

DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019



GGMG | GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine

Caring



This City. Your Life. Our Craft.



We helped two separate families purchase a duplex together in San Francisco. Both mothers were in their final trimesters of pregnancy. Imagine two baby bumps, nine offers, one grand Edwardian home, and a ton of perseverance. Our team and offer package prevailed. On top of it all, one mama gave birth a few days before closing escrow, and the other mama birthed her baby just days later!

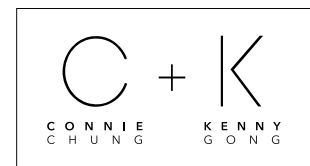
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Letter from the Editor:

Family Doesn't Always Come First

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is an editor, photographer, and mom to three kids and four furry beasts. She looks forward to starting her holiday shopping on December 23.

I've always been a self-centered woman. The kind of person who lies to her spouse that there are no more fries in the bag, just to weasel out of having to share. The kind of person whose first thought, upon learning of a friend's ugly breakup, is "There goes my connection to someone with a ski cabin." So obviously, when I became a parent, I kept self-care at the front and

center of my existence. For me, that meant preserving one essential thing at all costs: daily showers. Never would you hear from me the standard refrain of the exhausted new parent, confessing they haven't showered in days. Not me. I was squeaky clean from day one, when, against the nurse's advice, I staggered to the shower post c-section. When my baby came home and my husband returned to work, daily showering became trickier, but I persevered. I would put baby on a bathmat right outside the shower and put my head under the spray to drown out any wails. When he was cruising, he'd sometimes press up against the glass and whimper. I was sympathetic, but sorry, kiddo, mama has to deep condition. Today, my showers still come first. Bumped knees, sibling spats, party start times—all of them take a backseat to my need for self-care.

In this issue, our writers explore the push and pull between caring for and about others, and caring for ourselves, a precarious dance that's especially noticeable during the holidays. Catherine Symon turns her attention on page 16 to the problem of entitlement among children, discussing ways in which we can raise good, caring people by encouraging gratitude and independence while avoiding the pitfalls of overparenting. On page 20, Christina Raymond addresses the fraught topic of aging family members, sharing ways in which relatives and caregivers can and should address their own needs during stressful times. Jennifer Butterfoss reminds us of an easy

Bumped knees, sibling spats, party start times—all of them take a backseat to my need for self-care.

but meaningful way to care for the educators in our lives on page 15. And on page 24 Christine Chen comes to the rescue of holiday shopping slackers with a selection of products that will not only delight recipients but help heal the world.

As we move through a season noted for awkward in-law visits, tense dinners with outspoken uncles, and endless, monumental baking requests, remember to slow down, breathe, refocus, and if it all feels too overwhelming, just grab a shower.

Sonya Abrams

Housekeeping

Opinions expressed in this issue are those of the contributors. Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by GGGMG of any products or services. The editors reserve the right to accept, edit, or reject any content submitted to the magazine.

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COMING NEXT: February/March: Down and Dirty

Have an idea for an issue theme or article? Please email editor@ggmg.org.

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: An offer accepted on a house in Bernal Heights!; Finished 2 kindergarten apps, 3 more to go, while trying not to eat Halloween candy; Hand foot and mouth disease; K tours, tours, tours and crazy work schedule; Flamenco rehearsals

Letter from the Board: Making Mom “Me Time”

By Karen Brein

When I first became a mom, my ideas of self-care were grandiose and unrealistic. Spa day! Napa! Girls weekend! I would quickly become overwhelmed with handling the logistics and expense of my elaborate plans, then throw out the whole idea and continue to wallow in my never-ending piles of dishes and laundry. What I had to learn was that self-care can be low cost and simple; just the act of putting aside time for me made all the difference. A few of my favorite self-care hacks include taking a long walk through Golden Gate Park (by myself!) while listening to a podcast, indulging in a quiet bubble bath after the kids are asleep, and engaging with amazing women at GGMG events.

The GGMG community has saved me during some of my lowest mom moments. I try my best to attend at least one GGMG event a month because connecting with these smart and strong

childcare (please check the GGMG calendar online for more information). The best part is that this class is only \$10! If this is a financial burden, please contact the event organizer so we can help everyone attend. I encourage all GGMG members to frequently check the calendar as new events are added each week. These events are a great way to take advantage of your membership.



Karen is mom to two adorable and spirited kids, Adam and Ava. Her favorite pastimes include drinking coffee, drinking wine, indoor cycling, and taking long walks around San Francisco.

What I had to learn was that self-care can be low cost and simple; just the act of putting aside time for me made all the difference.

women always rejuvenates me. Did you know that GGMG offers dozens of events each month for moms, families, and children? The mom-only events are my favorite—book clubs, wine mixers, film screenings, sushi dinners, yoga classes—there’s something for everyone.

One upcoming event that I can’t wait to check out is a Women’s Self-Defense Class on January 26 at One Martial Arts. Snacks and water will be provided, and we are hoping to offer

participated in self-care in December. We will post your ideas to the GGMG forum and one lucky winner will be selected at random to receive a small gift card to indulge in the best form of mom self-care—coffee!

Karen

Cover Outtakes



Only one shot can make it to the cover. Here are some of our other favorites.

Cover Photograph by Marissa HB Photography
Cover models: Hannah (2) and Jaxon (newborn)

Giving Back at the Holidays

By Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss

The holidays remind us to be grateful for the people and blessings in our lives. What better way to share this sentiment with children than to show them how to give back to their community?



SF-Marin Food Bank

Sort food at its warehouse. Minimum age is 4 to 11 years old depending on the project.
www.sfmfoodbank.org



GLIDE Memorial Church

Serve food, bus tables, and hand out utensils and condiments.
www.glide.org



Project Open Hand
meals with love

Project Open Hand

Provide meals to seniors and people living with serious illnesses.
www.openhand.org



Meals on Wheels

Make and distribute handmade Thanksgiving placemats for homebound seniors.
www.mowssf.org



Project Night Night

Host a Night Night Package Party to create comfort bags for children living in shelters.
www.projectnightnight.org



The Compassion Experience

Experience the lives of children in developing countries at this free, interactive event.
<https://cts.compassion.com>



San Francisco SPCA

Care for and interact with dogs, cats, chinchillas, and reptiles. Open to children in grades 1 to 5.
www.sfspca.org



Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Help our parks! Children under 7 years old must have an adult present.
www.parksconservancy.org

Jennifer is the mother of two children and a school administrator with San Francisco Unified School District. She is very intrigued by the idea of hosting a Project Night Night Birthday Party. Find out more at jenniferkuhrbutterfoss.com.



Li'l Kid, Big City: Where to See Holiday Lights

By Christine Chen

San Francisco, and the greater Bay Area, is full of holiday spirit with many opportunities to see festive lights. Free for members, **ZooLights at the SF Zoo** is a rare opportunity for kids to visit at night where holiday lights and decorations transform the space into a winter wonderland. Train lovers will enjoy riding a lit-up Little Puffer. **ZooLights at the Oakland Zoo** has specific free dates for members. An added bonus is seeing the city lights from the new gondola, which will be lit up as well. For boat lovers, **Fisherman's Wharf's Lighted Boat Parade** in mid-December is not to be missed. Boats decorated with lights will parade along the SF Waterfront from Pier 39 and head west towards St. Francis Yacht Club and Crissy Field, allowing for multiple vista points along the water. The famous **Chestnut Street houses in South San Francisco** are actually on Treeside and Woodside Courts in the Parkway Estates (501 Woodside Court, South SF) and are an animated display of lights and decorations. Further afield, **Christmas Tree Lane in Alameda** (3200 block of Thompson Ave) or **Christmas Tree Lane in Palo Alto** (1705 Fulton Street) are elaborately illuminated, decorated blocks of houses. ❖

Christine is mother to an almost 5-year-old son and almost 3-year-old daughter, both who want to have the Christmas tree up all year.

Wellness & Self-Care Getaways

By Neha Mandal Masson

Between stressful world events, work, and family obligations, we often forget to focus on our well-being. We should all take time to reflect and rejuvenate once in a while. Here are a few getaways near and far that allow time and space for self-care.

Cavallo Point (Sausalito)

www.cavallopoint.com

Just beyond the Golden Gate Bridge is an oasis nestled in the historic Fort Baker. Stay for a few hours to enjoy the world-class spa offering luxurious treatments, a serene garden, guided meditation, and group activities. Or stay overnight in the historic rooms to enjoy extended peace and quiet. Great for solo travelers or groups.

Green Gulch Farm (Muir Beach)

www.sfzc.org/green-gulch

A space oriented around quiet contemplation, this Buddhist Zen center boasts guided meditation, yoga, and lush gardens. Visit for the day or stay overnight in simple accommodations and enjoy homegrown, vegetarian meals. It's the perfect respite after a hike through the Tennessee Valley.

Muir Woods or Mount Sutro Nature Preserve (Marin/San Francisco)

www.nps.gov/muwo/index | www.mntsutro.com/hiking

Focusing on yourself doesn't have to take a lot of time or money. We're lucky to be surrounded by natural wonders and quiet, open spaces. Muir Woods is one of the coolest national parks in the country. Make a reservation online to enjoy a walk amongst the redwoods. Or check out Mount Sutro Nature Preserve, a hidden gem right in the middle of SF. You'll find pleasant hikes nestled amongst trees, wildflowers, and birds on preserved land owned by UCSF, but free for all to enjoy.

Post Ranch Inn (Big Sur)

www.postranchinn.com

Got a lot more time and budget? Head down Highway 1 to the Post Ranch Inn. This impressive "hideaway" sits atop a cliff with unobstructed views of the Pacific. Thirty-nine rooms offer private retreats where you can enjoy in-room massages and treatments. Dine at the award-winning restaurant, meditate on a cliff, and try a guided shaman session! ❖

Neha is a marketing professional in the tech space. Whether it's a Pilates class in SF or a cooking retreat in Italy, Neha enjoys taking time for herself every chance she gets.

Ask the Expert

Foster Care by Ashley Rhodes-Courter



Ashley Rhodes-Courter, MSW, is the New York Times and international bestselling author of the books *Three Little Words* and *Three More Words*, which recount her almost 10 years in foster care and her time caring for foster children as an adult. She is a keynote speaker, social worker, and the founder of *The Foundation for Sustainable Families* in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Tell us about foster care and how the foster care system works.

The foster care system is designed to temporarily house and care for children who have been removed from their homes due to extreme abuse and neglect. Each state has its own laws and practices regarding how children enter foster care, what services children receive, and how foster or adoptive parents are recruited and licensed. Some states have foster care programs that are entirely managed by the state. Others have a “privatized system” where Community Based Care Organizations (CBCs) can bid on contracts with the state. CBCs will use funds to subcontract other services such as case management and counseling.

Foster care is meant to be a temporary situation. If Child Protective Services finds a parent is unfit to care for the child, the agency will first search for a suitable relative or non-relative known to the family or child. If there are no suitable placements with relatives, then the child is placed in the custody of a trained and licensed foster parent. The goal is to have the children reunited with family as quickly and as safely as possible. The law stipulates that no child should be in foster care for more than a 12-month period; unfortunately, there are still cases that can drag out for years.

What would you like people to know about foster care?

Becoming a foster parent is not an undertaking to consider lightly. Over a five-year period, my husband and I cared for more than 25 foster children. Their stories were hideous and heartbreaking. I think one of the most important distinctions that needs to be made when talking about the foster care system is the difference between fostering and adopting. Can fostering lead to an adoption? Possibly. However, the goal of foster care is reunification. If you go into fostering with the true intention to adopt, your heart will be broken many times.

Nationally, there is a huge shortage of qualified, quality foster parents and homes available. And because of the devastating opioid epidemic, more and more children are coming into care. Turnover and burnout of foster parents and workers is very high.

Some agencies report that fewer than half of their foster families or case managers will last more than two years. Children enter foster care by no fault of their own. They are not criminals, unwanted, “bad kids,” or delinquent. They are victims who need to be shown love, attention, kindness, and stability. They need a voice and someone to fight for them to receive the educational, emotional, and functional services they need to thrive and become resilient.

Foster care is meant to be a temporary situation...If you go into fostering with the true intention to adopt, your heart will be broken many times.

How does one become a foster parent?

Each state and region has its own set of guidelines and regulations for becoming a foster parent. However, in all states, fostering classes and information are completely free to obtain. One can simply google “foster care agency” or “foster care licensing/classes” and their respective city or county. I encourage prospective parents to look for fostering or parent support groups online or in their communities and to talk to other foster parents. Read books and blogs. Once you’ve engaged an agency, keep asking questions and gathering information. Know yourself, your family, and your goals, and be honest about your limitations. There are children of every age, ethnicity, developmental stage, and demographic in foster care in need of homes.

Other than becoming a foster parent, what are other ways to help foster children?

Most child welfare groups serving children are nonprofit organizations that are always in need of donations of supplies, clothing, volunteers, or monetary contributions. There is also “respite care,” where families are trained the same way foster parents are trained but only take foster children for a few days at a time. Finally, you can volunteer as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASA volunteers become advocates for children by visiting them in their homes, making sure their needs are being met, and being extra eyes and ears for the judge. Their role is unique in that they make recommendations to the court based on what is in the best interests of the child—not the governing agency, lawyers, birth parents, case workers, foster parents, or relatives. ❖

Community Outreach

GGMG's annual fund drive for Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP) families is running now through the end of the year.



WHY GIVE TO HPP?

HPP's mission is to break the cycle of childhood poverty in partnership with their client families. HPP is built on a foundation of supportive, nonjudgmental case management that empowers families—particularly mothers—to recognize their strengths and trust in their own capacity to transform their lives. More than 4,000 families access HPP's services each year, with nearly 200 families coming to HPP for the first time every month. More than 90 percent of babies born to HPP clients are of normal weight and drug-free. More than 400 families each year are able to obtain permanent housing with HPP's assistance.

Please join us in continuing this incredible tradition of moms helping moms and make a donation to HPP this holiday season. Any amount is greatly appreciated and will be put to good use supporting HPP families.

You can donate at homelessprenatal.org/donate. Be sure to scroll down in the gift designation and choose "GGMG Gives" to help us track donations.

Contest

Relax with Nordstrom

Treat yourself this holiday season to a relaxing, rejuvenating experience in the tranquil spa at Nordstrom San Francisco Centre. From facial treatments to luxurious body wraps, its full range of spa services will be sure to help you wind down after a long day of mom duties.

This gift will include a Nordstrom Spa gift card valued at \$150, a Sonoma Lavender set that includes an eye mask and neck pillow, and a Moroccan Hair Oil gift set! Total value over \$250.

ENTER THE CONTEST BY EMAILING CONTEST@GGMG.ORG WITH "NORDSTROM" IN THE SUBJECT LINE BY DECEMBER 31, 2018. WINNERS ARE SELECTED AT RANDOM.

Congratulations to **Sarah Lee**, winner of the October contest prize, a home design consultation.



DADLANDS

Shared hobbies become lifelong bonds

By David Bushnell

My dad always liked working with his hands. Wood was his medium of choice because it appealed to his love of nature and his scientific mind. I felt most involved in his craft when I helped to create something with him. Whether I chose to start with a scrap of two-by-four, adding bent nails sticking out at odd angles, or a gnarled twisty branch, Dad always had a way of making me part of the creative process. Together, we transformed that raw material into something I cared about (a decorative paper weight? A Halloween prop?). Dad gave me pride in my latest doorstop, regardless of its actual door-stopping power. I was connecting with his craft and wanted to do it again. He was always happy to oblige.

The first thing I remember Dad building was his shop. With minimal outside help, he built a small one-room workshop in our backyard to continue his projects while keeping the house unburdened by dust, tools, and, to a

Those small pieces of turned wood remind me of all the times we built something, the manner in which he guided me, and the time we spent together.

lesser degree, noise. The shop became a place to watch him create, design (and re-design), and, to my delight, learn the occasional curse word. Dad was always trying new techniques, learning new tricks, and of course, buying new tools. No job was worth doing unless you bought a new tool, I learned. I recall summer days whittling sticks on the steps or (less fondly) insulating pipes under the house. Since those days, I have moved across the country and started my own family. Even so, Dad would mail a new project piece every year; we now have a kitchen drawer full of wooden-handled ice cream scoops, pizza cutters, and candlesticks to remember him by.

Living in an older house in the city, I'm familiar with most



maintenance requirements, and I'm fairly handy to boot. I try to engage my kids in the general upkeep of the house, cars, and yard, but sadly they aren't as impressed by manual labor as screen time. No matter, I have the chance to creatively instigate kid participation, usually by creating toys. I would never have guessed that a used plastic lid covered in tape and felt squares would be a vital component to a cardboard rocket ship. In the end, they were both proud of the results, and USS Banana Mountain took to the skies. I may not have a proper shop like Dad, but I don't need one to build with my kids. Accomplishment and success can come in different packages. Looking back, maybe that's what all those doorstops and ninja sticks were about: unconventional success.

Recently, I returned to my family home. Dad was sick and we knew we would have to say goodbye sooner rather than later. Ever the optimist, Dad asked me to head out to the shop and help him put together a jig for sharpening wood-turning lathe tools. He thought perhaps the next round of chemo would strengthen him enough to finish his final few projects. I agreed, hoping to feel like that kid again, helping Dad find a way to build something useful, something true. The last things he made for me (for my kids, actually) were two wooden spinning tops. Delighted as they are to have them, I selfishly try to keep the tops out of their accident-prone hands. Those small pieces of turned wood remind me of all the times we built something, the manner in which he guided me, and the time we spent together. I'm so happy to have this physical representation of his care, gentleness, and love.

I'm Dad now, and I get to build and create beside little ones of my own. I can't wait to help them feel proud of an ugly doorstop next time we have a few spare nails and two-by-fours laying around. Or maybe those spinning tops really are part of a "magical sparkle zombie spaceship." I guess unconventional success can come covered in glitter, too. ❖

David is an engineer focused on precision parallel parking and reaching tall things. When he is not re-attaching doll heads and retrieving roof-bound drones, he is tolerated by his wife, son, and daughter in Seattle.

MEMBER PROFILE: **Maria Jandres**

Photograph by Mini Anna Photography

GGMG staff writer Tara Hardesty had the great pleasure of talking with Maria Jandres about mothering and her passionate support of women and families in her community. Maria, originally from Nicaragua, where she was also an attorney, lives with her 2.5-year-old son in the Excelsior District. She is currently studying at SF State to become a court legal interpreter and also dedicates time to supporting the Family Independence Initiative.

HOW DO YOU JUGGLE BEING A MOM WITH EVERYTHING ELSE YOU DO?

It is a real juggle. I need to be very organized to be successful. I'm lucky because I have a big, supportive community, and it helps me accomplish my goals.

BEST MOMENT (SO FAR) AS A MOM?

My best moment is when someone comes to me and says, "Maria, I see how well you are raising your kid and how loving he is." That fulfills me. They say he is just like me and their comments make me feel like I'm doing a good job.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT AS A PARENT?

As a parent, I want to leave a legacy for my child. I want him to recognize that his mom played an important role in changing stereotypes and how families are seen. I'm very passionate about helping others. That's why I became a lawyer. I like to help other people. I want to have better communities, more accessibility, no gaps between races, so he can grow up in a place where we are all equals and have access to the same resources.

HOW DO YOU SQUEEZE IN "YOU" OR "SANITY" TIME?

When my son was a baby, I wasn't doing a lot of self-care. I had so much on my plate and was going through depression. I found out how important it is to take care of myself, and I started doing yoga. I'm trying to honor "me time" more—being able to sit down and eat in peace or take a bath or a shower. I would love more time for self-care, but I really try to take care of myself.

THREE WORDS YOU WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE MOTHERHOOD?

Happiness, challenge, adventure

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE WORK YOU DO WITH THE FAMILY INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVE?

The Family Independence Initiative (FII) is a project that believes that low- and middle-income families are stereotyped as being lazy or unwilling to better themselves to get out of poverty. We believe that is not true. These families are contributors to our society and are trying to get out of poverty. FII works directly with families and offers them resources. The founder, Mauricio, was raised by a single mother with two kids. She supported them all the way through UC Berkeley. His approach to poverty is different: As opposed to believing we have to give something to families struggling with poverty, we let them decide what they can do for themselves and work with their strengths, not their deficits. Families don't want pity; they want resources. For more information on the Family Independence Initiative, visit www.fii.org. ❖

Know a mom you want to spotlight in the next issue?

Email editor@ggmg.org with her name, email, and a few sentences about what makes her an awesome mom for our next Member Profile.



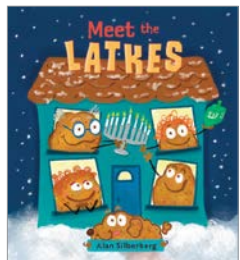
From a family of potato pancakes to forest animals yearning for a cozy warm nap in the middle of winter, these books will delight young readers and get them in the holiday mood.



William's Winter Nap

Written by Linda Ashman, illustrated by Chuck Groenink

Young William is getting ready for a nap in his cozy cabin, but just when he slips under heavy covers, a chipmunk knocks at his window. Is there room for one more in the bed? Both climb under the covers, yawn, and get ready to sleep when another forest animal knocks at the window to seek shelter from the cold and snow. Preschoolers and toddlers will love this bedtime story that teaches sharing and being kind to forest animals (or others)—whether at nap time or not. *Ages: 2 to 5 years*



Meet the Latkes

Written and illustrated by Alan Sildenberg

When the Latke family starts celebrating the Festival of Lights, Grandpa Latke starts telling the story of “CHHA-nukkah!” to Lucy, but he gets it all wrong.

Fortunately, Applesauce the dog (also a potato pancake, like all the Latkes) sets the record straight. This humorous twist on the story of Hanukkah will have your preschoolers in stitches while teaching them about the origins of the holiday. *Ages: 3 to 6 years*

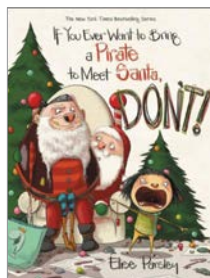


Winter is Here

Written by Kevin Henkes, illustrated by Laura Dronzek

Winter is here. It's falling from the sky. The white stuff is everywhere and this quiet winter world is all wrapped up in woolen layers. From the snowy scenes, you will not be surprised that the book author

lives in Wisconsin. Even if you are not snowbound, this is a great book to read aloud at bedtime when the days get shorter. The rhythm of the words associated with warm illustrations make this a lovely and quaint reflection on the meaning of winter and how winter is part of the cycle of seasons. *Ages: 3 to 6 years*

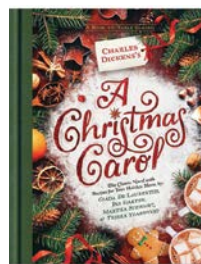


If You Ever Want to Bring a Pirate to Meet Santa, Don't! (Magnolia Says DON'T!)

Written and illustrated by Elise Parsley

A pirate on the naughty list? That sounds about right, except in this case of mistaken identity. When

Magnolia's dad takes her to meet a “bearded guy with a red suit and a bag full of treasures,” he doesn't mean a pirate, but Magnolia invites the pirate to join her in the line for Santa anyway. However, the naughty list won't do. She absolutely has to get the pirate on the good list. How can she change the scurvy ways of a pirate? Prepare for some rollicking times around the Christmas tree if your kids want to find out. *Ages: 3 to 8 years*



Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol: A Book-to-Table Classic

Written by Charles Dickens

Marley was dead to begin with. Thus begins Charles Dickens' Victorian tale of three ghosts paying visits to Ebenezer Scrooge on the night of Christmas. Aspiring tween and teen chefs (and their parents) will love this

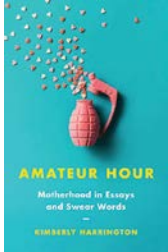
culinary version of the classic story which uses seasonal recipes to illustrate the unabridged 1843 text as it progresses. When the second ghost visits, Scrooge sees the poverty-stricken Cratchit family at the Christmas dinner table. “Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that. That was the pudding.” Isn't it fitting that food, which plays such an important role in this story condemning child poverty, should bring it to life once again? *Ages: 8 to 12 years*

Laure is the author of the mommy blog Frog Mom (frogmom.com), as well as the book Best Hikes with Kids: San Francisco Bay Area. She writes for several parenting websites and lives in London, where she peppers adventures with her husband and two daughters with compulsory cream tea stops. You can find her on social media @frogmomblog.

BOOKS for Parents

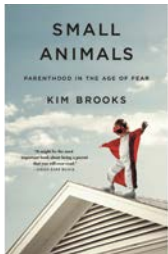
By Gail Cornwall

What happens when three mothers whose essays went viral each are offered a book deal?



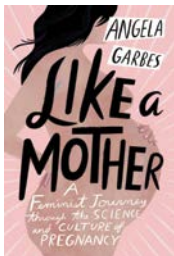
Amateur Hour: Motherhood in Essays and Swear Words

If you have mommy friends on the interwebs, chances are you've clicked on one of Kimberly Harrington's parenting essays, with titles such as "Job Description for the Dumbest Job Ever," "I Am the One Woman Who Has It All" (e.g., "I have kids who have forced me to do everything in my life with greater efficiency and the professional assumption that I'm now less efficient after having kids"), "Just What I Wanted, a Whole Twenty-Four Hours of Recognition Once a Year," and "Please Don't Get Murdered at School Today." Unlike most compilations, *Amateur Hour* mixes styles, combining biting social commentary with quirky conceptual pieces (the written equivalent of MOMA exhibits) and straight-laced ruminations on grief, aging, and marriage—all with a sprinkling of legitimately helpful parenting advice (i.e., "I will have to be the ... grown-up here, to not hobble you with my help"). While not every last bit of her material landed, Harrington spoke to my heart and/or sense of humor deeply and frequently enough to dub this one a must-read.



Small Animals: Parenthood in the Age of Fear

When Kim Brooks pulled up to a Target with her son comfortably ensconced in the backseat, she wondered: "Why? Why did I have to... drag him inside? It was cool out... The parking lot was safe." The answer is that in modern America if someone sees you leave your child alone for just minutes, they can make a video and call the police, and the Commonwealth of Virginia can prosecute you for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. They can, and in Brooks's case, they did. *Small Animals* analyzes what her experience reveals about parenting these days, a phenomenon free-range spokesperson Lenore Skenazy describes as "this huge cultural shift in how we view... the ability of children to move through the world." Brooks is at her best when establishing the existence of this new reality, its senselessness, the disproportionate impact it has on women and low-income families, and the way risk assessment and moral judgment intertwine. Though her prose is solid throughout, neither the chapters nor the sentences are as tight or moving as I had hoped. Still, a topic of incredible importance and a few sterling passages combine to earn my recommendation.



Like a Mother: A Feminist Journey Through the Science and Culture of Pregnancy

In the introduction to *Like a Mother*, Angela Garbes writes, "This book is not meant to be a traditional pregnancy guidebook with advice on what or how to do things," but after reading each of its chapters closely, it's still unclear to me what it is intended to be. As best I can figure, a food writer got pregnant, had a baby, talked to some friends who had some babies, read some stuff, wrote some stuff, and produced a book about all of the things that bothered or intrigued her along the way. The result is a journalist's stream-of-consciousness: personal experiences, research, anecdotes, and opinions. It could have worked, and in a few places—most notably the chapter featuring microchimerism—it does. But the vast majority of *Like a Mother* covers well-trodden ground and lacks coherence. It's a shame because Garbes offers some valuable additions to the discussion, top-notch science writing (e.g., "Hundreds of alveoli cells gather into grapelike bunches called lobules"), the perspective of a woman of color, and a few truly affecting turns of phrase (e.g., "It is easy for mothers to focus our attention away from our own needs and onto our tiny, helpless babies—after all, they will only be this young once. But we will never be this young again, either."). If only her journey weren't so winding that I wanted to toss the thing across the room.

GIVEAWAY: Tell us what you think of this new column at editor@gmg.org and be entered to win a copy of *Small Animals*.

Gail is a former public school teacher and recovering lawyer who now works as a stay-at-home mother and freelance writer in San Francisco. You can find her on Facebook (@gailalwaywrite) and Twitter (@gailcornwall), or read more at gailcornwall.com.

From Womb to World

Supporting New Moms

By Veronica Reilly-Granich

The moment when the world changes and you become a mother is amazing. Suddenly you are responsible for another human being whose very life depends upon your care. But those early days with an infant, while filled with wonder, can be overwhelming—especially for those who are far from their families or those who do it without the constant help of a partner. It can be a lonely time. Remembering that struggle, I wondered what I could do to support friends who were currently expecting. I'd mastered the meal train, but what else could I do to help? To get answers, I asked friends, family, and of course, the GGMG forums. Here are some of the best suggestions.

It can be hard for a new mother to ask for help or even know what would really be helpful, so make concrete offers.

First of all, just show up, however you can. Many mothers found that having someone come by and do a load of laundry or wash the dishes was incredibly helpful. However, don't bring the whole family along! Come alone and make note of what chores need to get done. Hold the baby so your friend can take a shower or eat with two hands. Throw one of her shirts over your shoulder so the baby is less likely to become cranky while you are on duty.

If you don't have time to stop by and take care of some household chores, offer to be a "lifeline" for the new parent. During a diaper crisis, one new mama sent her friend a photo of the diapers she needed and the friend showed up with the diapers and takeout food 30 minutes later. It was something small that made a stressful day so much better.

It can also be important for a new mother to have a reason to get out of the house. I remember that it seemed almost impossible for me to go anywhere during the first three months



of my very fussy firstborn's life, so I wouldn't leave unless I *had to*. Give your friend a reason to go out! Set up a weekly yoga date at a place with childcare or watch the little one while she grabs a coffee. Drive her to an important medical appointment or take her out for a walk around the neighborhood. And make sure to be patient while she struggles to get the baby into the carrier or the stroller!

Many women struggle with breastfeeding. If your friend

chooses to breastfeed, there are lots of ways to make it a little easier for her, from baking lactation cookies to cleaning her pump parts while she takes a nap. Or simply offer to talk about it and lend an ear. This can make a world of difference in the early days of motherhood.

You can also babysit. This is a win-win because you will get to snuggle an adorable little baby and your friend will get to go out without worrying (at least not too much) about her little bundle. Maybe she can get in a massage, a walk, a trip to the coffee shop, or even a date with her partner.

If your friend has older children, offer to care for them when the new baby comes—this was truly one of my biggest dilemmas when I had my second baby because I didn't feel comfortable asking friends to come watch my child at an unknown time that could potentially be in the middle of the night. Babysitting can be such an amazing offer, especially being on call during or right after the birth.

It can be hard for a new mother to ask for help or even know what would really be helpful, so make concrete offers. Texting allows her to respond with one hand whenever she has a little time. If we all do something small to make life easier for each new mother, we know it will make a big difference for many families! ❖

Veronica is an educator and writer living in San Francisco with her husband and two young daughters. If you want her to volunteer for your meal train just email her at very23@gmail.com. You'll get some delicious lentil soup delivered to your home!



A Case for Sponsoring the “Teacher Lunch”

By Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss

Once a month, I make a pilgrimage down to Dittmer’s Deli in Mountain View, where I get my hands on the German delicacies of my youth and stock up on the only meat products my kids will eat. Part of this trip includes lunch at Google X so my Googler husband and I can enjoy a grown-up meal with some of the best free food on the planet. It’s incredible that access to daily, free, restaurant-quality food is the norm for so many tech workers in the Bay Area. This contrasts sharply with my lengthy experience in public education, where the most complete meal I ever eat on the job involves something consumable on the go while working lunch duty (think: hard boiled eggs, apples, and corndogs...yum).

Why should the corporate world be the only ones entitled to these gastronomic perks? As a school leader, I work hard to show my gratitude for the teachers I work with through the occasional catered lunch or breakfast. Most of these are funded out of pocket, as getting reimbursed for food in San Francisco Unified School District requires a process almost as cumbersome as securing a passport. Teachers love to eat and rarely take the time to do so. So when appreciation shows up in the form of takeout or a home-cooked meal (my principal once brought in an electric skillet and treated us to pancakes and custom omelets), the entire tone and energy of the building is transformed. The latest budget cut, the stack of papers to grade, and that student who refuses to put away his cell phone all recede as adults

Breaking bread together is crucial for a community to build strong, healthy connections and keep morale strong.

munch and connect with one another. Breaking bread together is crucial for a community to build strong, healthy connections and keep morale strong. The tech industry has figured this out and has the capital to do so. Unfortunately, taxpayer dollars may never be able to justifiably fund a visit from Adam’s Grub Truck to my school, but one can dream.

This is why I am putting out a call to action: Feed your kids’ teachers! Volunteering in the library or coordinating annual auctions are important, but for those of you who can’t take a day off to frolic through the Exploratorium with 22 first graders, this is your moment. Consider doing something as simple as ordering a few trays of Chinese food or bringing in a crock pot of



your best chili recipe and leaving it simmering in the staff lounge until lunch.

How do you go about initiating this simple, selfless task? If you want to feed an entire staff, email your school principal. If you want to keep it small and simple, contact your kid’s teacher directly and offer to feed his or her grade-level team. It’s a one-time thing that will be remembered for years to come. I still get thank yous from my daughter’s teachers for the St. Patrick’s Day feast I put on three years ago. And Paxti’s Pizza is my go-to takeout place ever since one Alvarado parent made this a regular treat for our Special Education Department. And I’ll never forget the Everett Middle School mom who dropped off lentil and meatball stew when I had my first child. This is now the recipe I duplicated for my daughter’s school principal after she returned from maternity leave. Food is a gift that continues to give long after the last bite. ❖

Jennifer is a school leader with San Francisco Unified School District and the mother of two kids who love eating leberkase and bockwurst. When she is not dazzling teachers with her crockpot, you can find her at jenniferkuhrbutterfoss.com.



How Not to Raise Entitled Children

Raising Generation Me: Strategies on raising well-adjusted kids without entitlement issues

By Catherine Symon

Photographs by Marie Hamonic Photography

In May 2018, an unusual petition was presented to the Onondaga County Supreme Court in New York. Christina and Mark Rotondo were taking legal action to get their adult son, Michael, evicted from their house. The Rotondos had asked him repeatedly in writing to move out, even offering him help and financial assistance to move, find an apartment, and a job. They also requested that Michael's 2005 Volkswagen Passat, which had been parked on blocks in their driveway for some indeterminate time, be removed. Michael disregarded his parents' appeals and spent the cash on undisclosed "expenses." In court, Michael argued to Justice Donald Greenwood that his parents' wishes for him to leave were baseless and he deserved at least six more months in the

house. He also said he never contributed to household expenses or upkeep during his time under his parents' roof because he had never been asked to do so.

It took Justice Greenwood less than an hour to issue an eviction notice and tell the younger Rotondo he needed to "get out of that household." Michael's response: "That's outrageous. I don't see why we can't just wait a little bit for me to leave the house." Michael was 30 years old and had been living rent-free with his parents for years—he hadn't held a full-time job since he was 22.

What made Michael Rotondo feel he deserved to stay at his parents' house and make no contributions of his own? Psychologists have identified a growing trend of entitlement amongst youth and younger

7 Signs Your Child May Be Feeling Entitled

- You often have to resort to bribes or rewards to get your child to cooperate
- Your child is quick to blame others (and never herself) for things that go wrong
- Your child often tries to manipulate you to get his way and sulks or acts out when he fails
- You do things for your children even though you know they can (and should) do it themselves
- Your child finds it very difficult to wait patiently for something she wants
- You frequently rescue older children by reminding them about deadlines, assignments, or other obligations
- You feel like you're running ragged making sure everything gets done while your children make no effort to help

adults, a group some call Generation Me. Entitlement is the feeling of inherently deserving something without any need to earn it. In the case of Generation Me, researchers attribute it to a societal shift towards individualism (individual desires trump societal rules and mores), combined with being over-parented and over-praised while growing up. That is to say, it's the collision of the selfie era, helicopter parenting, and "good job"-itis.

Entitlement isn't necessarily tied to material goods or money; in fact, the prevailing sense of entitlement among today's youth is the belief that their individual happiness is the single most important thing in life. Ironically, many younger adults are also more miserable than ever because, as in Michael Rotondo's case, they either don't have the skills or the drive to independently manage their lives. They also often lack the emotional wherewithal to deal with life's challenges and disappointments.

So how can we avoid a similar fate in our own children? Here is some of the current thinking in child psychology.

Avoid overparenting and overpraising

A key long-term goal in parenting is to raise well-adjusted, competent children who become well-adjusted, competent adults. Infants may need tremendous amounts of help and support, but as children mature, they need increasing amounts of freedom to learn about themselves and how they fit in the world around them. Let them take risks. Let them make mistakes. Let them do things themselves. As tempting as it may be to keep your child from getting physically or emotionally hurt, taking over the situation both robs them of the hands-on practice they need to become capable adults and worse, teaches them that they can't do things without help.

Showing affection is important, and celebrating hard work and achievements can make your child feel good and motivate them. But telling him every painting he brings home from school is "beautiful" or saying "good job" each time she remembers to clear her

plate from the table diminishes the impact of the praise. Children who become accustomed to accolades for even mundane actions eventually lose the drive to work hard or be helpful without being cheered on. If a child is being helpful, a simple "thank you" is enough to acknowledge his or her contribution. And if you're trying to think of something to say about the fifth piece of artwork your preschooler has produced in a given day, use the time to talk about their process, not the end result. "I see you used four colors in your drawing. Which color did you use first? You also drew lots of circles. Do you like circles?" Use a similar strategy with older children: "I see you got an A on your paper. Why did you choose to write about the Gold Rush? Was there anything surprising you learned while you were researching it? Where did you find all the information?"

Don't give in to whining

Often when you can see a meltdown coming or the whining is making your ears bleed, you'll do anything to make it stop so you can get on with your day. But avoid the temptation to salve bad behavior with treats or bribes. In moments like this, it can be helpful to remember what children are, and are not, entitled to. Children are entitled to healthy food, safe shelter, access to medical and dental care, education, and love. Everything else is extra. Children don't need to be compensated because they have

Psychologists have identified a growing trend of entitlement amongst youth and younger adults, a group some call Generation Me.

to spend 20 minutes in the supermarket or wait quietly while you finish a conference call. Good behavior should be expected, not rewarded.

When you are firm and consistent with your "no," children eventually get the message and adjust their behavior accordingly. But if they know there's always a treat waiting in the wings, they are more likely to demand a prize in exchange for being good and, when that doesn't work, escalate their behavior until you give in.

The takeaway message here is NOT that



treats are forbidden or even bad. Yes, celebrate the first day of school with ice

cream. Yes, surprise them with the toy they've been talking about for months. Just be sure treats aren't tied to their behavior and be on the lookout for signs your child is

starting to expect a reward for every quiet minute or good grade.

Model gratitude

Gratitude is a learned skill, so your kids will take cues from you on how you appreciate the things you have and the world around you. When your children stop to look at a bug or a tree, take a few moments to examine it with them. Simply saying thank you to a store clerk, or noting how hard the bus driver works, goes a long way. Volunteering as a family or working with

your kids to choose charities to support is another way to build gratitude. Charitable giving is especially powerful for children when they know there is a specific individual who will be receiving the gift, as with “adopting” a family for the holidays.

Spend quality kid time

All children want to feel like they belong and that they have a purpose in the world. When either of those go unfulfilled, children tend to act out. One method of satisfying these needs is to spend one-on-one time with each child daily. This can seem difficult for parents who are already stretched for time, but when a child gets a daily dose of belonging and purpose, he or she is much more likely to cooperate and be patient with you at other times. Do your best to commit 10 minutes each day with no distractions. Give the block of time a name like “Micah’s Choice” or “Silly Time” and let the child choose what you’ll do (within reason given the limited time). Filling their cup with love and attention while empowering them to select your joint activity can keep them going for the rest of the day.

Give them responsibilities (chores!)

Chores and housework used to be the norm, but fewer kids today have responsibilities outside their own schoolwork and extracurricular activities. Part of the challenge is that children are enrolled in more activities than ever. Combine that with busy parents who are juggling work, family, and life, and it can be more tempting to do the work yourself rather than spend the time and energy cajoling a reluctant child or redoing a task so it’s done the way you want it. But participating in upkeep of the home both helps kids feel they are contributing to the family and prepares them for mundane necessities of adulthood like paying bills on time and keeping their homes clean when they live on their own.

And while you’re not responsible for making housework feel fun, you can tailor

chores to your children’s temperaments to make them more enticing: Let the animal lover be in charge of caring for pets while the neatnik gets to fold towels and keep the linen closet organized. ❖

Catherine is a medical writer. She aims to not raise another Michael Rotondo, but she reserves the right to move wherever her daughter goes once she’s an adult so they can always live in the same town.



CHORES BY AGE

Children won’t always be enthusiastic about doing chores, but contributing to the household can give them a sense of responsibility and prepare them for adulthood. Show them what to do, but give them the independence to do the chores their way.

2-3 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean tables and counters with a damp sponge • Put away toys and clothes • Fold washcloths • Wash vegetables • Feed pets (guide them on how much and how often)
4-5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sort laundry by colors, match socks • Make bed (comforter) • Water plants (guide them on how much and how often) • Empty small trash cans • Help with sweeping and dusting
6-8 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash dishes and load/unload dishwasher • Peel vegetables • Pack lunch for school • Put groceries away
9-11 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fold laundry and put it away • Wash the car • Take out trash/recycling/compost • Clean refrigerator and toilets
12-14 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fold laundry and put it away • Wash the car • Take out trash/recycling/compost • Clean refrigerator and toilets
15-18 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep cleaning • Independent babysitting • Weekly meal planning • Complete meal preparation • Yard work

Sources:

Supremecourt.gov, BBC News, The Washington Post, NPR, The Sun, CNYCentral.com, The Blessings of a Skinned Knee by Wendy Mogel, Ph.D., The “Me, Me, Me” Epidemic by Amy McCready, Generation Me and The Narcissism Epidemic by Jean M Twenge, Ph.D., Leon F. Seltzer, Ph.D., Psychology Today.



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Survival Mode: Self-Care While Caring for an Aging or Ill Parent

By Christina Raymond

With time at a premium, family caregivers must think beyond spa days and yoga classes to establish an effective—and sustainable—self-care practice.

With many parents now waiting until their late 30s and early 40s to start families, an increasing number of us may soon find ourselves raising young children while also caring for our aging mothers, fathers, or both—if we aren't already.

Practicing self-care is difficult enough while parenting young children, but add in the challenges that come with caring for an aging or ill parent, and it can feel downright impossible. Yet, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), family caregivers are at a high risk of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. This makes good self-care not just important, but critical.

Self-care while in survival mode looks different than what one might expect; in comparison to traditional forms, the modalities recommended here may seem overly simple or too small to make a difference. However, when incorporated into one's daily routine, even micro-practices can make a big impact—provided they are consistently performed.

Acknowledge barriers

The first step toward establishing a sustainable practice is to identify personal barriers to your self-care. Barriers to self-care typically fall into two categories: practical barriers (e.g., a lack of time or resources) and psychosocial barriers (e.g., shame or guilt). While practical barriers can be addressed in a straightforward way, breaking down those barriers rooted in our personal and cultural identities requires a more intricate effort. And while ignoring these barriers—and denying

yourself care—might at times feel easier than facing them head on, doing so can be harmful in the long run.

The process is challenging but worth it, says Victoria, mother of four (ages 2, 5, 7, and 16). In early 2018, Victoria's father began feeling mildly ill, experiencing symptoms that did not yet signal the serious cardiac condition that was developing. By spring, Victoria was tag-teaming with her sister, helping to care for their father after heart surgery. After her father was discharged following a month-long hospital stay, Victoria found herself making nightly visits to her parents' home; finally, she says, moving her father and mother into her own home became necessary.

At the height of her dad's illness, Victoria was struggling to practice even basic forms of self-care. "I used to go until late afternoon before eating my first meal of the day. I rarely changed up my daily uniform. I rarely brushed my hair. I was a mess," says Victoria. She constantly put the comfort of others ahead of her own, with little to no regard for her physical or mental health.

But all that changed when Victoria realized (with her therapist's help) that in neglecting to take care of herself, she was also perpetuating her parents' behaviors towards self-care—behaviors she did not wish her children to inherit. "I think I was being self-sacrificing, but also in a way self-centered," says Victoria. While she remains as busy and hardworking as ever, she now aims

to show her children, by example, how to take good care of themselves.

Tim, a dad of two sons (one in preschool, the other in fourth grade), is learning to navigate what is commonly known as "caregiver guilt"; that is, when a caregiver feels selfish or shameful for thinking about, or acting upon, his own needs. Tim and his wife are helping to care for Tim's mother, who has Alzheimer's Disease, while also supporting his

[E]ven small, repetitive practices have a profound impact on a person's brain and overall well-being.

father during this challenging time. With two active young boys to also care for, Tim and his wife clearly have their hands full. Yet, regardless of how much Tim helps his parents, he still finds himself questioning whether he is doing enough.

"My mom is going through such a hardship, and my dad has to deal with it 24/7," says Tim. "I sometimes wonder why it's hard for me to help for just a few hours."

To cope with these emotions and stay committed to his self-care practice, Tim recalls a rule he learned in wilderness first aid training: You cannot help others if you end up getting hurt yourself.

"Finding the time for self-care can be difficult with the demands of everyday life," says Tim, "but I've decided that I must make my health a priority." He also emphasizes the

importance of both initiating and facilitating downtime for your partner, which can alleviate some of the guilt that comes with self-care. When Tim sees that his wife needs a break, he encourages her to carve out time to recharge, and she does the same for him.

Start small

In the exhausting chaos of caring for one's children as well as a sick or aging parent, taking time out for self-care can feel impossible. But don't discount the power of brief, simple, and free modalities, especially as a means for beginning a self-care routine. Studies in neuroplasticity suggest that even small, repetitive practices have a profound impact on a person's brain and overall well-being.

These micro-practices can be performed nearly anywhere, anytime, and take no longer than five minutes to complete:

- **Controlled breathing:** Take a deep breath in through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth, as if blowing through a straw. Repeat at least 6 times, working up to more repetitions when time allows.
- **Eye palming:** Sit or lie down. Rub your palms together for 5-10 seconds to warm your hands. Cup your palms over your eyes, and take a few slow, calming breaths.
- **Mantras:** Write or find a mantra that speaks to you as a caregiver. Need one to start? Try "I have enough. I give enough. I am enough."
- **Relaxing imagery:** Close your eyes. Think of a relaxing place or scene, summoning the way it looks, sounds, smells, and even tastes. Stay with this place and enjoy it for a couple of minutes.
- **Restorative yoga:** Take a gentle, restorative yoga pose, such as Child's Pose or Savasana, and hold it for 2-5 minutes.

Micro-practices can also be beneficial to prepare for caregiving, or to wind down after an emotionally or physically taxing visit with a parent.

Examples adapted from Andrea Sherman, PhD, and Marsha Weiner, MA:

- Before entering the caregiving space, complete a brief controlled breathing exercise. For example, take a deep inhale,



Jen Loong on Unsplash

imagining that you are breathing in vitality, and slowly exhale, breathing out stress. Repeat three times, or as many times as you need to feel stronger and more prepared.

- Upon exiting the caregiving space, be sure to take time to recover before moving on; try a few more controlled breaths, try a yoga pose that either restores (Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose) or energizes you (Lion's Breath), or invoke a mantra to bring closure to the caregiving session.

Get creative

Once you have established a consistent micro-practice routine, carving out time for additional, and perhaps more involved forms of self-care may seem more possible than before. They might not be in the form of a spa day or vacation, and they might be performed with your children in tow—and that's okay.

For Tim, exercise is a key form of self-care, providing much-needed stress-relief as well as increased stamina and energy. While he often feels tired, Tim believes that working out helps him avoid feeling lethargic and depressed. Indeed, according to the CDC, regular exercise can reduce your risk of depression and also improve sleep quality.

While the CDC recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week for healthy adults, it says that exercise can still be effective when performed in small, 10-minute increments spread throughout a week.

Those mini-workouts could certainly be accomplished by

- Climbing stairs while wearing your baby
- Pushing a stroller around your neighborhood
- Dancing in your living room with your toddler
- Jumping on your bed with your big kid (We won't tell anyone!)

Self-care might also take the form of saying “no,” or letting go of certain expectations or rules. After months of caring for her father and quickly heading towards burnout, Victoria decided to give herself 30 minutes every morning of what she calls “gratuitous” me time—an opportunity to sit down with a cup of coffee, read some digital news, and



shop online. And to hell with concerns about screen time, says Victoria. With her father's heart condition stabilized, her parents have moved out of her home. But when they were still living with her, the family's bedtime ritual involved everyone piling into her parents' room, snuggling up, and watching a nature show together. “It was probably my favorite part of the day,” admits Victoria.

Victoria also warns against using precious downtime to do things like cleaning the house or running errands, as tempting as that might be. “If you can, throw some money at the problem,” suggests Victoria, pointing to the various apps and services that can help with grocery shopping, food delivery, and even housework. Of course, there is a free alternative to these paid services, although many of us fail to fully utilize it: Ask others for help.

Ask for (and accept) help

How many times has someone said to you, “Let me know if I can help you with anything?” And how many times have you actually taken anyone up on that offer? Be prepared for the next time someone offers help. For example, if cooking meals for your family has become difficult to manage, take a

few quick minutes to create a Meal Train account (mealtrain.com) and have the link ready to share. Most people who offer their assistance genuinely want to support you; they just need to know how.

Both Victoria and Tim are adamant that caregivers should have someone with whom they can talk openly and honestly. This might be a friend or family member, a counselor, a spiritual advisor, or a caregiver support group—anyone to whom you can honestly vent. Like parenting, caring for an aging or ill parent can be fulfilling, but also emotionally and physically draining. It should not be taken on without a strong support system in place.

For information about local resources that support family caregivers, see the Family Caregiver Alliance (caregiver.org). GGMG members can also reach out for assistance with meal delivery, childcare, home cleaning, and other services. Contact member.support@gmg.org for more details. ❖

A former ballet dancer and teacher, Christina is now a writer, researcher, and editor specializing in technology and IP transactions. She and her husband have a two-year-old daughter.



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Holiday Gifts That Give Back

(Some might be self-gifting, but who are we to judge?
It is the most wonderful time of the year, after all!)

by Christine Chen



Christmas is my favorite holiday for several reasons, one of which I am not afraid to admit: It gives me an excuse to shop (for others and myself). With holiday deals popping up in October (where is the respect for pumpkins?) when trees and ornaments begin arriving in many locations, retailers prey on consumers like me. During the frenzy that ensues in November and December, the true holiday spirit of giving to those who are less fortunate is often overshadowed. To alleviate some shopper guilt, these brands will give back for items purchased.

Amour Vert. This San Francisco brand sells fashionable, high-quality, sustainable clothing, including a line of baby and kids clothing that is organic and sustainable. For the first time this holiday, it is launching a men's capsule of sustainable essentials. For every T-shirt purchase, Amour Vert will plant a tree in North America with its partner, American Forest. www.amourvert.com

Discount code: GOLDENGATE15 — 15% off for the month of December.





Tea Collection. Known for adorable, quality clothing with a global style anchored in traveling the world, Tea gives back to The Global Fund for Children with each purchase. Since 2003, San Francisco-based Tea has donated almost \$500,000 to local grassroots organizations helping children around the world. www.teacollection.com

Discount code: Use code GGGM2018 to receive \$20 off your order of \$50 or more. Expires December 24, 2018



Bixbee. San Francisco-based Bixbee sells an adorable collection of ergonomic backpacks, lunch boxes, and duffles that can be personalized with your child's name. For each backpack sold, Bixbee will donate a school bag and supplies to a child in need through its One Here. One There.® program. www.bixbee.com

Discount code: Get 20% off products on www.bixbee.com with BIXBEEG20 at checkout. Expires December 31, 2018



Bombas. Who doesn't love a pair of comfy, cozy socks, especially during cold winter days? Known for its comfort and fit, Bombas'

cotton and merino wool blend socks are moisture wicking. While kids might dread getting socks from Santa, the number one most requested clothing item at homeless shelters is socks. With every pair of its socks purchased, Bombas will donate a pair to a person in need in the U.S. The socks are designed with an antimicrobial treatment for those who don't have the luxury of changing their socks often. www.bombas.com



Warby Parker. Founded by Wharton Business school students, it started as an online-only destination for affordable yet stylish glasses. Now it has two locations in San Francisco. Since its founding in 2010, it has distributed over 4 million pairs of glasses through its Buy a Pair, Give a Pair program through its partner, Vision Spring. In addition, certain frame purchases donate 100% of the proceeds to their Pupils Project, which helps school children in need get free glasses. www.warbyparker.com



Twice as Warm. Wear One, Give One, is the motto of Twice as Warm, which sells winter accessories such as gloves, scarfs, hats, and now tops. With each purchase, the company will give the same high-quality, American-made items to local organizations for people in need during the winter. Particularly popular are the "Circle of Warmth" infinity scarfs. twiceaswarm.com

TOMS. The Gift of Shoes, Sight, and Water. This One for One® Pioneer started in 2006 as a shoe brand known for giving a pair of shoes to children in need for every pair of TOMS shoes purchased. TOMS has since expanded its

product offering and charitable giving. For every eyewear purchase, a full eye exam is given, and for each bag of TOMS Roasting Co. Coffee (yes, you read that correctly) purchased, 140 liters of water (a week's supply) is given to a person in need. www.toms.com



Soapbox. Soapbox sells soaps, bath bombs, hair and body care that is natural and paraben free. Its products can be purchased online or at retailers such as your local Walgreens. With every product you purchase, it donates a bar of soap to someone in need in the U.S. or abroad. www.soapboxsoaps.com



LifeStraw. LifeStraw is a water filter designed to be used by one person to filter a maximum of 4000 liters of drinking water (enough for that person for three years) and removes almost all waterborne bacteria and parasites. LifeStraw Play is a 2-stage water filtration bottle designed for children that removes bacteria and reduces chemicals and bad taste. For every Play bottle purchased, one child in a developing country receives clean drinking water for an entire school year through its Do Good platform. Its products can be found on Amazon and REI or their own website. www.lifestraw.com

Christine has analyzed and advised consumer companies for a career and loves conducting "market research" at the mall, which has only made her shopping addiction worse. Sadly, her kids think everything comes from Amazon or UPS.

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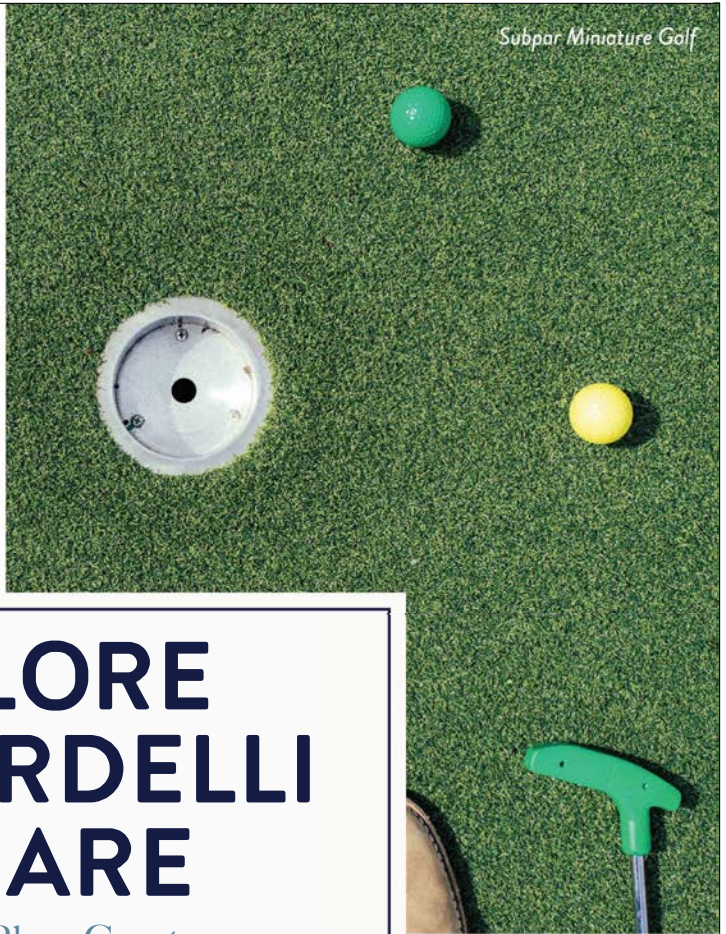


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COMMITTEES SPOTLIGHT

GGMG is run by more than 150 volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to giving back to their community. More than a dozen committees oversee the organization, from creating fun events to helping members snag a variety of local perks and discounts. Here's a peek into the missions of the GGMG committees. We are always in need of eager moms looking to sharpen their skills and deepen connections with their fellow GGMG moms. If you're interested in volunteering, please reach out, and we will happily find the perfect role to fit your busy life.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Governs GGMG, oversees operations, and supports all committees in their initiatives.

board@ggmg.org

CAREERS & ENTREPRENEURS

Provides networking opportunities and resources for navigating career and motherhood.

entrepreneurs@ggmg.org

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Holds fundraisers, donation drives, and events to benefit Bay Area women-and-child-centered nonprofits.

communityoutreach@ggmg.org

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Builds a safe and supportive atmosphere for all through education and community outreach.

diversity@ggmg.org

JUST FOR MOMS

Plans mom-specific events, like member mixers that let moms have fun, relax, and try something new.

justformoms@ggmg.org

KIDS ACTIVITIES

Holds seasonal events that are fun for all ages, like pumpkin decorating, attending the Nutcracker ballet, and celebrating Earth Day.

activities@ggmg.org

MAGAZINE

Crafts a fun and informative publication dedicated to exploring concerns relevant to moms and parents in the Bay Area and beyond.

editor@ggmg.org

MEMBER SUPPORT

Offers meals, babysitting, and other resources for members in need.

member.support@ggmg.org

MEMBERSHIP APPROVALS

Helps new and existing members complete the application process and responds to questions regarding GGMG membership.

membership@ggmg.org

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Connects new and existing members and increases awareness of membership benefits. Signature event is the quarterly Newborn Playgroup Formation, where many members begin their GGMG journey.

membershipengagement@ggmg.org

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

Connects GGMG moms to help build and grow communities across six neighborhoods. Events include yoga and wine nights, weekday meetups, and family playdates.

ambassadors@ggmg.org

PARENT EDUCATION

Organizes educational events for GGMG members on topics related to children, education, and parenthood.

education@ggmg.org

PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborates with local organizations and businesses to provide exceptional perks and resources for members. Partners also support other committees, providing assistance to members in need, volunteering at events, and providing food and beverage sponsorship for meetings.

partnerships@ggmg.org

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Manages GGMG's external communications to convey mission, benefits, and membership criteria. Responds to media requests, guides social media development, and supports events where GGMG has a presence.

pr@ggmg.org

SOCIAL EVENTS

Puts on two huge annual events for the community—Spring Fling and Fall Fest—that bring hundreds of members together to enjoy fun kids activities and goodies.

rsvp@ggmg.org

SOCIAL MEDIA

Manages GGMG social media accounts and curates content to enhance the vibrant online community of GGMG moms and demonstrate our vibe and values to potential members. Shares news, promotes events, and highlights work of other committees and GGMG as a whole.

socialmedia@ggmg.org

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Focuses on celebrating and supporting all volunteers. Holds bi-monthly volunteer meetings to connect and sync with other volunteers as well as bi-monthly fun activities to create greater bonds between volunteers.

operations@ggmg.org

WEB TEAM

Manages all online activities including maintaining the website, moderating the forums, classifieds, and reviews, and assisting members with technical questions.

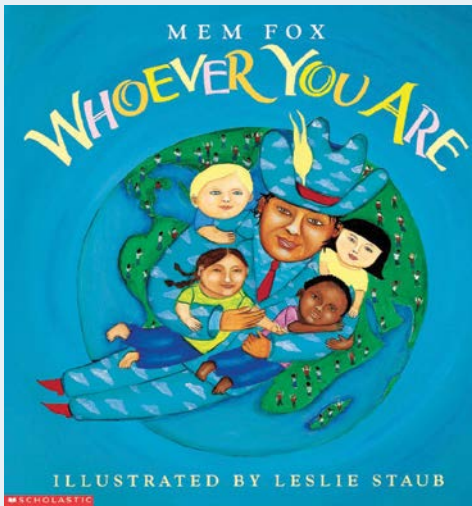
webteam@ggmg.org



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

On October 24, GGGM's Diversity & Inclusion Committee and the Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP) presented a panel discussion, "How to Talk to Kids About Homelessness." Utilizing their expertise and experience, panelists Martha Ryan (Founder/Executive Director of HPP), Miriam Hernandez Dimmler, Ph.D. (Associate Director/Community Mental Health Initiative Director, Child Trauma Research Center, UCSF), and Kelley Cutler (Human Rights Organizer, Coalition on Homelessness) discussed the current state of homelessness in San Francisco and how parents can engage with children on the topic.

Panelists stressed that before we can talk meaningfully about homelessness with



children, we must first ask ourselves, what do I believe about homelessness? Answering this question, while examining underlying biases, will help parents guide children toward an understanding of homelessness that aligns with their personal values. Parents must (1) identify their family values (creating a "family mission statement" is a great way to involve kids in the process of distilling what matters to you most), (2) strive to live those values every day, and THEN (3) engage in age-appropriate conversations with children to nurture those

values. Jumping to step (3) without first investing in steps (1) and (2) renders any discussion far less impactful.

We often struggle to find the "right" words to talk with children about fraught topics. But panelists emphasized that no single conversation about homelessness, race, religion, or any other complex topic will sum up everything your child needs to know. Rather,

All three panelists emphasized the importance of seeing the humanity in homeless people... such as making eye contact and...saying hello.

ongoing and evolving discussions are required as your child grows. Don't beat yourself up if you don't handle a conversation the way you hoped; you'll have other opportunities, and you can always initiate a discussion if one doesn't organically arise. For very young children, keep your answers simple and focused on their questions, which are often very literal and specific. For example, if a preschool-aged child asks why a person is sleeping outdoors, an age-appropriate answer might be, "Not everyone has a home. We are lucky to have a home with a soft bed."

Your attitudes about homeless people may overlap with or be influenced by your attitudes about people of color because racial minorities constitute a disproportionate number of the homeless population in San Francisco. Be mindful of this possibility. Exposing yourself and your children to people of different backgrounds is a wonderful way to develop a global mindset. The choices you make, whether big (your school or neighborhood) or small (your children's books or weekend activities), significantly impact the way you and your children perceive and interact with people you may think of as "different."

Panelists agreed that showing empathy is possible without compromising children's safety. It is important to avoid making unfair stereotypes of homeless people, such as that they are lazy, based on assumptions or a

single negative interaction. As Kelley Cutler remarked, being homeless requires significant resilience and energy. No one chooses to be homeless, and homelessness can happen to anyone—even those who are blessed with abundant resources.

All three panelists emphasized the importance of seeing the humanity in homeless people. This begins with the simple act of acknowledgment, such as making eye contact and/or saying hello. If and when it feels safe, the panelists suggested asking homeless individuals if there is something specific they need or simply giving a gift such as money or socks. Bear in mind that many homeless people carry all of their belongings everywhere they go, so heavy, bulky items may



be impractical gifts, even if well-intentioned.

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee's most highly recommended book for teaching children about the inherent oneness of all people is *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox. Additionally, HPP recommends the picture book *Homeless* by Mike Boyce. Further resources have been posted on the GGGM forum and are available by request. Email diversity@ggmg.org to receive these resources, suggest a future topic you're interested in exploring, and/or to join our team. We look forward to seeing you at our next event!

MEMBER SUPPORT

Celebrate Your Village This Holiday Season

Amid the gift-giving, card-addressing, and cookie-baking madness, the holidays can unearth feelings of loneliness for those who have lost loved ones or are separated by great distances from family. It can also be the best time to pause and celebrate the (sometimes less visible) hands that lift us up and keep us moving forward. If you are feeling the holiday blues, here are a few ideas for celebrating your community:

- **Make a list.** Who are the work-wives, nannies, teachers, playdate parents, or long-distance besties who keep you sane?
- **Make a second list.** That barista who knows your order. The bus driver who always keeps the door open when he sees you running. The dry cleaner who removed that stubborn stain from your shirt. The neighbor who always has time for a hello. Your child's pediatrician.
- **Think about how you can show a little extra love to the folks on your lists.** Five extra minutes with your neighbor? A drawing from your child? A quick email?



Big or small, a gesture of love can go a long way for both the giver and the recipient. If you're struggling to make your lists or if you wish to help others who could use an extra hand, please reach out to member.support@gmg.org.

New Arrivals



Gen M. Baby Jaxon Nathaniel

Kathleen R. Baby Rohan Louis

Kim S. Baby Evelyn Sloane

Congratulations to **Gen M.**! She will be pampering her little one with products from Babyganics. These plant-based, tear-free, hypoallergenic cleansers and lotions clean and protect skin from head to toe.

To announce your new arrival in the magazine and for a chance to win a Babyganics gift set, fill out the form at <http://tinyurl/gmgNewArrivals>.



GGMG Fall Festival

Thank you to all the members and their families who joined us at this year's GGMG Fall Festival held at our new location, SFF Soccer Field in Mission Bay! It was wonderful to see everyone exploring the pumpkin patch, jumping in the bounce houses, rockin' out to live music, savoring the yummy treats, making arts and crafts, golf putting, kicking a ball around, and enjoying so many other fun-filled activities!

Did you strike a pose at the JCC photo booth? See your photos at: <https://buzzimages.smugmug.com/2018-Galleries/2018-GGMG-Event>

We really appreciate all the volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this fun event possible! And we would especially like to thank all of our amazing sponsors who contributed so generously to Fall Festival! Please be sure to check them out. Thank you so much!



GGMG Village Voices: Celebrating the Holidays, SF-Style

The GGMG online forums are overflowing with advice on navigating life and parenthood in the Bay Area. With the end of the year upon us, we checked in with our online community to see how members make the holidays in San Francisco extra special for their families. Here are some tips:

“Every December, we dress up in brightly patterned clothing and go out for high tea at the Crown and Crumpet outpost in Japantown. It’s not as expensive as some of the hotel high teas, and it’s super festive. My boys love it.”

“Old Clam House for Christmas Eve/ Christmas Day dinner...is a tradition we started last year after someone on GGMG recommended it.”

“Last year we were here for the first time over Christmas and went down to Union Square on Christmas Eve. It was bustling but not crazy, and we were able to sit on Santa’s lap in Macy’s without even waiting in line.”

“For littler ones, the skating rink at the Academy [of Sciences] had the ‘chairs’ to hold on to while the Embarcadero rink does not seem to have those.”

“We also do a cheese fondue with sourdough and Dungeness for Christmas Eve dinner. To me Dungeness is SF’s definitive holiday food!”

“Holiday performances at Grace Cathedral. The one aimed at kids is relatively inexpensive and fun (choose aisle seats/front as actors interact with kids)—but kids 7 and up might enjoy the adult performance as well (mine does).”



GGMG MEMBERS: COME JOIN THE FUN



With exclusive discounts on programs and activities for families – including Kinder Fun Klub, swim lessons, Fitness Center memberships and more – GGMG members receive three free passes to any JCCSF Kinder Fun Klub drop-in class (music, art, dance or gym) as well as 50% off the first two months of Swim School lessons.

TO REDEEM PASS: Bring the cover of the current GGMG magazine or your GGMG membership card in person to the JCCSF Front Desk. Magazine must bear the name and address of the GGMG member.

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MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Newborn Playgroup Formation Event at Sports Basement Presidio

Attention, moms with newborns! You don't want to miss this event. You will get a chance to mingle with other moms while we organize playgroups based on your child's age and neighborhood. Take the first step on the path to lifelong friendships.

DATE: Sunday, January 13

TIME: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.

COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.ggmg.org

New Year Member Mixer

Looking to mix, mingle, and meet other GGMG moms? Come join us as we continue celebrating the New Year and get to know each other over food and drinks. This will be a nice way to end the weekend and start your week off right!

DATE: Sunday, January 27

TIME: 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

PLACE: TBD

REGISTRATION: *Details to come on www.ggmg.org and Facebook!*



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Women's Self-Defense Class

Join other GGMG moms and refresh your self-defense skills in a fun and safe environment at our women-only class at One Martial Arts. You will learn the basics to defend yourself. Snacks and water will be available. We may offer childcare, so please check the calendar for updates.

DATE: Saturday, January 26

TIME: 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

PLACE: One Martial Arts, 850 Taraval St.

COST: \$10

REGISTRATION: www.ggmg.org



NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

Neighborhood 5 has a new director, Viona Seshadri, and two new ambassadors, Evelyn Nichols and Maggie Ma. Evelyn is a mother of two little ones, has a Masters of Education, and is a parent educator and caregiver trainer. She is best known as the founder and teacher of Mighty Bambinis Nursery School. Maggie is a neuroscientist, originally from Shanghai, and a mother to an adorable 26-month-old.

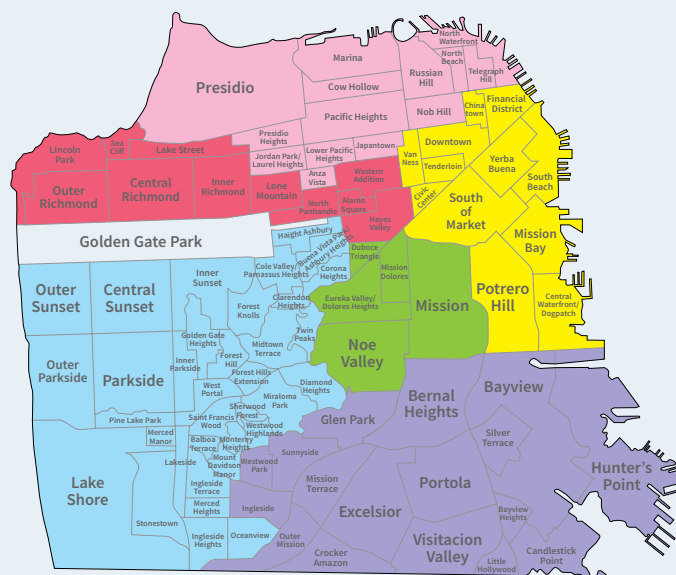
Evelyn and Viona will be hosting themed wine nights once a month. The first will be on November 28 at 8 p.m. at Noeteca Wine Bar. The theme will be about mentally preparing for the holiday season, when lots of things are happening all at the same time. The goal is to allow moms to connect and have a good time. The following wine night will be on December 19 at 8 p.m., also at Noeteca, and the theme will be “Last Minute SOS on Preschool Applications.” As preschool application deadlines approach, this will be a chance for moms to share where they have applied and consider whether they should apply to other schools before the deadline.

Maggie and Viona will also be hosting an outdoor Mandarin-speaking playgroup every other Friday at 10 a.m.—they will start with a small hike and play some simple games. Please visit the GGMG event page for meetup locations and dates.

Neighborhood 5 is also lucky to have Monday morning walk and coffee groups.

Join Neighborhood 5 (click on Dashboard on the main GGMG website then search the left side menu for “search & join groups”) to follow along and get involved in some of the wonderful events being planned! Alternatively, contact Viona at viona.seshadri@gmail.com.

Neighborhood 5
Duboce Triangle, Noe, Castro, Mission, and surrounding neighborhoods.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Neighborhood 7: We'll be having our regular wine night (every third Friday) on December 21 and January 18 and a weekend family playdate in early December.

Neighborhood 6: The annual holiday moms-only party will include a white elephant exchange, food, and drink at Director Dru Garza's house.

Neighborhood 3: There will be a winter celebration playdate with crafts and snacks at Clay Street Playground on December 14 from 10 a.m. to noon.

Neighborhood 2: Our series of private, 90-minute yoga classes continues, followed by tea and delicious snacks at Yoga Tree with the fabulous Kari Marble on January 20, 2019. Check-in begins at 12:45 p.m., class begins promptly at 1:00 p.m. and runs until 2:30 p.m.

Watch the GGMG Calendar for details.



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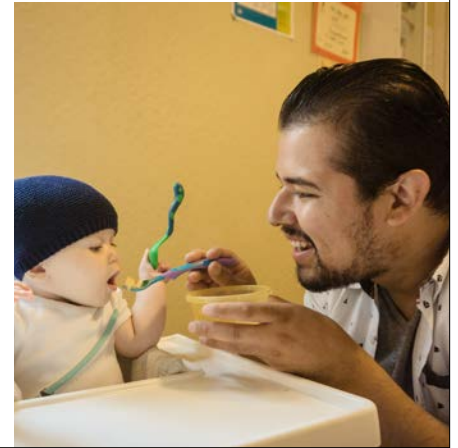
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My Wake-Up Call

By Jessica Williams

I never imagined I'd be lying on the floor of a dimly lit restaurant bathroom with a steel drain to the right of my ear and a toilet brush behind my head. I had tried so, so hard not to have to lie down on those dirty, brown tiles. Yet there I was.

My daughter, who was 3 years old at the time and still too fearful of the grown-up potty and its automatic flusher, looked at me inquisitively from the travel potty I'd set up for her. I managed to squeak out a few reassuring words, but in reality, I didn't know how I'd stand up, much less pack up the travel potty and pick her up to wash her hands. Every shallow breath brought the feeling of a million needles jabbing into my spine. And though I lay motionless on the floor, the absurdity of that moment did not escape me: I'd thrown out my back lifting my not-even-30-pound daughter onto her travel potty.

Excruciating back pain was new to me. With my husband's help, I managed to make it home, where I crawled like a baby to our front door. For three hours I lay on the living room floor with my knees bent in a tabletop



My mom was the nucleus of our home—she made sure life ran on time, and her love and endless devotion kept life in step.

position while he moved them ever so slightly to loosen up my back. When he told my daughter, "Mommy got hurt, Daddy's reading to you tonight," she burst into tears asking if mommy was all right and demanding that mommy, mommy, MOMMEEE! NOT Daddy, read *Corduroy* to her. For a mom, there's little reprieve. So as I lay on the floor, the dog sniffing my face, my daughter piled her bedtime books next to my head. Then I read them to her.

Like my daughter, when I was young, I often just wanted mom. My mom was the nucleus of our home—she made sure life ran on time, and her love and endless devotion kept life in step. So whenever my mom got sick or hurt, there was an unease about

the house. Reality became a slow, shadowy variation of the norm, where my dad, brother, and I managed to get things done but accomplished the tasks in missteps: the sandwiches sliced

in the wrong direction, the front porch light left on throughout the day, the countertops besmirched by toast crumbs until dinnertime. My mom probably did too much for me, for all of us. But isn't that what moms do?

Certainly there were things my daughter could do for herself. I mean, did I *really* have to place her onto her travel potty? But doing things for her wasn't about coddling but about speeding up the process: there's only so long you can wait for your child to stop dancing in front of the mirror and playing with the toilet paper while other customers wait outside. But subconsciously, could I also be treating my 3-year-old a bit like a baby so I could slow down time a little? She's growing up so fast. One day she's resting in her bassinet, and the next day she's

putting on her own shoes (sometimes).

It took me lying immobile on the floor to realize the time had come for my daughter to start doing more for herself. And if I wanted any hope of chasing after her for the remainder of her childhood, it was high time I started taking better care of myself, too. Once I could move again, I began taking barre classes to build back my strength and rehabilitate my core, something I had not prioritized since my c-section. At first my legs wobbled like jelly, and my superfit instructor—a former ballet dancer—called them "little legs." But working out was no longer optional; I had to make time for it. Fast forward a year, and, thankfully, I haven't hurt my back again. I've also learned fun terms like "spinal alignment" and "abdominal stabilization."

Now, it's time to get these little legs to the gym. ❖

Jessica is a freelance writer and editor. She wants to thank her mom for everything. Fittingly, her mom had trouble finding a photo of herself for this article because she was always the one taking the photos. Don't make that same mistake! Contact her through her website, www.jesslynnwilliams.com.



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