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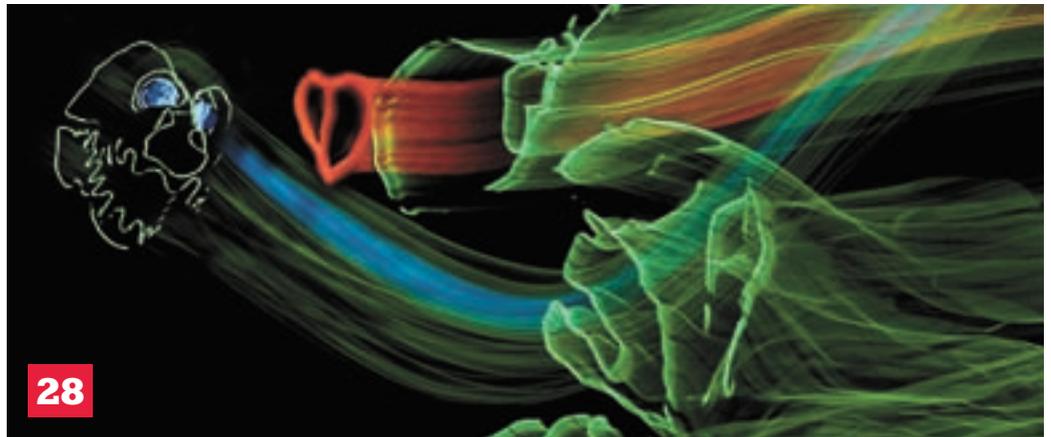
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Letter from the publisher

Thinking of love

Love is in the air. I can feel it, or is it just that I'm frozen and feeling things I want to feel out of longing? It was a pretty cold January!

The month of February holds a lot of interesting things for all of us. The *Winter Olympics*

is one of my favorites and the month is also going to start off with the Super Bowl right here in our metro area.

After that we have *Valentine's Day* with the idea of romance and matters of the heart being pretty strong in this month's editorial. Our articles discuss adolescent romantic relationships, offer a delicious recipe for sweetheart brownies, and give advice on how you can help girls to



leave an abusive relationship. With a lot of territory to cover, our writers have contributed wonderfully informative pieces.

Every time I write this column for our February issue I think about love and all the different kinds of love there

are. I think about the love we all feel for our children and how profoundly it affects the rest of our lives.

I saw a play last night about a man and a woman who meet and know almost instantly the kind of passion and connection we all dream of. They have found their soul mate in each other but it is too late. She is already married and the mother of two youngsters and the truth is that unless she leaves her life and her

family and runs off with him, there is no hope for their love to go any further.

She doesn't leave. They have four days together and then her family returns and she melds back into her life, into the responsibilities and love she has for her children and for her husband. He leaves and they never meet again.

She made a choice. For her the needs of her family and the responsibilities she took on offer no out, nor does she realistically feel they could or should. She had the four days and in those days she knew/experienced a love that would stay with her for the rest of her life.

The truth is that having children, being a parent, changes your life, your priorities, and your essentials. Nothing is every the same. One has a new normal. Even when they're

grown, you are still their parents. They are just older and need you less and for different things.

It's a great thing this parent love. It's a profound joy most of the time and some of the time a big headache, but it does become your new normal and it affects your whole life for all of it, or it should.

Have a great month and stay warm. We shall see what the groundhog says about the arrival of spring. It always comes eventually.

Thanks for reading.

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Making brushing FUN



Build good habits during National Children's Dental Health Month

BY ALEXA BIGWARFE

Good dental hygiene is an important issue for parents to tackle with their children from a very young age.

Tooth decay (which leads to cavities) remains the most common chronic disease in children, despite the fact that it could be easily prevented.

According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research more than 40 percent of children ages 2 to 11 have had a cavity in their baby teeth. The organization also reports that decay is increasing in preschool-age children; a problem that is entirely preventable through good oral hygiene.

This February marks the 65th annual, month-long focus on children's dental health. National Children's Dental Health Month is sponsored by the American Dental Association to raise awareness about oral hygiene. Throughout the month, the benefits of good oral hygiene are promoted extensively to children and their families, teachers, and other caregivers.

To further this campaign, the Association provides many free resources for parents and educators, to include posters. This year's motto is "Join the Super Smiles Team." The Association recommends that

If your children watch you brushing your teeth, they will probably be more enthusiastic about brushing their teeth.

children brush for two minutes, two times a day. However, brushing teeth is often a chore that many children (and their parents) dread. Part of the goal of National Children's Dental Health Month is to provide activities and support materials to help parents and teachers make brushing teeth fun. Along with those resources, here are a few tips that have worked in my family's house.

Seven tips for a fun tooth brushing experience

- Visit the American Dental Association's website and download free coloring sheets, crossword puzzles, certificates, a puppet template, and more.
- Have your child create a calendar to track good oral health practices. Post the calendar in the bathroom and reward children with a gold star or happy face for each day of great oral care!
- Sing songs. "Happy Birthday" or the "ABCs" both sung two times through is usually a good length for brushing.
- Buy your children fun toothbrushes. But be sure to only use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- Join the free America's Tooth Fairy Kids Club. Members will receive personalized letters from

the Tooth Fairy and quarterly fun educational activities!

- Purchase or check out the book and DVD combo: "The Magical Toothfairies." This is a fun and adventurous take on the importance of brushing teeth.

- Set a good example by brushing as a family. If your children watch you brushing your teeth, they will probably be more enthusiastic about brushing their teeth.

The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research provides the following tips for preventing tooth decay:

- Limit between-meal snacks. This reduces the number of acid attacks on teeth and gives teeth a chance to repair themselves.

- Save candy, cookies, soda, and other sugary drinks for special occasions.

- Limit fruit juice. Follow the Daily Juice Recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- Make sure your child doesn't eat or drink anything with sugar in it after bedtime tooth brushing. Saliva flow decreases during sleep. Without enough saliva, teeth are less able to repair themselves after an acid attack.

Good habits begin in the home. Developing a good oral hygiene routine at an early age and visiting the dentist regularly will help your children ward off tooth decay and cavities.

If your children watch you brushing your teeth, they will probably be more enthusiastic about brushing their teeth. Let's help our kids "Join the Super Smiles Team" today!

Alexa Bigwarfe resides with her husband, three children — ages 6, 4, and 2 — and their dog.

More online resources

Here are a few websites where you can find get tools to get your kids brushing!

For fun activity sheets to help children have fun while brushing teeth: www.ada.org/5578.aspx#sheets

America's Tooth Fairy Kids Club can be found at www.ncohf.org/resources/kids-club. For more fun facts, tips, photos, and to see the winning video, "like" America's Tooth

Fairy on Facebook.

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research publishes the MedlinePlus Magazine feature on Children's Dental Health: www.nidcr.nih.gov/

For free booklets, brochures, teacher's guides and activities in English and Spanish specifically about Children's Dental health, visit: www.nidcr.nih.gov/Order-Publications/#2



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Moment of tooth

When it is time to tango with the Tooth Fairy

BY CHRISTA MELNYK HINES

It seems like just days ago when I waited patiently for my son's first little biters to erupt in his infant mouth. Those days somehow melted magically into years, and before I knew it, I could hear the Tooth Fairy fluttering about.

Like many parents, I wondered: what is developmentally normal when it comes to baby tooth loss? How does the tooth-obsessed fairy collect her pearly prizes? And what is the paying pixie's going rate for a baby tooth?

Losing baby teeth

Pediatric dentist Dr. Jill Jenkins says, in general, children lose their first tooth between the ages of 4 and 7, with teeth falling out in the order in which they first came in.

Should you yank a loose tooth? "Usually, the best policy is to let it

come out on its own," Jenkins says. "If the other tooth is coming in, parents can have their child suck on a Popsicle to numb the gums and eat pizza crust, carrots, or apples. If a tooth is wiggly, and we're not seeing the new tooth, letting your child work through it on his own is usually the easiest way and the least stressful way to go about it."

Be sure to consult your child's dentist if you have any concerns.

Enter the Tooth Fairy

That first loose tooth can cause anxiety for some children. Often, anxiety turns to excitement as children listen to tooth-loss stories exchanged among classmates and anticipate the reward the Tooth Fairy leaves behind.

The exact origin of the enigmatic Tooth Fairy is steeped in mystery, but historically the loss of baby teeth is an important rite of passage.

The earliest known written records regarding baby teeth date from northern Europe and describe a tann-fe, or tooth fee, in which money was paid for a baby tooth. In the Middle Ages, Europeans, fearing witches could curse their children if they acquired their baby teeth, buried the teeth in the ground. The Vikings wore baby teeth as jewelry, considering them good-luck talismans in battle. Other cultures fed the teeth to animals believing the adult tooth would resemble the animal's powerful, strong teeth.

Today, countries all over the world continue to mark the loss of baby teeth with various customs. In Spain, France, Italy, and Mexico, for example, the Tooth Fairy appears as a small white mouse or rat, symbolic because rodents have strong teeth that never stop growing. In Sweden, the baby tooth is placed in a glass of water, where it is mysteriously replaced overnight with coins. And, it is customary in much of the Middle East for baby teeth to be thrown towards the sun, and in Asia, onto the roof.

The Tooth Fairy as many of us know her, appeared in the early 1900s.

Cups, pillows, pockets, and doors

The Tooth Fairy isn't picky about how she collects baby teeth. Lori Poland grew up placing her baby teeth in a clear glass of water on her nightstand. She says she loved fishing a wet \$2 bill out of the cup the next morning, setting it out to dry, and

storing it in her memory box.

Although a tooth placed in a plastic Ziploc bag or envelope tucked under the pillow should do the trick, many parents opt for a Tooth Fairy pillow or pouch for their youngster. Retailers offer an assortment of pillows or you can try making your own.

Monica Bradford designed a Tooth Fairy Pocket for her 6-year-old son when he lost his first tooth.

"He placed his tooth in the pocket, hung it on his bedpost, and woke up to find \$2 for his first tooth," she says. (For instructions on making your own Tooth Fairy Pocket, visit Bradford's blog at <http://scrapinspired.com/2011/10/tooth-fairy-pocket/>).

Cathy Green, mom of three, says the Tooth Fairy enters their home through a small ceramic door that Green's stepmother designed. The door is outside the kids' bedrooms. After collecting the tooth from a small box under the child's pillow, the Tooth Fairy replaces the tooth with her reward and leaves the box next to the tiny door.

The going rate

According to a 2013 survey conducted by Visa, kids are receiving an average of \$3.70 per tooth. That's up from \$2.60 per tooth in 2011 — a 42 percent jump.

Beth Foster says that the Tooth Fairy typically pays \$1 per tooth, although her daughter Logan, 6, discovered a \$5 payout under her pillow for her fifth tooth.

"This is a Foster tradition, and I've been assured the good old fairy does not leave \$10 for the 10th," Foster says.

What does the Tooth Fairy do with those teeth?

Legend says that the Tooth Fairy tosses the teeth up to the sky and they become stars.

Naturally, many theories exist. Foster's daughter Logan says, "The fairy uses her wand to shrink the teeth to a very small size so she can carry them in a bag with her from house to house. She then takes the teeth to Santa, so he can use them to make toys."

Whatever she does with them, with each tooth lost, adulthood gains another foothold on our kids. It's no wonder we've found ways to mark this stage in our kids' lives, which seems as fleeting as the Tooth Fairy herself.

Freelance journalist Christa Melnyk Hines is a mom of two boys and the author of "Confidently Connected: A Mom's Guide to a Satisfying Social Life," a resource for moms seeking a more balanced social life that supports their emotional health.





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Quintessential family

Staten Island's
only set of
quintuplets
turn five

BY JANE BIANCHI

At an obstetrician appointment in the spring of 2008, when Jamie Ferrante was 31 years old and six weeks pregnant, she was worried that she was having a second miscarriage.

"But then my doctor told me, 'This is quite the opposite. I see one, two, three, four heartbeats,'" says Jamie.

Five weeks later, another doctor discovered a fifth heartbeat.

Many women in Jamie's shoes would have been a little frightened by the news, since caring for quintuplets certainly isn't easy and because carrying multiple children has higher medical risks than carrying a single child, such as early labor and low birth weight. But Jamie wasn't fazed.

"I was so happy to be pregnant. I just thought, 'OK, this is what I got,'" she says.

Since Jamie had trouble getting pregnant naturally, she had undergone intrauterine insemination, which means that sperm were placed in her uterus around the time of ovulation. She also got injections to help her ovulate, which increased her chance for a multiple pregnancy.

While she was pregnant, she felt a lot of pressure from doctors to reduce two or three babies.

"I was told that there was more than a 65 percent chance of at least one baby having a disability. But I wasn't going to allow anyone to play God. I can't imagine my life without any of my five kids," says Jamie. "For three months, I couldn't find a doctor who would take me as a patient. Nobody on Staten Island had delivered quintuplets before."

Sixteen weeks into her pregnancy, Jamie had to leave her job as co-manager of The Children's Place to go on modified bed rest. At 23 weeks, she went to Staten Island University Hospital and stayed there until she



The happy Ferrante family — mom Jamie and dad Kevin with, from left (and in birth order), Alessia, Amanda, Emily, Matthew, and Ella.

delivered via a C-section.

After 27 weeks and five days, on Dec. 27, 2008, Jamie was delighted to meet her five children for the first time: Alessia Louise (2 pounds), Amanda Frances (1 pound, 8 ounces), Emily Ann (2 pounds, 1 ounce), Matthew Sabatino (2 pounds, 4.5 ounces), and Ella Lilliana (1 pound, 15.5 ounces).

A caring medical team

"At the hospital, my doctor was the most amazing person in the world. His name is Paul Heltzer, MD," says Jamie. "He was so calm and reassuring. After he delivered my last baby, he said, 'I need to take out your right ovary. You have ovarian cancer that was never diagnosed.' So he also saved my life and helped me realize why I had such a hard time getting pregnant. He came to visit me every day I was in the hospital to see how I was doing."

Dr. Heltzer wasn't the only one who impressed Jamie. The 40 hospital staffers who were assigned to help with the birth of her children also blew her mind.

"They were all on call, just waiting for me to go into labor. Once I delivered, each baby had a team of

six or seven people caring for it. The babies were labeled 'A, B, C, D, and E' and the team members wore shirts with corresponding letters on them. It was so cool," says Jamie.

The five babies were tiny and fragile right after birth.

"Their skin was see-through. With one of my daughters, every time a doctor touched her skin, it bled," says Jamie. There was a scare when Emily had a brain bleed, but, fortunately, it cleared up on its own. There was another moment of concern when doctors realized that Matthew was born without one pinky finger bone, so one of his pinkies was removed.

"I said, 'That's it? That was my huge chance of disability? Thank God. Who needs a pinky?'" says Jamie. Beyond those two hiccups, the babies were all doing well. "I was so proud that I was able to carry five healthy babies."

Raising five kids — all at once

As the children grew stronger, they were released from the Natal Intensive Care Unit one by one over several months. Life for Jamie and her husband Kevin, an operating



Alessia, Amanda, Emily, Matthew, and Ella on the day they were born.

engineer who was 34 at the time, became very regimented.

"We stuck to a feeding schedule of 2:00, 5:00, 8:00 and 11:00, around the clock. And we were changing them constantly," says Jamie. The norm was going through 40 diapers a day, 40 bottles a day, and seven cases of specialized formula a week. "I didn't get much sleep at night, because I would stand over their cribs to make sure they were breathing," says Jamie.

As the kids got older, new challenges presented themselves. Just when Jamie and Kevin had mastered the baby routine, the kids started to crawl.

"And when they started walking, that turned my world around. They were everywhere, all at the same time," says Jamie. Sickness was — and still is — a hassle, because when one gets the flu, they all get the flu.

"Then they learned to fight," says Jamie. "Sometimes I feel like a referee."

One day in the car, the kids were being particularly difficult. All five were screaming at once and Jamie started laughing. Kevin asked what she was laughing about. She said to him: "Before they were born, we didn't even know if these kids would have lungs that would work. Listen to the lungs that these kids have!"

Even when things are hard, she appreciates her good fortune.

"I always remember that we beat the odds and I'm so grateful for that," says Jamie.

Another part of life that took some getting used to: being a local celebrity in Staten Island. Sometimes, it has its downsides.

"Some people are rude," says Jamie. "One lady at a mall once asked me, 'Are they all normal?'" But for the most part, Jamie says the kind comments from people in her community are nice. "People will see me in 7-11 and say, 'Oh, I saw your babies in the newspaper.

They're so big now,'" says Jamie.

Now that the kids are in school, Jamie would like to work again.

"After I dropped them off at kindergarten, I came home and started crying. The house was so quiet!" says Jamie.

Celebrating five fifth birthdays

The Ferrante family was thrilled to celebrate the kids' fifth birthdays this past December at a party hosted by Staten Island University Hospital with all the doctors and nurses who helped bring the children into the world.

"It was so nice to see everyone who had taken such good care of my kids," says Jamie. The hospital workers provided a dazzling, three-layer fondant cake that was decorated with snowflakes, gingerbread men, and snowmen. They gave the children Build-a-Bears, as well as Crayola backpacks filled with art supplies.

The hospital staffers enjoyed seeing how much all five children had grown.

"The fact that they all turned out so well is like hitting the Lotto. It's definitely a reason to celebrate," said Dr. James Ducy, director of obstetrics and maternal fetal medicine at the hospital.

Lately, the kids have been on a kick where one will say to Jamie, "I need to hug you" or "I need to kiss you," and then the others will immediately follow suit.

"It becomes a train. They all jump on me until I say, 'I can't breathe anymore!'" says Jamie. Moments like these are why she became a mom. Jamie put it best when she said: "I've got five times the gray hair, but I get five times the love."

Jane Bianchi was an editor at Seventeen, Family Circle, and Good Housekeeping, and now freelance writes for a variety of publications. She lives with her husband in Brooklyn.



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DANIELLE SULLIVAN



Shyness is not a sin

If you are raising a shy child or were one yourself, have you ever considered that being shy might not be a bad thing? There are countless books on how to get your shy child to come out of her shell, and therapists scrutinize children for signs of social anxiety, but being shy has its benefits. There are many reasons why shy children not only grow up to be productive people, but many also go on to be leaders and artists.

Susan Cain, author of “Quiet: The Power of Introverts In a World That Can’t Stop Talking,” breaks open the stigma of being shy and replaces it with scientific evidence to support the evolutionary benefits that introverts, or sitters, bring to a world of extroverts, or rovers.

As Cain points out, the ads for social anxiety medications show pathetic views of shy people who apparently suffer from social anxiety. One has to wonder if children who are prescribed these medications even need them, or if they just have a quiet way of being part of the world, a way in which they take in their surroundings through peaceful observation and introspection rather than immediate interaction.

Why does everyone have to be a social butterfly to be deemed normal or even acceptable? There are many brilliant and successful people who were thought to be shy, including Einstein, Darwin, and J.K. Rowling. Cain says that many shy people grow up to be fabulous leaders because they listen and really take in what others say; they are sensitive to people and careful thinkers.

It’s distressing that society doesn’t value this personality trait, and makes being shy an uncomfortable characteristic at best. Think about how many times you’ve heard a mom or a teacher says, “She’s a little shy” or “He’s just shy.” It’s probably the worst thing an adult can do to a child because it points out her trait by making an excuse for the child’s personality, which sends a message to the child that how she is in the world is wrong. And that’s just not true. Think about if a child was being rambunctious. An adult wouldn’t try to point out his behavior by saying, “Oh, he’s just loud and obnoxious.”

Now more than ever, society places pressure on people to be extroverted. The media, social network systems, and even the medical profession is capitalizing on telling people they need to be more socially active. Cain writes that the idea of social anxiety hadn’t begun to take off until the drug companies started making medication to treat it:

“Social anxiety disorder did not officially exist until it appeared in that year’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the DSM-III, the psychiatrist’s bible of mental disorders, under the name ‘social phobia.’ It was not widely known until the 1990s, when pharmaceutical companies received F.D.A. approval to treat social anxiety with S.S.R.I.s and poured tens of millions of dollars into advertising its existence. The current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the DSM-IV, acknowledges that stage fright (and shyness in social situations) is common and not necessarily a sign of illness.”

So is the stigma of shyness exploding because worried parents are bombarded with doctors and drug companies telling us that our children won’t lead successful lives if they are simply shy? That is anything but the truth. Furthermore, it is a travesty to try to change a person’s innate personality with medication, which it seems, is now happening:

A recent study suggests that today’s selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors not only relieve social anxiety, but also induce extroverted behavior.

“The day may come — and might be here already — when people are as comfortable changing their psyches as the color of their hair. If we continue to confuse shyness with sickness, we may find ourselves in a world of all rovers and no sitters, of all yang and no yin,” says Cain.

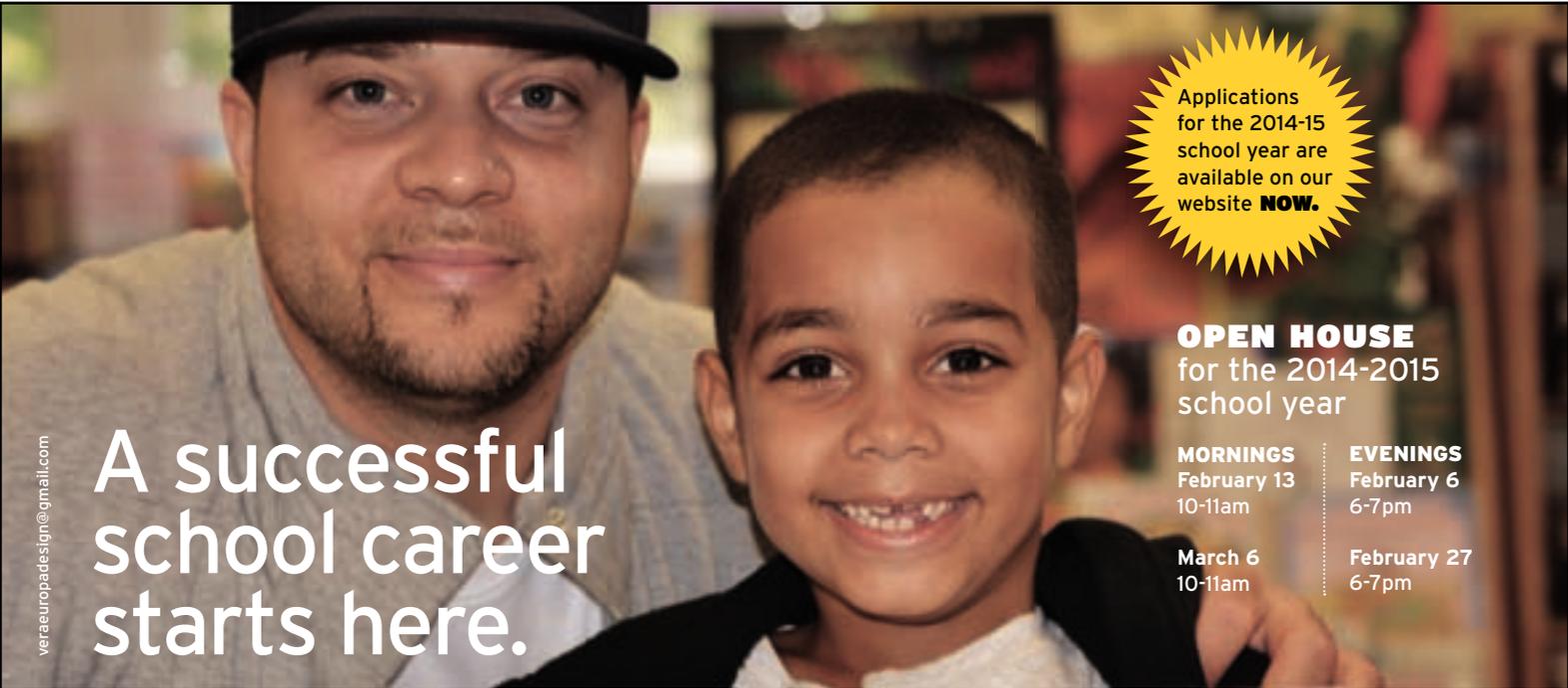
I was a shy kid and to some degree still am shy. I always enjoyed, and even craved, solitary time throughout the day. Now I spend most of my day in the loudness that comes from raising kids, working in publishing, and living in New York City, but I still treasure being alone, and I know that exact personality tendency is what has spurred my writing. I am at my best when my mind is happily wandering the realms of the creative world. I often wonder what would have happened if my mother had viewed my shyness as a fault and instead of allowing me the quiet time I needed, threw me into non-stop activities just so she would feel better about my personality, or worse yet, put me on medication. I fully believe my artistic sensibilities would have suffered if I were not simply allowed to live as I was born to be.

By medicating children to be more socially active, we might possibly be stifling many sensitive, would-be artists and creative thinkers. As Cain writes, Steve Wozniak, the engineer who founded Apple with Steve Jobs, is a person who craves quiet and time to be alone:

“Mr. Wozniak describes his creative process as an exercise in solitude. ‘Most inventors and engineers I’ve met are like me,’ he writes in “iWoz,” his autobiography. ‘They’re shy and they live in their heads. They’re almost like artists. In fact, the very best of them are artists. And artists work best alone.’”

Shyness can be a gift and the best thing a shy child (or any child) can have is a parent who doesn’t see their personality as a defect but celebrates their uniqueness.

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



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High school admissions

Seven steps to a successful result at city schools

BY MAURICE FRUMKIN

Tens of thousands of families across New York City are now facing the high school admissions waiting game they have heard about — and have been dreading for months and sometimes years.

After submitting the “round one” public high school application choices back in December, parents and students are now waiting for the results (expected in early March) and are asking themselves, “What happens next?” “What happens after we get our round one result?” And most important of all, “What if we don’t get a school we are happy with?”

In recent years, there have been thousands of students each year who are not matched to any of their first high school choices, or are less than satisfied with their round one match. The reasons are beyond the scope of this discussion, but the next immediate step in the process

for these families is the infamous “round two.” This represents another chance to submit choices, and many of the mechanics of the process are similar to round one. Is your head spinning yet?

What is significantly different from round one, however, are the school program choices that are typically available. As one can imagine, as time (and rounds in the process) passes, seats are filled. The city does its best to fill as many remaining seats as possible with students who willingly choose those seats. Unfortunately, the reality of round two is that there are fewer seats in the schools that many families deem “desirable.”

Based on my work with hundreds of families faced with exactly this scenario, these are my Seven Steps Towards A Successful High School Result.

- Anticipate and plan. This may seem obvious, but the truth is many families don’t do this. Most wait until round one results are issued

in March and only then think about what happens after that. This is the worst course of action. Understand the process the best you can, and develop a proactive plan of action. You can always rest later.

- Don’t assume you will get what you want. This may sound harsh and may be hard to swallow now, but it is best to anticipate the worst and be ready for it. The day letters are issued can be traumatic for many students, so plan to be there to support your child the best you can. If you are pleasantly surprised, so be it. But the numbers don’t lie — unfortunately, not everyone can get a top choice, no less their number-one choice.

- Understand what happens in round two and beyond. This cannot be overstated, since you will most likely not have the luxury of time in round two to act and make decisions. Should you participate in round two if you got a round one match? Should you apply to any of the same schools as in round one? Should you forego round two and submit an appeal? These are just some of the questions many families will have, so be sure to anticipate your own responses.

- Understand the appeals process, but don’t rely on it. There is a reason it’s called the appeals process and not “round three,” but unfortunately many families are already relying on the appeals process to get what they want and will be sorely disappointed when their appeal is denied.

- You may have to compromise. Again, this is probably not what you want to hear. But know that many students flourish in their new schools, despite not getting a top choice.

- Don’t let your emotions get in the way of the unfinished work ahead. I have seen many families who, in frustration or anger directly elsewhere, sabotage their own efforts by spending an inordinate amount of time and energy on unproductive activity. Focus on the work that matters, not personalities or emotions.

- Consult an expert. Whether that is your school counselor, friend, or someone else who truly knows the process well, get the facts, develop a solid plan based on accurate information, and don’t act based on rumors or someone else’s situation.

Maurice Frumkin is president of NYC Admissions Solutions, a Brooklyn-based firm that provides expert advice to families navigating the complex city high-school admissions process. Follow him on Facebook at NYCAdmissionsSolutions, Twitter @NYCHSAdmissions, and sign up for his free monthly newsletter at www.nycadmissionssolutions.com.



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Fighting bullying

A program
strives to
combat the
problem on
all fronts

BY CANDI SPARKS

Kids are bullied. It's a sad fact of life that school kids are picked on by their peers. In fact, one in five children is likely to be bullied; 18 percent of the city's high-school students are bullied, and students who are lesbian, gay, or bi-sexual are twice as likely to be cyber-bullied, according to a study released by the New York City Department of Health in December. Tragically and too often, bullying can result in suicide.

What is bullying and why would it result in suicide? The general definition of bullying is any act that involves physical aggression, name-calling, and any attempt to gain power or control over another person. Some bullying behavior starts on first- and second-grade playgrounds, but that's mostly due to children learning how to set boundaries and socialize with one another. But as children age and intentional components of physical aggression, humiliation, shame and name calling escalates, it's bullying.

Unfortunately, children who are bullied by friends or associates often don't want to tell anyone about it. Yet, the commitment to the safety of our children is paramount to stop bullying and prevent suicide.

Strengthening relationships

Cheryl Hurst, a social worker of The Children's Hospital at Montefiore School Health Program, and her team address the problem in an eight-week middle school classroom curriculum called Strengthening Tween and Adolescent Relationships, known as "STAR." The program helps 12-to-14-year-old children and adolescents cope with stress, whether it's related to family, dating, academics, violence

or the daily environment.

"No temporary problem should have a permanent solution," Hurst says.

'STAR' students

Teachers appreciate the importance of the program's mission.

"At the end of the day, no parent wants their child to become a statistic," says Arissa Zervas, a sixth grade teacher at PS-MS 95 in the Bronx.

She witnessed a remarkable improvement in the relationships between her students and their ability to manage difficult social situations. She only had positive things to say about the effect of the program.

"The STAR program sparked an interest in my students to explore how they interact in relationships. My class talked a lot about relationships and what a relationship means. Some students were not even aware of what that term meant. At first they giggled at the word, because they automatically assumed that 'relationship' means boyfriend or girlfriend, romance and kissing," says Zervas. She discussed with her students that we all have many relationships in the world, like the relationship between students and teachers, families, and non-romantic peer relationships.

The students also discussed abuse in relationships, whether in the form of teasing, bullying, racism, or dating violence.

"This group was not the most mature, but it was interesting to watch them on the journey," she says. "The approach is very student-centered. Some took these lessons to heart and incorporated the lessons into the group."

Changes in students

The changes in Zervas's students are the positive outcomes of the program, which are outlined in the book

"Dialectical Behavior Therapy with Suicidal Adolescents" by authors Alec L. Miller, Jill H. Rathus, Marsha M. Linehan, and Charles Robert Swenson (Foreword). Hurst works with Dr. Alec Miller, chief of Child and Adolescent Psychology and director of the Adolescent Depression and Suicide Program at Montefiore Medical Center. They use dialectical behavior therapy to help children develop new adaptive skills to cope with life challenges.

"My students started to take a stand against teasing, bullying and abuse," says Zervas. "Their opinions changed. They were also able to defend their opinions as to why a behavior either was or was not abusive. I absolutely recommend the STAR program to any grade, not just elementary grades. It is important to know what good relationships look like and what abuse is — all the different types that we normally take for granted."

'STAR' activities

Coping skills are developed through child-centered activities. Zervas's students enjoyed most of the role-playing activities.

"It was very powerful for the students. Two people in a relationship would have to act out different types of abuse. This gave them a visual and tactile connection to the problem. The classroom had different degrees posted around the room (like the weather temperature). The students would go stand near the degree number that represented how big of a problem this is — the higher the degree, the more abusive the situation. They would then discuss what happened in the relationship, how to handle anger, how this is a form of bullying."

Students also enjoyed making collages. The students cut out images of stereotypes and gender roles in society to create a personal collage, which they then discussed.

"Some of the images they identified with were not as appealing by the end of the program," she says.

"Perhaps the most important activity the students enjoyed was the discussion of how to handle what is happening," she continues. "Many times, students don't get a chance to do that with each other, and don't really want to do it at home (because it isn't cool)."

Discussing bullying at home

This program works in schools among students and their peers in a guided setting. But at home, teens



and tweens can present difficult parenting challenges. The age group is often already moody, emotional, and withdrawn for any reason and for no reason at all. It is difficult to know whether or not a child's behavior in this age group is "normal" or the result of bullying. Hurst says that, to teens, it isn't cool to talk about things at home.

She wants parents to be proactive and "politically correct" when it comes to their children and to discipline from a place of safety, not violence. She suggests that parents "strike when the iron is cold" through daily conversation and spending time in the relationship to enhance the child's ability to communicate.

"Ask them about their friends and their experiences at school. Be on the

lookout for children who don't come home with the lunchbox or all of their possessions and have their clothes tattered at school — [they] might be victims. Parents have to be the eyes and ears of the child's experience and help them navigate this world."

Signs of bullying

Dr. Miller wants adults to be alert to the other signs, symptoms, and signals that a child is having trouble.

"Depression is a 'soft sign' of bullying," he says. "But depressed children don't look like adults. They are more irritable and express boredom and anhedonia [lack of pleasure]. They typically no longer enjoy the things that they used to, like basketball or video games. In addition, changes in sleep or appetite such as waking

up early and pains such as stomach aches or headaches. These symptoms could be medical or they could be anxiety related to bullying."

Identifying when a child is being bullied is tricky, and recognizing the suicidal tendency is even trickier. Kids tend to feel really isolated and alone when go through a bullying experience, and can become remote and moody in general, but there are additional warning signs that can seep out. Dr. Miller gives a few warning signs when teens might be contemplating self-harm or suicide, such as:

- Anxious avoidance of school or peer activities.
- Verbal expressions of wanting to die or suicide.
- Written or artistic expressions regarding death or suicide in English or art class.
- Suicide contagion — adolescents are most vulnerable to news of a recent or celebrity suicide, like the '90s Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain. The suicide of a peer reported in the media concerns them.
- Self-injury like cutting, eating disorders, substance abuse, and other self-harm. This could be an attempt to manage and regulate difficult emotions, or it may be a sign of bullying, and a heightened risk of suicide.

What to do

What can be done when a child shows any of these stress signals and there is a suspicion of bullying? According to Hurst:

- The hardest part of this process is being mindful of your own emotional state. It's best not to become frustrated, angry, or judgmental.
- A proactive approach works best for children. "I am worried about you," is a good way to start the conversation, then, get specific as to why there is a concern.
- Prevent the child from feeling isolated by validating their feelings. "I can tell that something is bothering you. I would like to be able to help you." "How do you feel about the way you are being treated?"
- Don't be alarmed if the mood or pattern goes on for several days. Fight through the child's resistance to open up. But, if it is persisting more than two days, have a guidance counselor, psychologist, or social worker speak with the child.
- Most importantly, become a vigilant monitor of the child's state of being. Parents should have the right to see their child's electronic communications and set a time for them to shut it down. This will help kids

who are getting barraged with texts late at night in bed.

• Let children know that help is out there. Everyone should be involved in anti-bullying measures — parents, peer groups, by-standers, mental health workers, and community advocates can "circle the wagons" to protect children.

Making a safe school

Parents, teachers, and staff can take an aggressive stance to make "safe" schools. Principal Serge Marshall Davis of PS-MS 95 in the Bronx utilizes the STAR program to enhance his school.

"Social and emotional well-being is critical to the student's success in school and in life," he says.

The program has had such a positive effect that every year the school is looking to add another grade and classroom to the program.

"Emphasizing equality as a huge part of a healthy relationship and STAR helps participants understand that there needs to be safety, trust, and support to have a good one," says Hurst. "Participants often realize that they are not yet ready to date because they still need time to learn how to express their gender identity and how stand up for themselves before getting involved in dating and romantic relationships."

Putting first things first sounds good to me.

Davis attributes the success of the program at this school to Hurst, directly.

"We are fortunate to have someone of Ms. Hurst's caliber. She is passionate about children, growth and contributing to the school community," he says. "She is teaching children that they have rights and emotions and how to stand up for themselves in a confident way."

•••

I was bullied as a school girl, and by the time I was ready to stand up for myself, it had stopped. If there had been a program to teach students like myself how to cope with bullying, my bullying might have ended a whole lot sooner. If this program helps the life of even one child, in my opinion, it is 100 percent worth it.

Candi Sparks is a Brooklyn mother of two, a Department of Education vendor and author of kid money books "Can I Have Some Money?", "Max Gets It!", and "Nacho Money." She is the chief executive officer of Sparks Fly (specializing in financial literacy for youth). She can be found on her website, www.sparksfly.org, on Twitter @candi_sparks, and on Facebook Candi_Sparks.



MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SEREDA

The magic number

How we decide how many children to have

It seems everywhere I go lately, since I'm out-to-there-pregnant, people are asking if I'll have more children. The same thing happened when Olivia was born. The nurse at the hospital asked me when my husband and I would start trying for baby number two, when I had delivered Olivia just three hours before. Needless to say, having another baby was the last thing on my mind.

Everyone has their number — the ideal number of children they want to have — and more often than not, the number in their head doesn't match the number of actual children they will have.

My mother always wanted four children. She was one of four and grew up with fond memories (and some not so fond) of growing up with her older brothers. But when she had a complicated pregnancy and childbirth with me, she decided one was plenty.

My dad is one of eight and always wanted lots of children, too. He remarried my stepmother and had two more. She thought two was perfect. She had her pair; my half-brother and half-sister. So that was that.

Today, it's no surprise that, whether parents decide to or not, families are shrinking. It's become extremely pricey to raise a family, and with two parents working to make ends meet, little time is left over to rear children.

I used to think it would be much easier, like most people, before I had children. I didn't give much thought to childcare or funding college or even simple dance lessons. Everything would just work

itself out.

Now, with a second one on the way, my inner control freak is feeling the pressure. As someone recently told me, "One is manageable, two is scary."

I don't know what the future holds or if I'll have a change of heart in a few years. My husband and I don't have a master plan for the size of our family — before we had kids, his number was five but somehow I think that number has changed for him. Sure, we'd both love to have a boy. But I'm finally getting used to the idea of my girls, and I love it.



Our home will certainly be very girly and my husband will definitely crave more guy time, but I remind him of the daughters who will grow up and take care of us in our old age, if we're lucky. I also remind him that we should never be outnumbered.

Maybe one day we'll want to add to our family, but right now I'm comfortable with the idea of a family of four. I've always been a bit of a loner as an only child, so I'm excited that Olivia gets to have a sibling to grow up with.

Her and her sister, with mom and dad's help, will create their own memories.

In the meantime, mom and dad will be tucking money away for all those dance lessons and other wonderful expenses.

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Understanding tonsillitis

It is prime season
for this commonly
misunderstood
condition

BY JAMIE LOBER

February is part of the cold-and-flu season and it is a prime time to talk about one of the most commonly misunderstood conditions: tonsillitis.

"People do not necessarily call it tonsillitis; they call it a sore throat or strep throat and occasionally they mean tonsillitis," says Dr. Joseph M. Bernstein, director of the division of pediatric otolaryngology at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. Often, people are unsure as to what having tonsillitis really means. "Tonsillitis by definition is an inflammation or infection of the tonsils, which are immune organs or lymphatic organs in the back of one's throat," says Bernstein.

Different names get thrown around — such as tonsil infection or throat infection — but doctors understand what parents are referencing.

"In young kids the tonsils are a significant area in the back of the throat, so it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a localized tonsil infection versus a more diffuse, where everything in the back of the throat is inflamed, which would be a pharyngitis effectively," says Bernstein.

In general, tonsillitis is not preventable.

"The causes are either a virus or a bacteria, and viral tonsillitis is more



Tonsillitis tends to be associated with a child's first couple of years of early exposure to a variety of respiratory illnesses.

common than bacterial tonsillitis," he says.

The signs of tonsillitis can mimic other conditions.

"The symptoms generally include some generalized malaise, sore throat, and often times a fever," says Bernstein. Younger kids tend to be affected because they have a more immature immune system. "We see kids below the age of 10 more commonly and we see this more in the winter or cold months." It tends to be associated with a child's first couple of years of early exposure to a variety of respiratory illnesses.

Diagnosis is based on looking at the tonsils, as well as taking a history.

"We can make the clinical diagnosis simply with a combination of a complaint about a sore throat along with some objective signs of inflammation," says Bernstein. If the doctor looks in the back of the throat and sees redness or swelling that means there is inflammation in the tonsils, but does not tell whether the tonsils are inflamed because of a virus or bacteria that may need to be treated with antibiotics. This is where throat cultures come in handy.

The prognosis is good.

"Generally speaking, tonsillitis — if not due to streptococcus infections — tends to be fairly self-limited and most kids tend to get better on their own," says Bernstein. Conservative management is helpful. "Kids should be properly hydrated. Control fevers and pain with some Tylenol or Motrin, and they are self-resolving over the course of a couple of days," says Bernstein.

With streptococcal infections, you have to be concerned about potential complications so doctors treat with antibiotics.

"There is some evidence to show that it hastens the clinical improvement and kids get better and it also decreases the complications," says Bernstein.

In severe cases, tonsils are removed.

"Generally speaking, we wait until kids have significant symptoms and have had either seven infections within a year or five infections for a couple of years running, or three infections for three or more years running," says Bernstein. It is the severe, more recurrent cases that tend to benefit from a tonsillectomy. "There are risks like bleeding after surgery which on average is in about two and a half percent of cases," he says.

Doctors are cautious about recommending the procedure. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggested surgery for tonsil or adenoid swelling that makes normal breathing difficult; tonsils that are so swollen that your child has a problem swallowing; your child has repeated ear or sinus infections despite treatment; your child has an excessive number of severe sore throats each year; or your child's lymph nodes beneath the lower jaw are swollen or tender for at least six months even with antibiotic treatment. If your child is a candidate for surgery, make sure he knows what to expect before, during, and after so it is less frightening to go through.

Now that you understand the basics of tonsillitis, you may wonder why we have tonsils in the first place.

"The tonsils function as an immunologic organ system and their function is to initiate an immune response against infectious, foreign bodies, entering the respiratory tract," says Bernstein. The mode of entry through the mouth can be through inhalation or ingestion and the tonsils are the first defense against those antigens that potentially seek harm.

The take-home message is that if your child has a sore throat and fever without other symptoms suggestive of a common cold, he should see the pediatrician for a culture of his throat and to make sure it is not a strep infection that needs to be treated with antibiotics.

"It can last as short as 48 hours to occasionally as long as a week or 10 days," says Bernstein. With supportive therapies, kids can do quite well.

Jamie Lober, author of Pink Power (www.getpinkpower.com), is dedicated to providing information on women's and pediatric health topics. She can be reached at jamie@getpinkpower.com.

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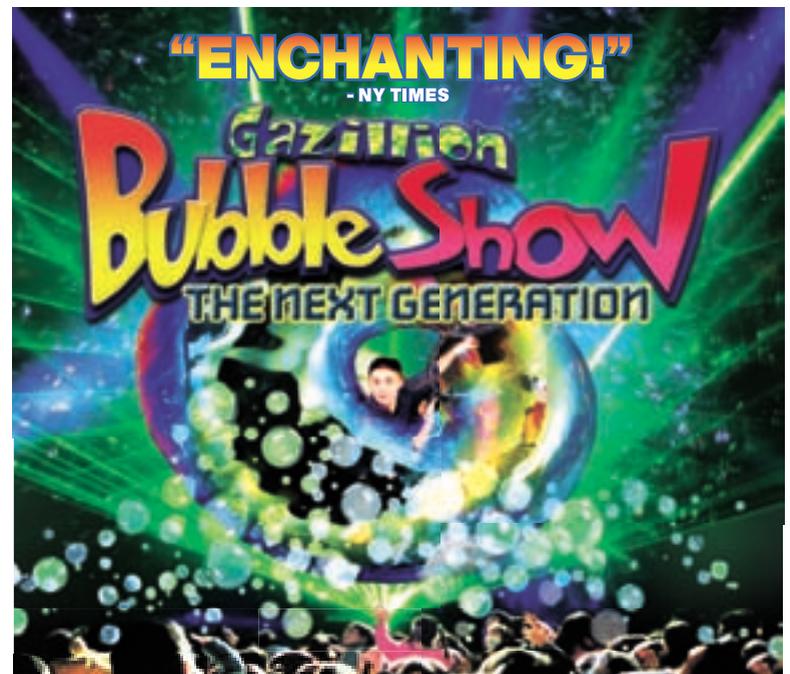


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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Brutal boyfriends

How to help girls leave an abusive relationship

According to a 2011 survey conducted by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “9.4 percent of high school students reported being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the 12 months prior to the survey.”

Dating violence crosses all racial, economic, and social lines. However, most victims are young women, who often keep their suffering secret, so it is typical that parents don’t find out until things have gotten extremely out of hand.

Heidi*, the mother of an abused teenage daughter, explains, “We only found out, because my husband took her phone for another reason and was shocked to see messages our daughter’s boyfriend was sending her.”

Heidi says that her daughter Sabrina’s* boyfriend did not start mistreating her until months into the relationship. By that time, he had already established control over her.

“He would tell her things like, ‘Your mom and dad don’t love you



like I do,’” Heidi reports. She says that the situation escalated rapidly. “The school called us one day and said that we had to get there immediately, because our daughter had been hurt by her boyfriend.”

Heidi describes the fear, hopelessness, anger, and frustration

that a parent feels when this is happening to her child.

“It’s hard to understand how awful this is unless you’re going through it. It started to affect our marriage and our other children because we were consumed with Sabrina’s situation.”

Can parents help their daughters out of the abyss?

**Names changed to protect privacy.*

Getting out of a dangerous relationship

The following tips are provided by Mike Domitrz, founder of The Date Safe Project (www.Date-SafeProject.org), which provides educational programs and materials about verbal consent, respecting boundaries, healthy intimacy, and support for survivors of violence.

- Recognize the abuse: You deserve equal choice and freedom in all aspects of a relationship. Disrespect or violence of any kind (emotional, verbal, or physical) is NEVER alright.

- Document: Document the abuse in order to see the red flags and take steps to leave the relationship. Seek medical attention.



Not all injuries are visible and it is another way to document the abuse.

- Change all access: Change your phone password and all online passwords prior to telling the abuser you are ending the relationship.

- Safety first: If your safety is at all a concern in meeting with the abuser, you do not “owe it” to the abuser to meet in-person to end the relationship.

- Be clear: When ending any relationship, use clear wording. For example, “This relationship is not one I want to be in today or at any time in the future. We are no longer dating.”

- Hand over and report technol-

ogy: Give your phone to a trusted adult who will report any abusive messages sent to you from the abuser.

- Free yourself of stress: Stay away from online communities where the abuser may try to influence you (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

- Your options: Be willing to call the police and/or turn to additional resources such as:

- NYCDomesticViolenceHotline: 1 (800) 621-HOPE [4673]

- The National Dating Abuse Helpline: 1 (866) 331-9474

- www.breakthecycle.org (online dating abuse prevention program)

- www.loveisrespect.org (information about healthy relationships)

Avoiding abuse from the get-go

A healthy and loving relationship with male caregivers is a good prerequisite for future relationships, because girls will know what to look for in a male companion. However, this does not guarantee that your daughter won’t become involved in a destructive relationship.

“The key lies in creating a strong, loving bond between a daughter and her dad. This is her first relationship with a man and later leads to her choice of men to date and marry,” explains Dr. Carole Lieberman, host of the weekly internet radio show, Dr. Carole’s Couch, and member of the clinical faculty at the University of California, Los Angeles’s Neuropsychiatric Institute.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, founder

“It’s hard to understand how awful this is unless you’re going through it. It started to affect our marriage and our other children because we were consumed with our daughter’s situation.”

of This World: The Values Network and international best-selling author of 30 books, including “Ten Conversations You Need to Have with Your Children,” counsels, “Parents need to be up to speed on what their children are doing.”

Warning signs

Some suitors don’t seem violent at first, so it is imperative that parents are aware of potential warning signs.

Dr. Christine Weber, a clinical neuropsychologist practicing in Seaford, NY, instructs parents to be wary of the following behaviors:

- Your teen stops sharing information with friends and family.
- Your teen becomes isolated.
- Your teen justifies the abuse (e.g. “He didn’t mean to shove me.”).
- Your teen drastically changes her appearance to satisfy her boyfriend’s needs instead of her own.
- Your teen’s boyfriend refuses to meet you. (Not necessarily a sign of abuse, but a general “red flag.”)

Steps parents should take

“You need her to trust you; otherwise, she won’t even be able to hear you,” says Dr. Robert Epstein, a senior research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology and author of “Teen 2.0: Saving Our Children and Families from the Torment of Adolescence.”

“The most important way to achieve this is to show her that you trust her judgment, and not to criticize her for being an idiot

who is being taken advantage of by a defective male.”

Rabbi Boteach says that parents need to be in positions of authority but understand their child’s needs.

“Rather than saying ‘I won’t allow it,’ ask questions about what your teen is feeling, such as ‘Do you feel this young man respects you?’”

Lieberman recommends that parents step in when violence occurs.

“Contact the school and the police, especially if there is proof of physical abuse.”

Epstein urges parents to be on their daughter’s side by giving her a better quality of love than her boyfriend is giving. Unconditional love and being there to pick up the pieces are essential.

Tips and tales

“Teen girls should be leery of the guy who doesn’t want her to go out with her friends and family or gets jealous if he doesn’t have her attention.”

Laura Bongiorno, Hyde Park, NY
“Showing them the consequences of what could happen to them (e.g. a battered women’s shelter) if they choose to stay in a violent relationship is convincing. Reassurance that you love them unconditionally is also important.”

Patti Clerc, Ocala, FL
“Love is blind sometimes, but as parents, we should be involved in our daughters’ relationships. Meet and get to know the boyfriend, but not in a controlling way.”

Rhonda Dixon, Kingston, NY
“Controlling relationships start out with a lot of attention, which can be flattering. When they have someone who showers them with gifts, they think it’s the real thing. However, the gifts often come with strings, and the giver can be quite pushy about collecting.”

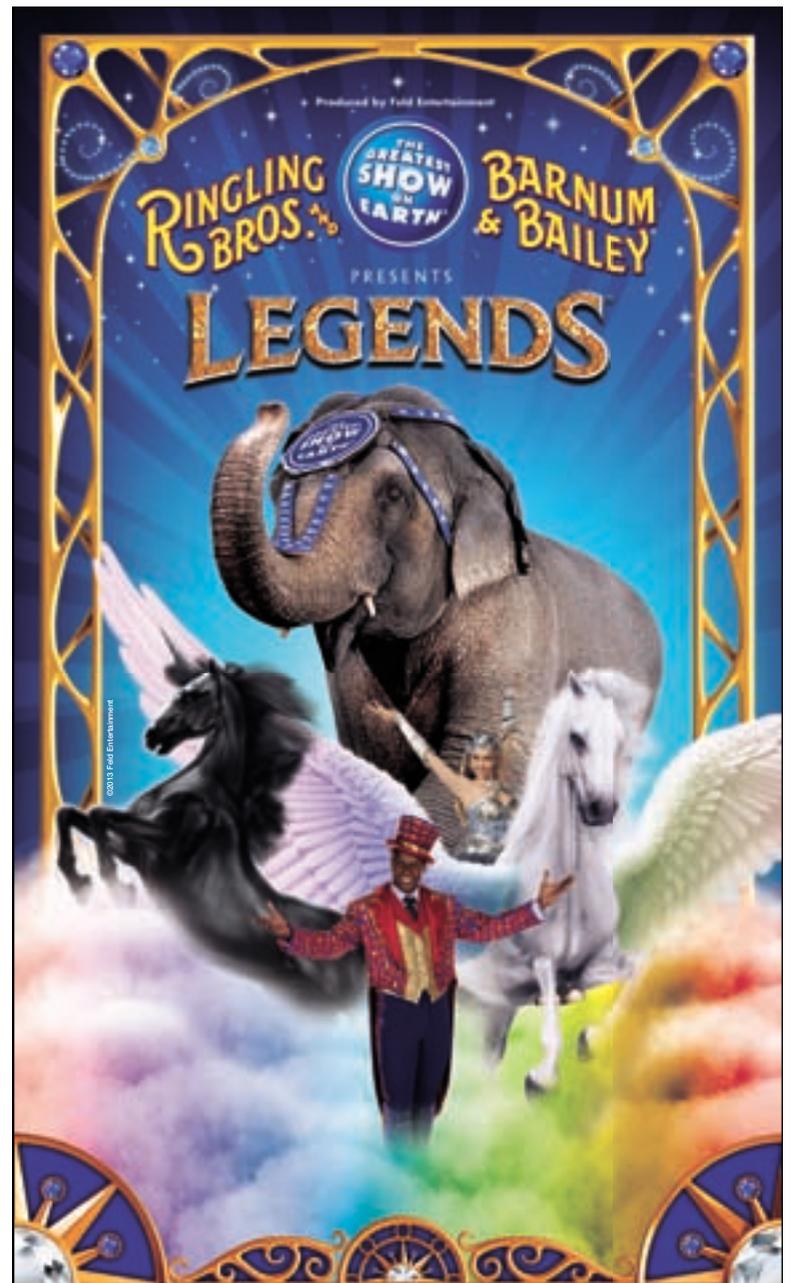
Debbie St. Onge, Poughkeepsie, NY

Share your ideas

Upcoming topic: Adolescents affected by divorce. How parents can help.

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, “Lions And Tigers And Teens: Expert Advice and Support for the Conscientious Parent Just Like You” (Unlimited Publishing LLC, 2012).



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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Divorce following domestic violence

Once, when I participated in an online discussion about the limits of mediation, I shared what I had been taught in 1997, in the first mediation training I had attended: That when one spouse is unable to express him or herself after experiencing domestic violence, mediation is inappropriate.

The basis for this policy can be understood when we consider what happens during sessions and what is expected of the participants. Overwhelmingly, divorce mediation requires the spouses to be present and in the same room. To ultimately reach agreements, both need to provide information, and talk about what they want and need for themselves and their children. The parties work to create options that best suit their situations, and finally — though this is not quite the linear process it sounds like — decide together how to settle their issues.

Mediators are helpful at every step, and other professionals can also be involved, but it is the spouses themselves who have to have the capacity to speak their own minds and make their own decisions. Possible exceptions are for another article.

How can a spouse who has been abused express herself and make decisions without fear of violence? How can she even be in the same room with her husband? It's important to keep in mind that in an abusive heterosexual relationship, it may be the husband who is the victim.

During the online discussion, it didn't take long for my assertions to be challenged. One contributor, Naomi Holtring, Master of Dispute Resolution and Director of interMEDiate Dispute Management in Australia, said that mediation may be appropriate even in situations where there has been abuse.

But first, she said, a thorough assessment needs to be completed, and the level of harm gauged.

"Then, the appropriateness of the mediation process can be considered," she says



Holtring mentioned a case where the wife had been severely injured by the husband. Even so, she, the wife, was the one who wanted to mediate.

The wife wanted to tell her husband directly about the pain he had caused her. She wanted him to know, from her, about the financial expenses his abuse had made her incur, and the inconvenience and lost time from work.

Additionally, this spouse needed the money a settlement would bring very quickly to pay those costs, and more generally to move on with her life.

Holtring told us that the sessions had been conducted via phone — essentially through conference calls allowing the parties to speak with each other and the mediator, while physically being apart, providing a much greater sense of safety than would have been possible with everyone in the same room.

"After four hours of mediation they [the wife and husband] had discussed and agreed on parenting, property, and finance," she says. "Our [follow-up] reviews show those agreements are holding up and they are each moving on with their separate lives."

That online conversation made a big impression that has stayed with

me. Many continue to believe that cases involving domestic violence are inappropriate for mediation. Period. But my own thinking has changed. Every couple is different. Those working with spouses may need to distinguish between one spouse slapping the other five years ago — any violence is inexcusable — without any violence afterwards, from ongoing and escalating abuse.

Mediation certainly is not a suitable process in every instance where there has been domestic violence; but neither should it be dismissed out of hand. Consider the alternative of going to court, which so often increases feelings of fear and anger as cases may drag on for years; it definitely has drawbacks.

During that online discussion I learned that, with the necessary safeguards in place, mediation just may be preferable to long, expensive, and antagonistic court proceedings.

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

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

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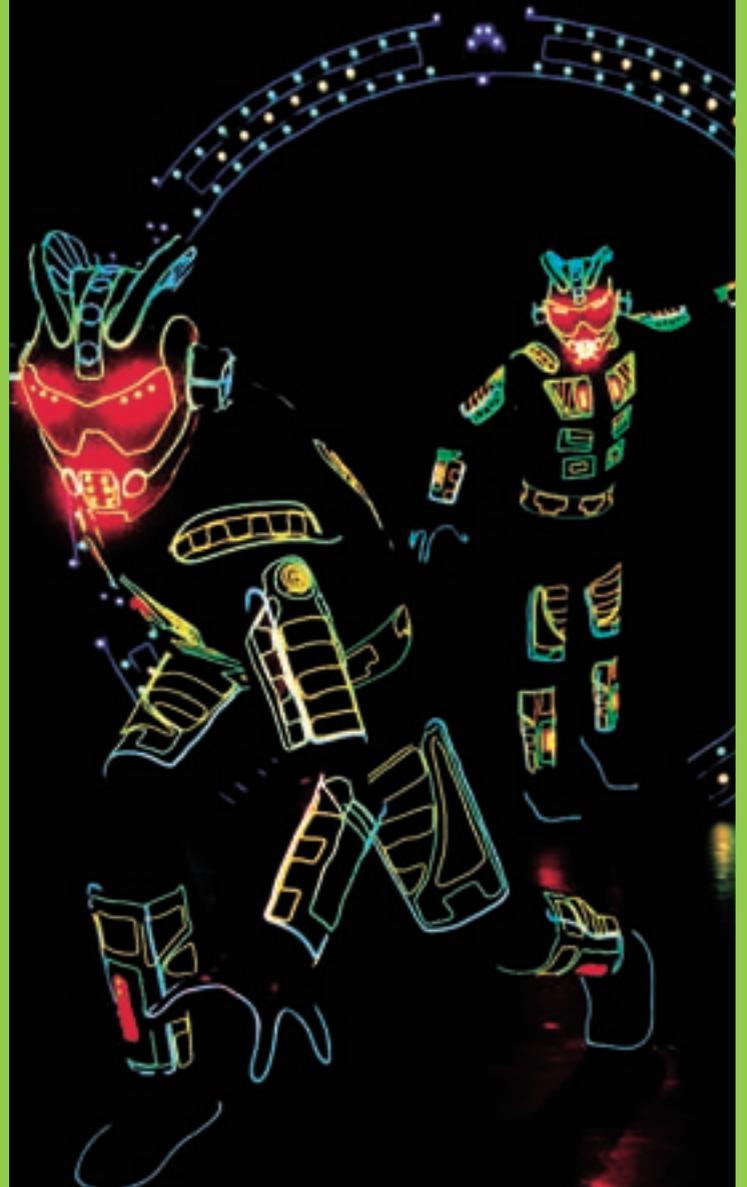


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Looking for LOVE

Supporting adolescent romantic relationships

BY DR. HEIDI SMITH LUEDTKE

Your daughter's latest crush has a shock of thick black hair and a brown belt in aikido. Enamored of his vegetarian lifestyle and Eastern interests, she's talking tofu and downloading anime movies by the gigabyte. You? Not so impressed.

Learning from love

"Although many parents would like pre-teens to participate in supervised group activities, school dances, and trips to the mall or the movies, kids are starting to date earlier than most parents would like," says relationship education advocate Lindsay Kriger, creator of the young women's romance advice blog *If Only I Knew*. Tweens are often pre-occupied with romance. They may be infatuated with classmates or obsessed with peers' partnerships. Spending time with mixed-sex peer groups exposes kids to potential love interests and offers opportunities for flirtation. By ages 16 to 18, 75 percent of teens report they've had a relationship, dated, or "hooked up" with someone.

Dating is an opportunity for adolescents to test out different identities, says Dr. Stephanie Madsen, associate professor of psychology at McDaniel College in Westminster, Md. One month, your teen may be sporting an athletic persona; the next, he may be asking to turn your garage into a recording studio. His clothing choices and personal style may shift to please the latest would-be girlfriend. For parents, watching kids try on identities may be like

watching bad comedy. Although the characters are awkward and unbelievable, you just can't look away.

Relationships are like a mirror: kids see themselves as others see them and find out how their words and actions draw others closer or push them away. Tweens and teens also learn about their values and goals, explore their feelings, and practice communication and commitment in dating relationships, says Los Angeles-based teen life coach Melissa Kahn.

"In some ways, teenage love is the purest, sweetest love of all — the kind that is about attraction and fun," says Kahn.

But that doesn't mean young love is easy.

"Romance is a double-edged sword," says Madsen. Being admired and desired is exhilarating, getting disregarded or dumped can be crushing. First relationships also create a template teens use to understand future relationships.

"Failed relationships can make teens feel inadequate, and those feelings of unworthiness may be carried around for a long time," says Kriger.

Parents can help kids learn what is appropriate in a healthy, loving partnership by taking a consulting role in early romance.

Parenting pointers

Meeting your daughter's date at the door with a loaded shotgun or a list of killer questions would likely do more harm than good. Support healthy relationship skills development by following these do's and don'ts.

•DO listen and share. "Romance

can be a fun topic for parents and kids to bond over," says Kahn. "Parents can take a listening role to hear what is on their child's mind. They can also share their personal experiences with love, which a lot of kids are curious about."

Ask your child what qualities she looks for in a potential boyfriend and what she likes to do on a date.

"A teen who has talked through what she wants in a relationship is better prepared when important choices — like when to end a relationship — present themselves," says Kahn. Initiate an ongoing conversation.

•DON'T overemphasize sex. "Fewer than half of teens in high school have had intercourse," says Kahn, "yet many parents — fearing the worst — assume their teen is engaged in sexually risky behavior and discourage dating altogether."

Be careful to distinguish between romance and sex; they aren't the same thing.

"Many young girls are more interested in infatuation and the logistics of being asked out on a date than in sex," says Kahn. If you immediately bring up sex when your tween or teen mentions a boyfriend, you'll shut down the dialogue.

•DO supervise appropriately. Madsen's research shows 64 percent of parents have rules about kids' romantic relationships. The best rules give parents a chance to step in if their child needs support, says Madsen, they don't restrict kids' behavior. For instance, you might make a rule that you must meet a date before your child goes out and that you need to know where they're going



and when they'll return.

"Restrictive rules that tell kids who they can (and can't) date, and what they can (and can't) do on a date are perceived as overbearing," says Madsen, and they can backfire. Kids may look for loopholes or keep relationships secret to avoid punishment.

- DON'T intrude. Dating is one way kids separate from parents and that may evoke some anxiety, says Madsen. Holding on isn't healthy.

"Teens crave privacy and independence," says Kahn, and they'll pull away from you if you're over-involved. Forego any spy missions you might be contemplating. Just be available to act as a sounding board when your child wants to talk.

When he chooses to share his dating troubles and triumphs, keep them in strictest confidence. It's not cool to post your kid's romance-related news on Facebook.

- DO set clear expectations. Adolescents are learning what behavior is normal during dating. Explain what is and is not acceptable. Studies show many tweens and teens experience verbal harassment in dating relationships and nearly one-third say they worry they might be physically hurt by a romantic partner. Kids need to know they don't have to tolerate disrespect or abuse. Establish a code your child can use to escape a bad situation.

If she calls or texts you the code, come to the rescue. Tell her you need her to return home immediately due to a "family emergency" and pick her up if necessary.

- DON'T project. Thinking back on your own teenage years may help you better connect with your child, but remember, your child is not you.

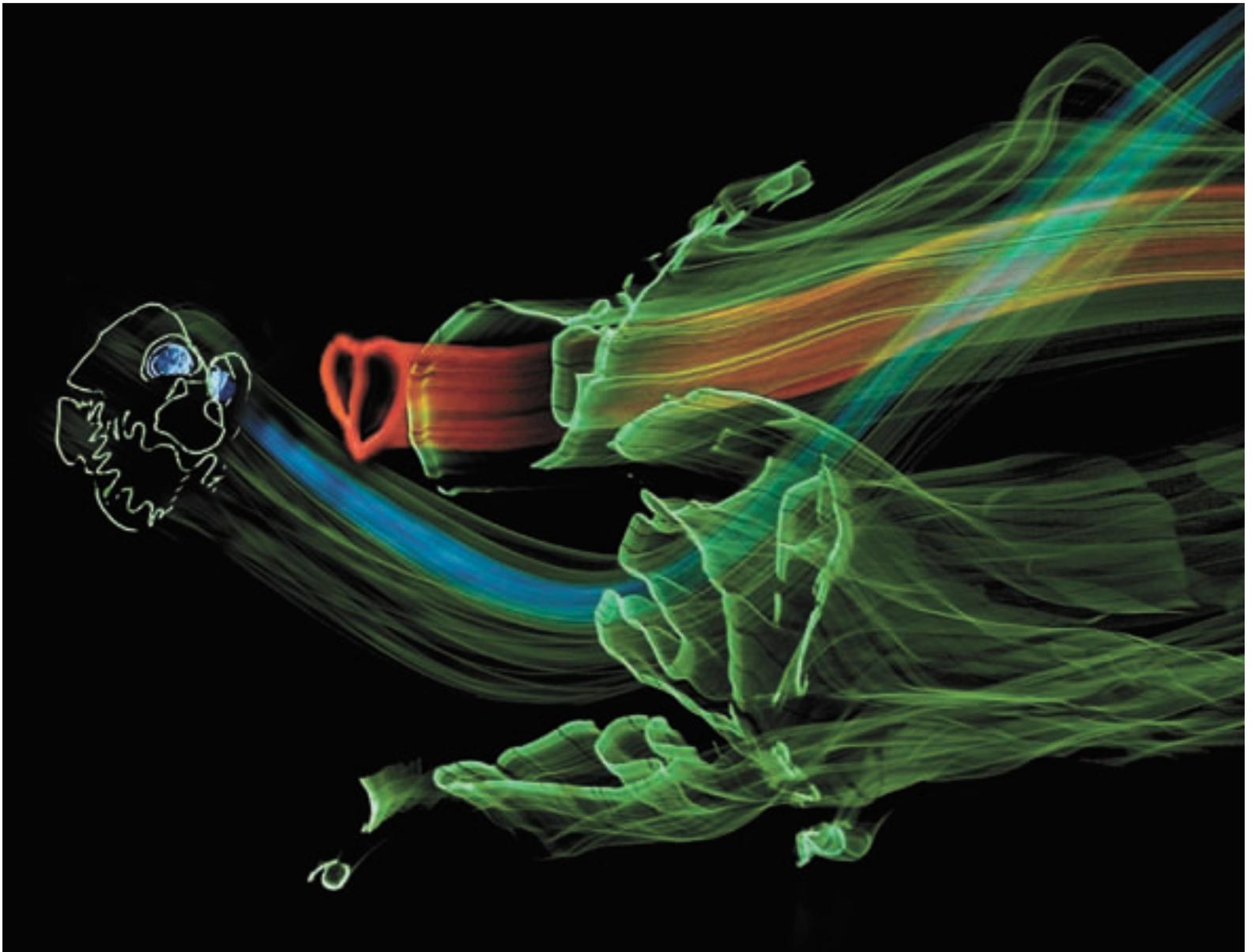
"Parents may fear teens are repeating the very same mistakes we made, which — in retrospect — seem horrifying," says Kahn.

Be careful not to assume kids are making the same choices you made or that the same results are inevitable. You can't prevent your child from making mistakes — or talk her out of her latest crush. You can be there to pick up the pieces of her broken heart.

Heidi Smith Luedtke is a personality psychologist and mom of two. She is the author of "Detachment Parenting."

Calendar

FEBRUARY



Out-of-this-world dinosaurs

Electric dinosaurs are coming to the Center for Performing Arts on Feb. 23.

Featured on the show "America's Got Talent," Dino-Light is a unique and innovative theater experience where electroluminescent crayon-like creatures light up the stage.

Children 7 years and older will

delight in the glow-in-the-dark heart-rending original adventure that incorporates puppetry, technology, and dance.

Dino-Light on Feb. 23 at 3 pm. Tickets are \$14, and \$16.

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

Submit a listing

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

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

FRI, JAN. 31

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 11:30 am; Free.

Little ones 3 to 5 years old enjoy play time with a caregiver or parent.

Doodlebug FunTime: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 227-8839; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm; Free.

Kathleen Hagen tells stories, plays music, and arts and crafts for children 18 months to 4 years old with a caregiver. Registration required. Series 2.

SAT, FEB. 1

ON STATEN ISLAND

Kids & Kritters: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (917) 751-0071; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am-12:30 pm; Free.

Nancy Zawada Clair leads children 5 to 7 years old with a parent on fun outdoor adventures throughout the center's grounds. Wear appropriate clothing that you don't mind getting dirty. Followed by a craft, story, and games.

Krafty Kids: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (917) 751-0071; www.nycgovparks.org; 1-2 pm; Free.

Join Nancy Zawada Clair for a crafty afternoon. Pre-registration is required. For children 4 to 10 years old with a caregiver.

Night sky: Wolfe's Pond Park Comfort Station, Cornelia Ave. at Hyland Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 6 pm; Free.

Take out your binoculars and view the winter stars. Urban rangers discuss the history, science and folklore surrounding our universe.



Groundhogs & more

Staten Island Zoo is just a hive of activity this February.

On Feb. 2, Charles G. Hogg, AKA, Staten Island Chuck, pops out of his den to look for his shadow. Immediately following the groundhog's grand appearance, visitors are invited to share a breakfast at the Zoo Cafe.

On Feb. 22, children can take a tour of the animal kitchen and help the staff prepare breakfast for the zoo's residents. After meeting some of the denizens up close and personal, children can enjoy a breakfast of their own.

The zoo's gates open on Feb. 2 at 6:30 am, with festivities with Chuck beginning at 7 am. Breakfast follows. Admission is free to

view Chuck. Admission to breakfast is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 3 to 5 years old, and free for children younger than 3. Reservations are required for the breakfast.

Breakfast with the Beasts on Feb. 22 runs from 9:30 to 11 am. Admission is \$15 for zoo members, and \$17 for non members. The event is suitable for children 5 years and older. Sorry, no younger siblings. A paying adult must accompany a child. Pre-registration before Feb. 19 is required.

Staten Island Zoo [614 Broadway at Martling Avenue in West Brighton, (718) 442-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org].

SUN, FEB. 2

ON STATEN ISLAND

Groundhog Day: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 442-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 6:30 am; Free.

Will Staten Island Chuck see his shadow? Come on down and celebrate his predictions.

Groundhog Day-Breakfast: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 442-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 10 am; \$10 (\$5 children 3 to 5; Free children under 3).

Have breakfast with Staten Island Chuck at the zoo cafe after he makes his annual appearance. Reservations

required.

Forest Garden Friends: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; Noon-1:30 pm; Free.

Children explore their green thumb with naturalist and gardener John Paul Learn. Pre-registration required.

Groundhog day: Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 1 pm; Free.

Will he or won't he? Find out if Staten Island Chuck will make the proper prediction. Suitable for children 7 years and older. Registration required.

FURTHER AFIELD

Little Makers – Lunar New Year Lanterns: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St. at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 10:30 am; \$8 plus museum admission.

Celebrate the Year of the Horse as children tinker with LEDs and tissue paper to make a glowing lantern.

Family Nature Crafts: Dana Discovery Center, 110th St. between Fifth and Lenox avenues in Central Park, Manhattan; (212) 628-2345; www.nycgovparks.org/events/2014/02/02/family-nature-crafts; 11 am; Free with museum admission.

Urban Park Rangers will help children make nature crafts to help learn about our environment.

Poisons in Nature – Grades 1 and 2: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; 1:30 pm; \$125, \$115 (Members).

Visitors will go behind the scenes into the The Power of Poison to explore which living things are poisonous and how they use that to their advantage.

MON, FEB. 3

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen Cafe: New Dorp Library, 309 New Dorp Ln at Clawson Street; (718) 351-2977; www.nypl.org; 2-4 pm; Free.

Hang out with friends, bring snacks, soda, homework or share the internet and browse the web. For tweens and teens, 12 to 18 years old.

Read aloud: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nypl.org; 4-4:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 enjoy books.

TUES, FEB. 4

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Make a friendship bracelet. For ages 7 to 12 years old.

Resources for teens: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Children 13 to 18 years old, learn all about what the library has to offer.

WED, FEB. 5

ON STATEN ISLAND

Greenbelt peepers: Greenbelt

Continued on page 30

Calendar

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

Continued from page 29

Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. at Brielle Avenue; (718) 351-3450; www.nycgovparks.com; 10 – 10:45 am; \$4 per session.

Children 2 years old with adult chaperone enjoy hands-on activities, stories and finger play. Classes take place inside and outside, weather permitting.

Movies for teens: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nysl.org; 3:30–5:30 pm; Free.

Children 13 to 18 years old watch an age appropriate film.

THURS, FEB. 6

ON STATEN ISLAND

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

Children 3 to 12 years old hear a story and make a coloring craft.

FRI, FEB. 7

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nysl.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Little ones 3 to 5 years old enjoy play time with a caregiver or parent.

Pre-school time: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nysl.org; 10:30 – 11:30 am; Free.

Children 3 to 5 years old with caregiver listen to a stories, songs, and play with other toddlers.

Doodlebug FunTime: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 227-8839; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm; Free.

Kathleen Hagen tells stories, plays music, and arts and crafts for children 18 months to 4 years old with a caregiver. Registration required. Series 1.

SAT, FEB. 8

ON STATEN ISLAND

Crafternoon: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nysl.org; 2–3 pm; Free.

Children 4 years and older make fun projects.

Owl prow! Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 7 pm; Free.

Explore the dark corners of the park with Cliff Hagen. Flashlights are often unnecessary, but are acceptable.

Sing out!

Celebrate Black History Month with the Young People's Chorus at LeFrak Theatre of the American Museum of Natural History on Feb. 8.

The Young People's Chorus presents a concert in honor of Black History Month. Joined by National Endowment for the Arts's Jazz Master Delfeayo Marsalis and his sextet, plus special guest Darryl "DMC" McDaniels of the hip-hop group Run-DMC, the chorus will perform two original jazz

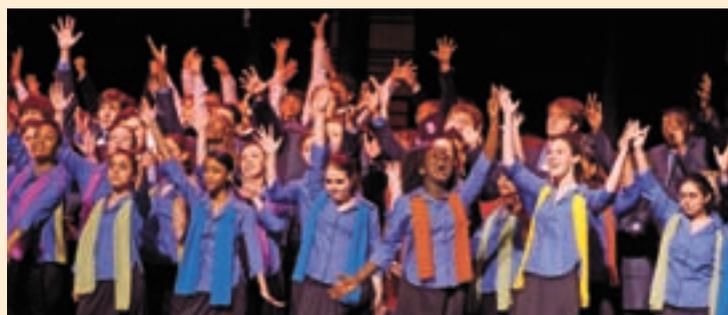


Photo by Stephanie Berger

works that will include audience participation, too!

Young People's Chorus concert on Feb. 8 at 4 pm. Free with museum admission.

LeFrak Theatre of the American Museum of Natural History [Central Park West at 79th Street on the Upper West Side, (212) 769-5100, <http://thepaperbackplayers.org/nyc-weekend-shows>].

FURTHER AFIELD

Give Your Voice – Honor Black History: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; Noon–5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Celebrate Black History Month with a series of activities and performances all day at the museum.

"A Surprise Inside – Buildings with Secret Powers": New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta-museum; 1:30–2 pm; Free with museum admission.

A special program for children 6 years and older to discuss the 74th Street Powerhouse building and then make their own dioramas.

The Young People's Chorus Concert: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; 4 pm; Free with museum admission.

The chorus will be performing two original jazz works and new choral settings of existing music with jazz master Delfeayo Marsalis, plus special guest, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels from Run-DMC.

SUN, FEB. 9

ON STATEN ISLAND

Storytime: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 1 pm; Free.

Park Rangers encourage children to let their imagination run wild with classic stories about animals, nature, and the environment.

Natural Science Club: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. be-

tween Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 2–3:30 pm; Free.

Children 8 to 12 years old meet with Clay Wollney and discuss various science topics.

FURTHER AFIELD

"A Surprise Inside – Buildings with Secret Powers": 1:30–2 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Feb. 8.

Poisons in Nature – Grades 1 and 2: 1:30 pm. American Museum of Natural History. See Sunday, Feb. 2.

MON, FEB. 10

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen Cafe: 2–4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Monday, Feb. 3.

Arts and Crafts: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nysl.org; 3:30–4:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 years old make a collage notebook.

Read aloud: 4–4:30 pm. Huguenot Public Library. See Monday, Feb. 3.

TUES, FEB. 11

FURTHER AFIELD

Taste the Museum – A Walking Food Tour: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; 6:30 & 7:30 pm; \$40.

This after-hours tour will include chocolate tastings as you learn about its place in history.

WED, FEB. 12

ON STATEN ISLAND

Greenbelt peepers: 10 – 10:45

am. Greenbelt Nature Center. See Wednesday, Feb. 5.

Wii gaming: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nysl.org; 3:30–4:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 years old play video games.

THURS, FEB. 13

ON STATEN ISLAND

Family matinee: Huguenot Public Library, 830 Huguenot Ave. at Drumgoole Road East; (718) 984-4636; www.nysl.org; 3 pm; Free.

Enjoy a film for the whole family.

Read aloud: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Feb. 6.

FRI, FEB. 14

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Feb. 7.

Craft day: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nysl.org; 3:30–4:30 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 years old make a Valentine's Day item.

SAT, FEB. 15

ON STATEN ISLAND

Scavenger Hunt: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. between Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am; Free.

Urban rangers lead children on a search to find nature clues to solve the puzzle.

FURTHER AFIELD

Family Winter Nature Hike: Dana Discovery Center, 110th St.

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

between Fifth and Lenox avenues in Central Park, Manhattan; (212) 628-2345; www.nycgovparks.org/events/2014/02/15/family-winter-nature-hike; 1 pm; Free.

Led by Urban Rangers, families take a leisurely hike through Central Park's North Woods.

SUN, FEB. 16

ON STATEN ISLAND

Family day: Myriad Games, 1650 Richmond Ave. at Arlene St.; (347) 974-2637; 11 am to 3 pm; Free.

Presented by the Staten Island Boardgamers in conjunction with Myriad Games, fun day awaits for all ages, including game demos of Ticket to Ride, in a Pickle, Feed the Kitty, and many more.

FURTHER AFIELD

Little Makers – Dynamic Dyes: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 10:30 am; \$8 plus museum admission.

Children will discover the properties of plants and fruit as they make natural dyes then dip-dye fabric with the colorful hand-made pigments.

MON, FEB. 17

FURTHER AFIELD

Engineering Day: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 11 am–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Visitors will learn about civil engineering through interactive games, construction challenges, and hands-on activities.

Elliott Kaufman: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 2:30–4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Meet Elliott Kaufman, the author of the photography book, "Numbers Everywhere," which reveals the hidden numbers unintentionally created by architectural details, shadows, light and natural elements.

TUES, FEB. 18

ON STATEN ISLAND

Bracelet workshop: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Feb. 4.

Resources for teens: 4–5 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Feb. 4.

THURS, FEB. 20

ON STATEN ISLAND

Read aloud: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills



Photo by Michael Horan

Marley, the musical

The timeless music of Bob Marley comes to life on the stage when "Bob Marley's Three Little Birds" opens as a musical at the New Victory Theatre on Feb. 7.

The story is based on a children's book written by Marley's daughter Cedella, and follows young Ziggy as he learns how to "breathe easy" and stop worrying about everything. It's geared toward children ages 5 years and older, and the melodies will have both parents and kids swaying

along.

"Bob Marley's Three Little Birds" begins Feb. 7 and runs through Feb. 23. Showtimes are noon and 5 pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Additional performances on Feb. 17, 19, 20, and 21 at 2 pm. Tickets range from \$14 to \$25.

New Victory Theatre [209 W. 42nd St. between Seventh and Eighth avenues in Times Square, (646) 223-3010, www.newvictory.org/Show-Detail.aspx?ProductionId=5198]

Library. See Thursday, Feb. 6.

Teen tech time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3:30–5:45 pm; Free.

For children 13 to 18 years old.

FRI, FEB. 21

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Feb. 7.

Pre-school time: 10:30–11:30 am. Huguenot Public Library. See Friday, Feb. 7.

SAT, FEB. 22

ON STATEN ISLAND

Breakfast with the Beasts: Staten Island Zoo, 614 Broadway at Martling Avenue; (718) 442-3174; www.statenislandzoo.org; 9:30 am–11 am; \$15 for zoo members \$17 for non-members).

Children visit the zoo kitchen where they will help prepare food for the crit-

ters and watch them eat. Then children will have a breakfast of their own. Pre-registration required.

Kids & Kritters: 11 am–12:30 pm. Blue Heron Nature Center. See Saturday, Feb. 1.

Krafty Kids: 1–2 pm. Blue Heron Nature Center. See Saturday, Feb. 1.

Owl prowl: 7 pm. Blue Heron Nature Center. See Saturday, Feb. 8.

FURTHER AFIELD

Eco House: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Noon–6 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children will be able to enter this mobile, cutting-edge exhibit that lets visitors see behind the walls and underneath the floor of a home.

SUN, FEB. 23

ON STATEN ISLAND

Explorers of the Wild: Blue Heron Nature Center, 222 Poillon Ave. be-

tween Amboy Road and Hylan Boulevard; (718) 967-3542; www.nycgovparks.org; 2–3:30 pm; Free.

Naturalist Clay Wollney teaches children 6 to 10 years old about the environment and science.

Dino-Light: Center for the Performing Arts, College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd.; (718) 982-2787; www.cfashows.com; 3 pm; \$14, \$16.

Sight, sound and dinosaurs.

FURTHER AFIELD

Little Makers – Operation Spy Gadgets: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; 10:30 am; \$8 plus museum admission.

Children will design and make spy gadgets like periscopes and invisible ink.

Eco House: Noon–6 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Saturday, Feb. 22.

MON, FEB. 24

ON STATEN ISLAND

Teen Cafe: 2–4 pm. New Dorp Library. See Monday, Feb. 3.

Movie time: Dongan Hills Library, 1617 Richmond Rd. at Liberty Avenue; (718) 351-1444; www.nypl.org; 3:30–5 pm; Free.

Movies the whole family can enjoy.

Read aloud: 4–4:30 pm. Huguenot Public Library. See Monday, Feb. 3.

TUES, FEB. 25

ON STATEN ISLAND

Resources for teens: 4–5 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Tuesday, Feb. 4.

WED, FEB. 26

ON STATEN ISLAND

Wii gaming: 3:30–4:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 12.

THURS, FEB. 27

ON STATEN ISLAND

Read aloud: 3:30 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Feb. 6.

Teen tech time: 3:30–5:45 pm. Dongan Hills Library. See Thursday, Feb. 20.

FRI, FEB. 28

ON STATEN ISLAND

Toddler Time: 10:30 am. Dongan Hills Library. See Friday, Feb. 7.

Continued on page 32



GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Making magic with freezer and pantry

It happened again. You're on your way home and you have no idea what you'll serve for dinner. And it's 5:30 pm.

Rather than steering your vehicle towards the closest drive-thru again, utilize your food pantry as a kitchen workhorse. When it holds canned, refrigerated, and frozen staples, you can provide healthier eats for your family and save money.

Heather Gottfried keeps a well-stocked pantry as well as some quick cooking essentials — such as chicken breasts, shrimp, veggies, and fruit — in the freezer.

“Aside from the stocked freezer, we always have whole-wheat pastas, minute brown rice, canned beans, tuna in water, low-sodium chicken stock, and canned fruit in water on hand,” she says.

Other shelf staple items to consider are tomatoes (whole, diced, crushed, sauce, paste), quinoa, bulgur, couscous, extra virgin olive oil, canned salmon, olives, and Arborio rice.

One fridge “must” is a hard cheese, such as Romano, for grating.

Make your food do double duty.

Rethink what's left of those roasted vegetables from one night, tossing them with spaghetti and cooked crumbled sausage the next.

This is not leftovers. It's a whole new supper.

“When cooking, especially on the



weekends, I try to make things that will stretch to another couple of meals,” says Gottfried, a busy working mother of a second-grade girl.

“A roasted chicken one night can turn into chicken fajitas one night and reappear again as chicken noodle soup later in the week.”

Other ideas might include:

- Microwave a baked potato and top it with canned (vegetarian) chili and grated cheese. Or, top it with cottage cheese.

- Tuna noodle casserole can be made in minutes with whole-grain noodles, frozen peas, and canned tuna. Or, make tuna melts with reduced-fat

cheese on whole-wheat bread.

- Once in a while, breakfast for dinner is a hit with the kids.

“Eggs can be made into a quick omelet or frittata with veggies or even just scrambled,” suggests Gottfried. Include fruit or vegetables and milk.

- Make a fast stir fry. Combine frozen Asian vegetable stir-fry mix, leftover chicken, and serve over quick-cooking brown rice.

- Have a “clean out the refrigerator” night. Take out the leftover dribs and drabs, spread out on the kitchen counter, and call it your buffet.

When you're prepared with versatile ingredients in your pantry, the daily stress of deciding what to eat at the last minute will be replaced by the peace of mind of having nourishing meal fixings at the ready.

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



Citrus soother

Yield: Makes 5 servings

INGREDIENTS:

3 cups Florida orange juice
1 cup Florida grapefruit juice
1/4 cup honey
3 inches stick cinnamon

DIRECTIONS: In a medium saucepan combine orange juice, grapefruit juice, honey, and cinnamon. Heat,

stirring occasionally, just until warm (do not boil). Remove cinnamon with slotted spoon; discard. Serve warm. If desired, garnish with Florida orange slices.

NUTRITION FACTS: 60 calories, 14 grams carbohydrate, 1 gram protein, 0 fat, fiber or sodium. 10% Daily Value vitamin A, 80% Daily Value vitamin C.

Recipe courtesy Florida Department of Citrus



THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

A fun and silly read

Little kids get away with all kinds of behavior. Big kids get all the privileges. But your son thinks he only hears “no” or “don’t” or “you can’t.” It’s enough to make him scream.

A curious kid like yours will be intrigued by the new book “Don’t Push the Button!” by Bill Cotter. Open the cover and you’ll be introduced to Larry, a friendly and fun purple monster who isn’t scary at all and wants you to come play. There’s just one rule: don’t push the button!

“Seriously,” says Larry. “Don’t even think about it.”

Oh, sure, it’s a nice button. It’s red and round, and it’s just sitting there on the page, waiting for something to happen. Sometimes, Larry wonders what would happen if you pushed it — but no! Don’t push the button!

Then again, what if nobody was around? What would you do with that button? Larry is pretty tempted to find out, but he wants the reader to do the dirty work. He wants you to

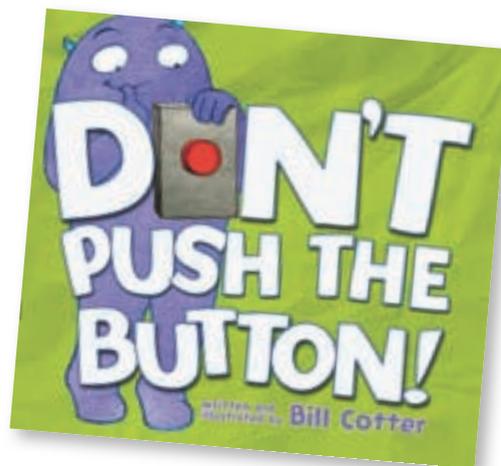
“give the button one little push.” And so you do.

Uh oh. If you push the button, strange things happen to Larry. Now what? Push it again and even odder things happen. Push it a bunch of times, and wow. Now you’ve really got a mess and Larry’s in big trouble. He’s no longer a purple monster.

But there’s a way out. There are a few steps you’ll need to take to get things back to the way they were before. But only you can do it because, well, you were the one who pushed the button in the first place.

Of course, you want your child to know that books are good and reading is fun — which is why you need “Don’t Push the Button!” in your house: this book is good fun.

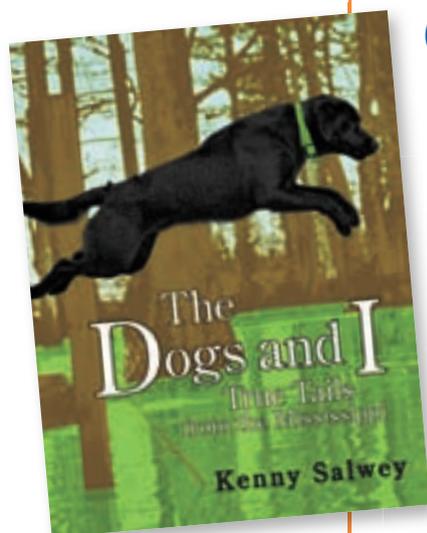
Larry the Monster is adorable and every bit as curious as is your child. He’s like a paper playmate, daring



kids to do the not-so-naughty thing he’s told them not to do. But author and illustrator Bill Cotter makes Larry — and the button — irresistible.

Word-wise, there’s not much to this book. You could probably plow through it in about five minutes, but why would you? “Don’t Push the Button!” is a story that absolutely needs to be read with time on your hands and a sense of silliness. Again and again, that’s something kids will really want to do.

“Don’t Push the Button!” by Bill Cotter [32 pages, 2013, \$16.99].



Great for outdoorsmen and dog lovers

You have a teen who loves the great outdoors.

He doesn’t know any better place for relaxing with a shady tree as his easy chair, birds songs as his music, and his dog nearby.

In fact, he does everything with his furry best friend: hunting, fishing, exploring, observing. In the new book “The Dogs and I” by Kenny Salwey, he’ll see that man + dog + outdoors = a pretty good life.

When Kenny Salwey was 4 years old, he met Brownie, who knocked him to the ground and “thoroughly washed my face, which no doubt needed it anyway.” That was the first dog Salwey remembers loving, but Brownie was far from the last.

Rover was 6-year-old Salwey’s first hunting pal. It was Salwey’s job to rid the farm of feed-destroying sparrows, and Rover was good at flushing them out. He was also a good fishing companion on lazy summer afternoons.

Teddy, who joined the family later,

was a coddled mama’s boy and Salwey’s mother encouraged it by fussing over the dog. Then along came Pepper, who lived up to his spicy name. Pepper sure made a fine squirrel dog, though.

Once he got out of the army in the 1960s, Salwey — who missed life “on the lovely little farm tucked away back in the hill country” — got a dog as soon as he could. Old Spook was almost a throwaway, but he became a once-in-a-lifetime dog for Salwey: they were hunting companions, fishing buddies, and “inseparable” best friends for 16 years. It broke Salwey’s heart when Spook died but “Old Spook helped me better understand the great Circle of Life.”

Spike followed Spook, and fish-retrieving Joey Girl came afterward. There was Spider, Travis, and Webster before the travel bug bit the Salweys and they decided against having another pooch. Traveling was a dream come true, but coming and going is hard on a pup.

Still, what’s a River Rat without his swamp dog?

While it’s true that anybody can read “The Dogs and I,” there’s no doubt in my mind that outdoorsy teens — particularly, maybe, boys — will love this book best.

That’s because author Kenny Salwey speaks the language of a lover of the land. Salwey’s words are thoughtful and earth-kind, evoking old-time sentiments mixed with modern sustainability. Every duck or pheasant hunter who owns this book will think of his favorite hunting spot as he reads. Every fisherman will recognize the feeling of knowing something’s been hooked, and both will remember their own four-legged companions, without whom the sport is just no fun.

I think outdoorsmen (and women) ages 13-to-17 will love this book, and they can easily share it with their dads and granddads, too. For hunters, fishers, and lovers of Labs, “The Dogs and I” is a world of good reading.

“The Dogs and I: True Tails from the Mississippi,” by Kenny Salwey [179 pages, 2013, \$15].

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

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Ages 3-16

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