals.

"Fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds are also rich in fiber, which can help feed your 'healthy' bacteria, which in turn can boost your immune de-

fense," she says.

For example, a research paper published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2010 concluded a high-fiber diet contributes to preferential gut microbiota, which is linked with better immune function.

It's important to start with a healthy plant-based diet, rich in nutrients, phytochemicals, and fibers that promote a good immune defense to protect against acquiring a disease.

"The beauty of whole foods for healing is that they offer no adverse effects when eaten in moderation, compared with the potential for drugs," adds Palmer.

Luckily for us, it happens to be the tastier option as well.

Healing foods

- **Chicken soup.** A 2000 study in Chest suggests that "Jewish penicillin" may contain a number of substances with a variety of medicinal properties, including anti-inflammatory effects, that could help ease symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections. The study found it may inhibit immune cells, called neutrophils, which play a role in the dis-

charge from mucous membranes that lead to coughs and excess sputum during a cold or flu. Both homemade or canned chicken soup worked, as did vegetable soup.

- **Extra virgin olive oil.** It contains the compound oleocanthal, which provides a similar anti-inflammatory property as ibuprofen.

- **Fresh ginger.** A decongestant, ginger can also reduce the pain associated with muscle injury after intense exercise. It also quiets upset stomachs, nausea, and motion sickness.

- **Herbal tea.** People have been sipping herbal teas as a health remedy for eons, and now research shows that some of these botanicals may have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

- **Mushrooms.** These fungi help fend off viral infections. White button mushrooms provide significant levels of selenium, niacin, and riboflavin.

- **Tart red cherries and pomegranates.** These fruits can reduce muscle soreness after intense physical activity.

- **Tea with honey.** Honey contains phenols, which possess antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Other compounds help prevent bacterial growth and reduce inflammation.

- **Yogurt.** Yogurt with active cultures of beneficial bacteria can help prevent and treat certain types of diarrhea. If the diarrhea is a side effect of antibiotics, which kill both good and bad bacteria, it's especially important to replenish the good ones.

Tornabene is convinced of the healing power of the homemade soup for her girls.

"We absolutely feel it helps them. My husband says it's evidence-based feeding. We've seen it work firsthand," she says.

Christine Palumbo, RD, is based in Naperville, Ill. She swears by any type of soup when she's under the weather. Contact her at Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com. Her Facebook page is Christine Palumbo Nutrition and her Twitter handle is @PalumboRD.

Beet & pomegranate seed salad

This glistening ruby salad highlights beets and other winter plant foods. It's certainly sophisticated enough for your holiday table and beyond. The compounds responsible for beets' deep red hue, called betalains, are anti-inflammatory, too.

Makes four servings (about 9 cups)

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups packed mixed baby greens
- 2 cups packed assorted microgreens
- 2 cups sliced baby beets, cooked and chilled
- 1 cup fresh pomegranate seeds
- 3 tablespoons coarsely chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed orange juice



- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 garlic clove, minced

DIRECTIONS: Arrange the baby greens in a salad bowl or on a platter. Top with the microgreens. Arrange the beets on top of the microgreens, and sprinkle with pome-

granate seeds and walnuts. Whisk together the orange juice, olive oil, black pepper, and garlic in a small bowl. Drizzle the vinaigrette over the salad and serve immediately.

NOTE: If you don't have time to cook fresh beets for this recipe, use drained canned beets (preferably with no added salt) or refrigerated, cooked beets, which are available in many supermarkets.

NUTRITION FACTS: (about 2-1/4 cups): 152 calories, 18 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 3 g protein, 9 g total fat, 1 g saturated fat, 160 mg sodium, 31 percent DV vitamin A, 34 percent DV vitamin C, 16 percent DV manganese.

Recipe used with permission from "The Plant-Powered Diet" by Sharon Palmer, RD.

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 Yoanne 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.



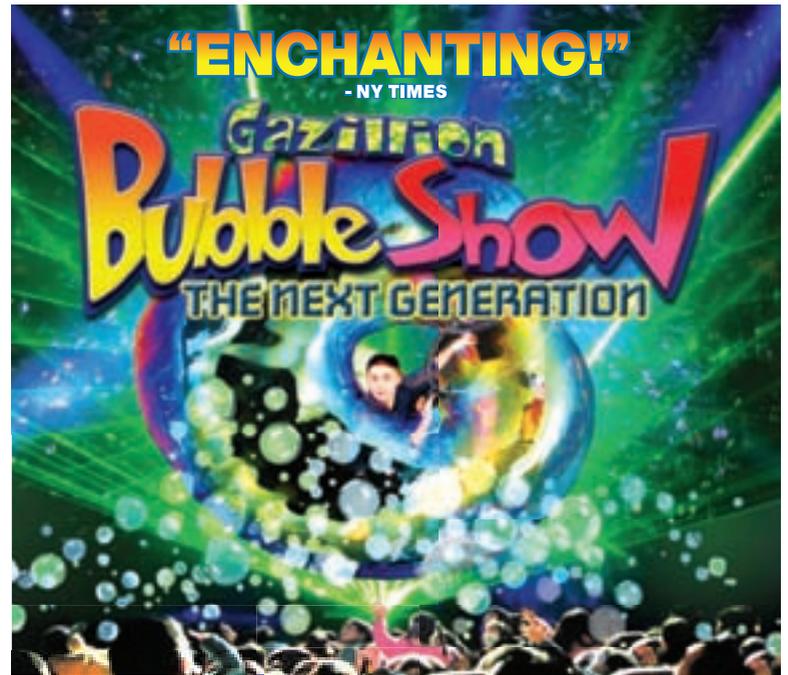
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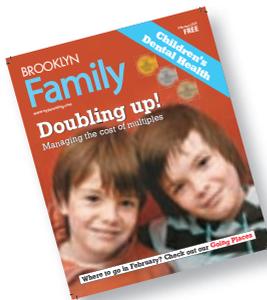
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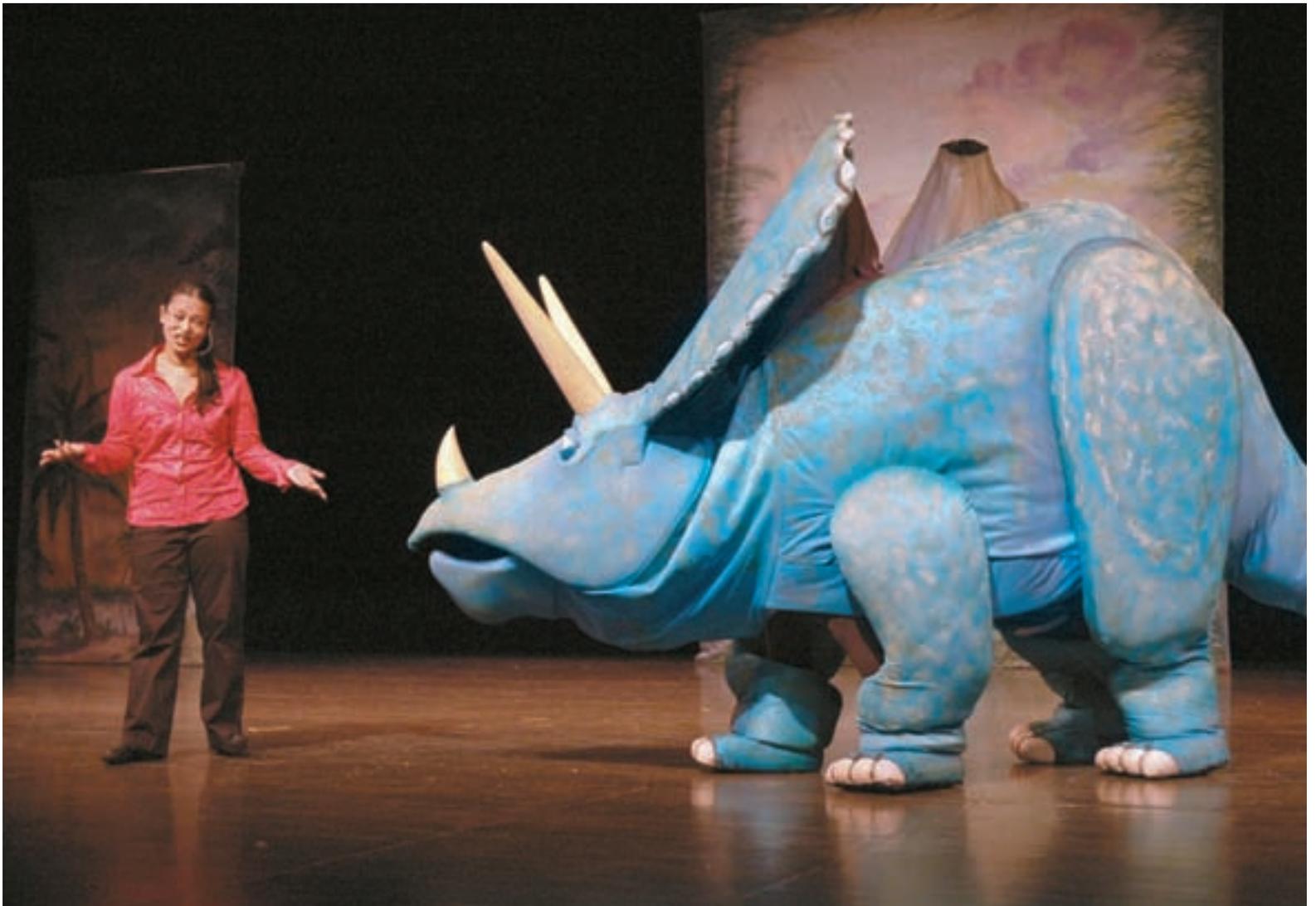
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Calendar

JANUARY



‘Mammoth’ fun at the College of Staten Island

The Mammoth Follies are stomping into town for a “dinatorrific” performance on Jan. 20 at the Center for the Performing Arts at the College of Staten Island.

Join your host Willie Mammoth as he leads his friends, Bessie the 27-foot-long apatosaurus, Smiley the saber-toothed tiger, Tony and Trixie triceratops, Terry the pterodactyl, and 11-foot-tall T-rex as they dance, toe-tap, and twirl in earth-smashing dances in this fun, pre-hysterical

musical that entertains and educates children 4 years and above about the wonderful world of dinosaurs. The good old-fashioned review is performed by giant dinosaur puppets created by the talented Hudson Vagabond Puppets.

“The Mammoth Follies” on Jan. 20, 2013, 3 pm. Tickets are \$12 and \$15.

Center for the Performing Arts at the College of Staten Island [2800 Victory Blvd. at Loop Road in Willowbrook, (718) 982-2787; www.cfashows.com].

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 statenislndcalendar@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!

SUN, JAN. 6

Animals and their instincts:

Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 10 am–4 pm; Free with zoo admission.

Children have an enriching day learning all about how animals stalk, hear, and mark their territories.

MON, JAN. 7

Tween craft: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

For children 5 to 18 years old.

Game time: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 years old and older play popular board games with friends.

TUES, JAN. 8

Resources: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old learn all about what the library has to offer in homework help and research.

WED, JAN. 9

Math tutoring: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30–6 pm; Free.

School-age children get help with two plus two. For children in grades pre-K to eighth grade.

Picture-book time: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

For children 3 years and older — finger play, action rhymes, and coloring.



Courtesy of the Staten Island Zoo

Eat with the animals

The weather outside may be beastly, but the beasts inside the Staten Island Zoo are warm and waiting for breakfast at Breakfast with the Beasts on Jan. 26.

Children are invited to share breakfast — the best meal of the day — with the denizens of the zoo. Participants can come to the zoo early and learn all about what the critters like to eat. Then, they can help staff prepare some

of the meals, watch the animals chow down, and have a meal of their own.

The event is recommended for children 5 years old and up. Pre-registration is required.

Come on down to the zoo on Jan. 26 at 10:30 am. Admission is \$15 and \$17 for non-members.

The Staten Island Zoo [614 Broadway at Martling Avenue in West Brighton, (718) 442-3101. www.statenislandzoo.org].

THURS, JAN. 10

Tech Time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

Teens between 13 and 18 years old get to use the libraries laptops and computers for research.

Teen lounge: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

For children ages 12 to 18 years old.

Games and more: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children 7 to 12 years of age play board games, recycled bottle bowling and Wii games. Pre-registration required.

FRI, JAN. 11

Baby Rhyme Time: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson

Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 10:30 am; Free.

For children birth through 12 months and caregiver, interactive program featuring simple books, songs and movement. Pre-registration required.

SAT, JAN. 12

Mulch fest: Clove Lakes Park, 1150 Clove Rd. at Bard Avenue; (718) 390-8000; www.nycgovparks.org; 10 am–2 pm; Free.

Bring your tree and have it turned to mulch.

Treecycle: Clove Lake Park, 1150 Clove Rd. at Victory Boulevard; (718) 390-8000; nycgovparks.org; 10am–2 pm; Free.

Bring your tree to the park and have it turned into mulch.

Flurries of fun: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 11 am–1:30 pm; \$8 (\$6

for members).

Children 4 to 8 years old listen to a snow story, then take a stroll through the grounds, have a hot cocoa and enjoy the day. Plus a craft.

SUN, JAN. 13

Mulch fest: 10 am–2 pm. Clove Lakes Park. See Saturday, Jan. 12.

Treecycle: 10 am–2 pm. Clove Lake Park. See Saturday, Jan. 12.

Rock of ages: High Rock Park, 700 Nevada Ave. and Manor Road; (718) 351-3450; 1 pm; \$6 (\$4 for members).

Learn how High Rock was formed. Suitable for children 7 years old and up with a parent.

"A Princess Fairy Tale Winter":

St. George Theatre, 35 Hyatt St. between St. Mark's Place and Central Avenue; (718) 442-2900; www.stgeorgetheatre.com; 2 pm; \$16-\$25.

It's a great time in the land of Happily Ever After as princes, princesses, and fairy tale creatures prepare for the Crystal Winter Ball. Children are invited to wear their favorite prince suit and princess dress.

MON, JAN. 14

Game time: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Jan. 7.

TUES, JAN. 15

Resources: 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Jan. 8.

WED, JAN. 16

Math tutoring: 3:30–6 pm. Great Kills Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 9.

Picture-book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 9.

THURS, JAN. 17

Tech Time: 3 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Jan. 10.

Teen lounge: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Jan. 10.

FRI, JAN. 18

Tot Shabbat: Temple Israel Reform Congregation of Staten Island, 315 Forest Ave.; (718) 727-2231; tmplisrael@aol.com; 6 pm; Free.

Little ones enjoy a service filled with music and song that's just right for their level of understanding and participation.

SAT, JAN. 19

Junior science club: Staten

Continued on page 36

Calendar

Continued from page 35

Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Pl. at Wall Street; (718) 727-1135; www.statenislandmuseum.org; 10 am–noon; \$8 (\$5 members).

Children learn about the biology of movement.

SUN, JAN. 20

“The Mammoth Follies”: Center for the Performing Arts at the College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd.; (718) 982-2787 www.cfashows.com; 3 pm; \$15 (\$12).

A pre-historic musical with one-of-a-kind songs and choreography, with Willie Mammoth, Smiley the Saber-Toothed Tiger and Bessie the 27-foot long Apatosaurus.

Winter night sky: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 5:30 pm; Free.

Participants view the constellations. Registration required.

MON, JAN. 21

Cool school day: Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; www.stateniskids.org; 10 am–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Enjoy the whole day at the museum with fun activities.

TUES, JAN. 22

Resources: 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Jan. 8.

WED, JAN. 23

Pre-school program: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Children 2 to 5 years old with a caregiver, read books, finger play and color. Pre-registration required.

Math tutoring: 3:30–6 pm. Great Kills Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 9.

Picture-book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 9.

THURS, JAN. 24

Toddler story time: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Children one and 1 1/2 to 3 years old with caregivers hear a story with finger play and activities. Pre-registration required.

Tech Time: 3 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Jan. 10.

Teen lounge: 3:30 pm. Great Kills



Photo by Tiffany Oelke

Sundays rule at the Guggenheim

Beat the cold and Sunday blahs at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum with lots of fun stuff to do.

From Just Drop In to the Open Studios for Families, young and old can explore the arts, create interactive projects, and make

their own masterpieces.

Most events are free with general museum admission.

Just Drop In for ages 3 to 10; Open Studios for Families for ages 5 to 14.

Both events are on Sundays from 1 to 4 pm.

General admission to the museum is \$22 for adults, \$18 for student and senior citizens, and free for children under 12.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
[1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org].

Library. See Thursday, Jan. 10.

FRI, JAN. 25

Story time: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

For pre-schoolers ages 3 to 5 with caregivers. Pre-registration required.

SAT, JAN. 26

Breakfast with the beasts: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; [\[islandzoo.org\]\(http://islandzoo.org\); 10:30 am; \\$15 \(\\$17 non-members\).](http://www.staten-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Children tour the animal kitchen and learn what the critters like to eat. Then children will help prepare some of the meals. Recommended for children 5 years old and up. Pre-registration required.

Story time: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

For special needs children, enjoy books, songs and socialization.

SUN, JAN. 27

Animal autographs: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 1 pm; \$8 (\$6 members).

Children 4 to 8 years old learn how to recognize animal prints, have hot cocoa, and make a craft. Registration and pre-payment required.

Sing-a-long with Patrick: Staten Island Children’s Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street; (718) 273-2060; www.stateniskids.org; 2 pm;

Calendar

Free with museum admission.

Patrick comes with his guitar and hosts a silly sing-a-long in Portia's playhouse.

MON, JAN. 28

Open House: Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Pl. at Wall Street; (718) 727-1135; www.statenislandmuseum.org; 2:30 pm; Free.

Teens spend the day with friends and explore the museum.

Game time: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Monday, Jan. 7.

TUES, JAN. 29

The great pizza secret: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Join with master pie maker Scott as he guides 13 to 18 years old on how to make the best pizza and the science behind it.

Resources: 4 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Jan. 8.

WED, JAN. 30

Math tutoring: 3:30-6 pm. Great Kills Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 9.

Picture-book time: 4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Wednesday, Jan. 9.

"The Odd Life of Timothy Green": Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; 4:30 pm; Free.

Flick for children 5 and older, starring Jennifer Garner, Joel Edgerton, and CJ Adams. Refreshments provided.

THURS, JAN. 31

Tech Time: 3 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Jan. 10.

Teen lounge: 3:30 pm. Great Kills Library. See Thursday, Jan. 10.

SAT, FEB. 2

Groundhog day: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 6:30 am; \$10 (\$5 children) breakfast.

Staten Island Chuck will again be called upon to prognosticate the weather. After Chuck gives his forecast join in for a breakfast. Reservations for breakfast required. Patrick Raftery will perform.

Groundhog day: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 11 am; \$8 (\$6 members).

Children 4 to 8 years old discover Phyllis the Groundhog and learn if there is six more weeks or winter. Registration and pre-payment required.

SUN, FEB. 3

Groundhog day: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 422-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 1:30-3:30 pm; Free with zoo admission.

Encore performance and related crafts and activities. With highlights of Chuck's predictions.

LONG-RUNNING

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.

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.

Kidz Cook: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street (718) 273-2060; statenisland-kids.org; Fridays, 2-3 pm; Now - Fri, Feb. 1; Free with museum admission. Children explore the culinary arts.

Fun Fridays: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; Friday, Jan. 11, 3:30 pm; Friday, Jan. 18, 3:30 pm; Free.

Children 3 years and older hear stories, sing songs, and do a fun craft.

Storytime: Barnes & Noble, 2245 Richmond Ave. at Travis Avenue; (718) 982-6983; www.barnesandnoble.com; Tuesdays and Saturdays, 10:30 am; Now - Sat, March 2; Free.

Children listen to a different story

each week.

Tutoring: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln. at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; Tuesdays, 3:30 pm, Saturdays, 11 am; Now - Sat, Feb. 2; Free.

Children in pre-K through eighth grade get homework help in math and English. First come-first served.

Math tutoring: Great Kills Library, 56 Giffords Ln. at Margaret Street; (718) 984-6670; www.nypl.org; Saturday, Jan. 12, noon; Saturday, Jan. 19, noon; Saturday, Jan. 26, noon; Free.

School-age children get help with two plus two. For children in grades Pre-K to grade 8.

Up4Art: Staten Island Children's Museum, 1000 Richmond Ter. at Tysen Street (718) 273-2060; statenisland-kids.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1, 2 and 3 pm; Now - Sat, Feb. 2; Free with museum admission.

Children create fun projects.

Tree tots for toddlers: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; Wednesday, Jan. 9, 9:45 am; Thursday, Jan. 10, 10 am; Wednesday, Jan. 16, 9:45 am; Thursday, Jan. 17, 11 am; Wednesday, Jan. 23, 9:45 am; Thursday, Jan. 24, 10 am; Wednesday, Jan. 30, 9:45 am; Thursday, Jan. 31, 10 am; \$6 per class.

Children 3 and 4 year olds provides a fun time with hands-on activities, observations, finger plays and stories.

After-school book club: Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Ave. at Tysen Court; (718) 351-1611; www.historicrichmondtown.org; Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30 pm; Now - Jan. 9; Free (plus cost of book).

Students in grades 4 to 7 read and discuss selected books covering major periods in history.

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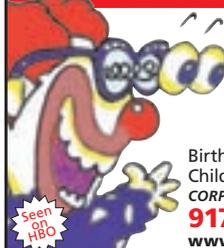
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ASK AN ATTORNEY

ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER,
ESQ.

Resolutions for 2013

Without fail, my busiest months are January and December. In January, clients want to get started on their New Year's resolution to get their legal documents prepared and signed. In December, clients who resolved to "get prepared" in the New Year can't believe that year has gone by, and are determined not to let another one pass without fulfilling their promise!

In addition to getting your estate planning documents in order, or up to date (your will, health care proxy, and power of attorney, among others), this month's column is dedicated to some other manageable resolutions to make for 2013.

January – *Max out your flexible spending accounts and recover the funds you spent in 2012:* You can submit for reimbursement for expenses up until March 31 for expenses incurred prior to Dec. 31, 2012. Take a moment to schedule your annual appointments with your primary care physician, pediatrician, dentist, eye doctor, and others.

February – *The tax man cometh:* Don't wait until April to get your taxes in order. April 15 will be here before you know it. If you haven't done so already, make an appointment with your accountant and start gathering all the documents you'll need. If you have money management software, start running reports and cleaning up your data. The sooner you file, the sooner you'll get back any refund you're entitled to.

March – *Looking for hidden treasure:* Find some money you didn't know you had, just in case you owe taxes! Banks, insurance companies, utilities, and other businesses are required by law to surrender inactive accounts which are "lost," "abandoned," or "unclaimed" to the state. The state comptroller serves as custodian of the money and if you can prove you're entitled to it, it's yours. Search your name to see if the state is holding your money, and to complete the necessary forms. [http://](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/ouf/index.htm)



www.osc.state.ny.us/ouf/index.htm

April – *Insure your peace of mind:* Review your life, disability, homeowners and auto policies to make sure they're sufficient for your needs, and that your beneficiaries are correctly named and up to date. Consider getting a free audit from an advisory firm to see if you need to make any adjustments. Maybe you need an umbrella policy on your homeowner's insurance, or convert your term policy to a whole policy

May – *Renew your passport:* Are your passports up to date? Do you have passports for your children? Believe it or not, you need passports for your infant children if you are planning to travel overseas in the summer months. In addition to other requirements, the process for children requires the child or children to be physically present with both parents (or for one parent to have a properly signed authorization and a copy of the other parent's drivers license). http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get_4855.html

June – *Medical authorizations:* Make sure all your children's camps, childcare facilities and caregivers have a medical authorization in the event that you or your spouse or partner cannot be reached. Parents should also have a "standby guardian" form for instances where they are unable to communicate, due to distance or medical emergencies. Adults should also have their health care proxies up to date.

July and August – *Relax at the beach knowing you've crossed so many important items off your "to dos!"*

September – *Back to school! Purge the clutter!* Deciding what to keep and what to toss? It's a good idea to keep tax returns and back-up documentation for five years. Insurance policies should be kept indefinitely. Utility bills should be tossed within one month. Everything else can go. If you're still not sure, consider scanning everything and ditching the paper.

October – *Tax loss and profit selling:* Don't wait until Dec. 31 to sell underperforming investments as tax-losses to offset capital gains, such as those that accrue from mutual fund dividends at the end of the year. You can purchase the same or a similar asset 31 days after the sale (keep in mind that purchasing at a lower price will reset your cost basis). The last quarter of any year is a good time to consider selling profitable stocks that can be set-off against losses and repurchased in 31 days (see above).

November – *Make annual gifts:* The federal government allows tax-free gifts of \$13,000 (\$26,000 if you are married and "split gifts") to each individual per year. If you are so inclined, this is a good opportunity to start shifting some of your own assets to your children – preferably by setting up a minor's trust that dictates how and when the money gets spent and distributed to the children. You can also use bank products, such as custodial accounts; however, keep in mind that those accounts technically become the child's property when they reach age 18.

December – *Spend wisely:* While in the mode of holiday shopping, consider some tax-smart purchases, such as charitable contributions, paying tax-deductible expenses, such as real estate taxes, quarterly state, or local income taxes, investment-related expenses, and dues before the year's end, or buying a new car. Evaluate how your spending went, plan for the year, and set a new budget for the year ahead.

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