

APRIL/MAY 2020



GGMG

GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine

Change





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Contents

COLUMNS

- 4 Letter from the Editor: The More Things Change, The More They Stay the Same**
Mom finds solace in the same while facing change
SONYA ABRAMS
- 5 Letter from the Board: Growing Up is Hard to Do**
Changing identities and utilizing resources
ERIN CAHILL
- 6 Out and About**
Earth Day Around the Bay
COLLEEN MORGAN

Li'l Kid, Big City: Golden Gate Park
CHRISTINE CHEN

Hikes
NEHA MASSON
- 8 Ask the Expert: Changing Your Personal Style**
Wardrobe tips for putting your best foot forward
ALLISON LODISH
- 10 Dadlands: Finding Gratitude Through Fatherhood**
How parenting can bring out the best in us
BRETT HARRISON
- 11 Member Profile: Renata Stoica**
A look inside the life of a GGMG member
TRIPS REDDY
- 12 Books for Kids: San Francisco**
Books that focus on the City by the Bay
LAURE LATHAM
- 13 Books for Parents: Love Issues Without the Long Face**
Much-needed levity on the family journey
GAIL CORNWALL
- 14 From Womb to World: Adding a Sibling**
Adjusting to life with two
CHRISTINE CHEN
- 39 I ♥ Mom: The Evolution of a Mom**
How parenting styles change, yet stay the same
EMILY BEAVEN

FEATURES

- 16 The Problem of the Blue Suede Shoes and Other Habits That Have Got to Go**
Sometimes a habit is more than just inconvenient or embarrassing
CLARE DEIGNAN
- 20 Ch-Ch-Changes**
How technology challenges and evolves parenting
VICTORIA DVORAK
- 24 Changing Schools**
Tips for successful school transitions
JENNIFER KUHR BUTTERFOSS

GGMG

- 4** HOUSEKEEPING
- 9** VILLAGE: COMMUNITY OUTREACH & CONTEST
- 15** NEW ARRIVALS
- 28** DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
- 29** PARTNERSHIPS, MEMBER SUPPORT, SOCIAL MEDIA
- 30** EVENTS
- 32** NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

Letter from the Editor:

The more things change, the more things stay the same

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is a Cole Valley-based mom of three and a work in progress.

Several months ago I found myself—a lover of routine, an enemy of change—a new widow, the family I'd created suddenly without an anchor. It was the biggest, most irremediable change I'd ever experienced, and it was thrust upon me without warning. The initial wave of grief ushered in a deep anxiety that the loss of my husband would alter everything so fundamentally that my family wouldn't know how to function anymore.

“The most important person in my life is gone—and without him I often feel empty and directionless—but the fundamental structures of my world are still here.”

But one of the biggest surprises of my current reality is how much hasn't changed. The most important person in my life is gone—and without him I often feel empty and directionless—but the fundamental structures of my world are still here. My children still complain about waking up early, still bombard me with endless questions, still laugh and cry about the same silly

situations, still eagerly bounce through their days with joy and fall asleep with smiles on their faces. My friends still swoop in for meals, activities, and weekends away. And I still find some contentment in the things that brought me happiness before: concerts, podcasts, parties, dark comedies with a glass of champagne, hikes with friends. My identity may have fundamentally shifted, but the individual components—the preferences, the passions, the personality quirks—remain. In those moments of feeling crushed by grief, I often consciously force myself to consider all that is still the same, and that calms me and reminds me that change doesn't mean an end to everything.

Our writers in this issue help us face change head on. On page 24, Jennifer Butterfoss shares her family's experience with switching schools and provides a roadmap to a successful transition for the whole family. On page 16, Clare Diegnan discovers which of our children's bad habits should be changed, and which we should let slide. And Victoria Dvorak on page 20 muses on the changing nature of parenthood over the decades as evolving technology gives parents more surveillance opportunities and ushers in new challenges.

We are living in a time of change. Global warming is changing our experience with the planet's behavior. Technology is changing how we engage with each other. And the COVID-19 pandemic is changing our daily movements and challenging our sense of safety. Change can be frightening, but I've been learning that it doesn't have to define or derail us, that we can draw on the constant threads of our life to support us when we face a new reality.

Sonya Abrams

Letter from the Board:

Growing Up is Hard to Do

By Erin Cahill

Change. This is something we continuously go through as parents, as children, as siblings, as friends, in our personal lives, and in our careers. In all aspects of our lives, change—whether big life events or smaller day-to-day occurrences—is constantly happening.

For me personally, the last few years have included some significant changes: becoming a first-time homeowner in San Francisco, becoming a parent in October 2017 and again in August 2019, making partner at my company. All of a sudden, it feels like I took the fast track lane to “grow up”—all by the time I turned 40. My weekends are no longer full of watching football all day at the local bar, long runs on a Saturday morning, or last-minute getaways to Wine Country. Instead, I experience the joys of middle-of-the-night wakings, broken water heaters and dishwashers, never-ending diaper changes and laundry, long walks to get my sleep-deprived son to sleep, and dealing with some sort of strange illness rampaging throughout our household.

But change isn't all bad. I now have a void filled I didn't realize existed before kids: my daughter's excited screams when I come home from work, seeing my son reach new

“My new “family” has come from many sources, but I definitely would not be able to do this parent thing without the friends and support I've gotten through GGMG.”

milestones, the realization that my daughter imitates me constantly and wants to be like me. I have found joy in the simpler things in life (Sunday Funday is now a morning at the

playground), and am appreciating the world from the perspective of a toddler.

My husband and I have relied a lot on our extended “family” to help through much of this. We are both transplants to San Francisco with no blood relation family here, so instead our family consists of the friends we have made here—those we've known since we were children, those we met as singles living in San Francisco, and those we've met as parents. GGMG has been a great resource for dealing with change, introducing me to friends through the Board and through my committee, late-night friends on the message boards as I read through posts on how to get my child to take a bottle, and even our new nanny. My new “family” has come from many sources, but I definitely would not be able to do this parent thing without the friends and support I've gotten through GGMG.

As I transition into the role of Vice Chair, I am excited to help lead this organization as it continues to grow and change to meet the needs of our members. If there are things you would like to see GGMG doing, changes made to the organization, or just a great idea to share with us, please reach out to Chair Virginia Green or me. We would love to hear from you.



Erin is both a mom—to Alyx, Jack and two orange tabbies—and a partner in a large accounting firm. Her husband and co-parent, Niall, helps to make this all possible. When she has free time, of which lately there is not a lot, she enjoys hiking, running, trying the latest restaurants, and, of course, wine.

Erin Cahill

Housekeeping

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

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Managing to tear my ACL and MCL on the last run of the day; Deeply failing at my no spend year new year's resolution; Moving again; Trying to cope with two teenagers suffering from mental health illnesses; Teaching my kids how to tell jokes; A trip to New Orleans; Moving cross country.

CORRECTION: In our February issue's Loving Parenthood Without Wine article, we incorrectly cited a study that alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer by 5%; the correct statistic is 15%.

Cover Outtakes



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

Cover photo by Marie Hamonic Photography
Cover models: Cristina and Olivia (6)



Earth Day Around the Bay

By Colleen Morgan

As the flowers bloom, celebrate the beauty of our planet with these family-friendly activities. **Make sure to check event websites as the evolving COVID-19 pandemic may alter activities.**

Earth Day SF

Enjoy live music, workshops, art, local food, and a kids' zone at this popular event's 50th anniversary. April 19, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Earthdaysf.org

National Park Week

Celebrate the beauty of national parks across the country from April 18 to 26 when special programs are introduced daily. To kick off the celebration, all parks are free on April 18. Learn more and find your local park at www.nps.gov/subjects/npscelebrates/national-park-week.htm

Earth Day 2020 Eco Sail

Board the Schooner Freda B sailboat in Sausalito and explore the Bay's diverse wildlife as you travel under the Golden Gate Bridge to Point Bonita Lighthouse. Choose from three special sails for Earth Day on April 22 (morning, afternoon, or sunset). Regularly scheduled sails are available every Saturday and Sunday.

schoonerfredab.com/ticketed-sails

Berkeley Earth Day

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, this event features eco-vendors, music, crafts, a kids' zone, vegan food, and The Wild & Scenic Film Festival. Tickets for the FilmFest are sold separately. April 19, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

berkeleyearthday.org

Celebration of Earth Day at Oakland Zoo

Enjoy over 60 hands-on Earth Day stations and connect with local environmental organizations. All activities are included with paid Zoo admission. April 18, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

www.oaklandzoo.org/programs-and-events/earth-day

SF Bicycle Coalition's Family Bike Fest

Ditch your car for a more ecological set of wheels. Advocate for more family-friendly bike lanes, demo cargo bikes and kids bikes, and enjoy free coffee, mimosas, and food from Bi-Rite while your kids are entertained by games, crafts, and activities. April 18, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

sfbike.org/event/family-bike-fest

Earth Day with the Environmental Education Coalition of Napa County

Over 100 organizations and vendors will showcase green products and services, teach you how you can get involved locally, and serve delicious food, wine, and beer. April 26, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Oxbow Commons.

napaenvironmentaled.org/earth-day

The 15th Annual Earth Day Celebration at Stinson Beach

Combines beach clean up with public sculpture-making and dance. Bring a picnic lunch. April 18, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

www.earthdaystinsonbeach.org

Presidio Earth Day Celebration

Volunteer your time during the Earth Week festivities happening around the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. This event is free and open to all ages and abilities. April 25, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

www.presidio.gov/volunteer/events

Colleen is a mom of 2 who has loved every minute of living in SF for 14 years. This spring, she will embark on a new adventure as she and her family move to NYC.

Boulders just south of Stinson Beach. Photo by Mark Dolinen



Hikes

By Neha Masson

Year-round access to the outdoors is one of the best things about living in California. Trails ranging from easy strolls to challenging workouts give us many opportunities to spend time in nature. Here are a few hikes you can add to your list in 2020.

Mount Sutro

Intersection of Clarendon Ave. & Johnstone Dr., San Francisco

Difficulty: Easy 1.8 mile loop

Cost: FREE

Hidden behind UCSF's Parnassus campus is an 80-acre nature reserve. Studded with eucalyptus trees, flowering bushes, and ivy, the Fairy Gates Trail is marked by a small sign and takes you on a restorative hike in this hidden oasis. Watch out for poison oak and cyclists. Great for kids as young as three who are expert walkers and can navigate rocky paths.

Panoramic Loop, Muir Woods

Muir Woods National Monument, Marin County

Difficulty: Easy to Intermediate 4.5 mile loop

Cost: \$15 park entry plus parking with reservation

Enter the park and start at the Redwood Creek Trail. Hike amongst historic redwoods and join the Fern Creek Trail, lush with beautiful greenery. Once you reach the Lost Trail, take a steep climb until you loop back downhill to Muir Woods where you started. Watch for poison oak and seriously gorgeous scenery along the way.

Scenic Loop, Joaquin Miller Park

Joaquin Miller Park, Oakland

Difficulty: Intermediate 4 mile loop

Cost: FREE

Oakland is home to many hidden gems, including this 500-acre park, which showcases a dense redwood forest. You'll encounter streams, canyons, and stunning views before looping back to the towering redwoods. Keep an eye out for wild turkeys, California quail, lizards, and scrub jays. Check out the park's other hiking, biking, and horse-back riding trails, picnic areas, and a 2,000-seat amphitheater that hosts Broadway musicals every summer.



Li'l Kid, Big City: Golden Gate Park

By Christine Chen

One of the area's most beautiful and inexpensive **carousels** can be found in the Koret Children's Center in Golden Gate Park, where kids ages 6 to 12 can ride for \$1 and children under 6 are free, though those under 40 inches tall must ride with a paying adult. The nearby playground is one of the best in the city, with structures and a **concrete slide**—fun for all age ranges. Bring your driver's license to show San Francisco residency for free entry into the **Botanical Gardens**, where you can explore 55 acres that showcase almost 9,000 different kinds of plants from around the world. General admission is free on Saturdays at the **de Young Museum** for residents of nine Bay Area counties. The free view from the tower is breathtaking and worth the elevator ride. Also free is the **de Youngsters studio**, located on the ground floor, where kids will love the interactive exhibits. While the **Japanese Tea garden** is only free for kids 5 and under, San Francisco residents get a discount (and free admission from 9 to 10 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). Free rotating weekends are offered by San Francisco ZIP code at the **Cal Academy of Sciences**.

Christine is mother to a 6-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter, both of whom love all that Golden Gate Park has to offer.

Neha enjoys taking her 4-year-old on hikes where they explore nature and look out for birds, colorful flowers, and the Gruffalo.



Crafting a Personal Style

with Allison Lodish

Allison Lodish is a personal stylist at Nordstrom in Corte Madera. A mother of two girls, she frequently works with clients who are experiencing a change in their life.

What’s the easiest way to change your look?

You can easily evolve into a new look, but don’t try to be something you’re not. Updating is the easiest way to make a change. Retire the old sweaters, try to incorporate a new color or pattern, maybe a new pair of sunglasses. Just remember, not everything that is on trend is flattering for every body type, but adding a few fun pieces can change your whole attitude.

What do moms look for when creating a new wardrobe after baby?

Bodies change after babies and that can be difficult to accept (but look at the reward!). The biggest mistake new moms make is trying to hide their bodies by buying big pieces. Find the right denim that is comfortable and flattering. There are so many styles these days there is something for everyone. If you have a long torso, then maybe a high-waisted jean is your friend; if you are on the petite side, a bootcut will actually make you look taller! Alterations can do wonders too, so don’t be afraid of the length.

A new top can brighten anyone’s day. Find a great t-shirt in basic colors (not too big) which you can wear alone or under a blazer. Also, a simple silky fabric or blend that can be dressed up or down and you’re ready for date night!

“Not everything that is on trend is flattering for every body type but adding a few fun pieces can change your whole attitude.”

What are some must-have pieces for moms in SF?

An awesome handbag, a great blazer, and a fun pair of mules or sneakers that add a little pep in your step!

How do you build a capsule wardrobe?

Start with your core pieces: great jeans, pants, dress, a blazer, and a few tops that you can dress up or down. Find things that work together but keep it fresh and simple at the same time.

Can a stylist help change your look?

The beauty of working with a stylist is that we see you in a different light. We know the hidden gems and bring you things to try that you most likely would never pick out yourself. Those are usually the pieces the client ends up liking the most.

Nordstrom personal stylist sessions are complimentary. To book a session, contact Allison Lodish at 415.302.0278 or allison.lodish@nordstrom.com.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Donate to Our Diaper Drive—Now Through May 31

Please join us in continuing this incredible tradition of moms helping moms by donating diapers and wipes to Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP) (homelessprenatal.org).

HPP is a nationally-recognized family resource center in San Francisco that empowers homeless and low-income families, particularly mothers motivated by pregnancy and parenthood, to find within themselves the strength and confidence they need to transform their lives. The agency serves over 4,000 families in need annually, providing a variety of programs and services to help them become healthy, stable, and self-sufficient.

HPP believes that no mother should have to choose whether to buy food or diapers for their children. In addition to helping families access health services and housing assistance, HPP distributes 150,000 diapers and wipes annually to mothers in need.



Donate diapers directly via Amazon: <https://amzn.to/2U1KvLh>

To help us keep track of GGMG members’ awesomeness, please email drives@ggm.org with the number of diapers you donated.

Thank you so much for your support of this drive!



CONTEST

Mommy and Me Portrait



Laura Dallagata creates custom illustrations for families based on their memories, stories, and anecdotes.

Our winner will receive a personalized session with Laura, resulting in a custom illustration of Mom and her child(ren). The value of this prize ranges from \$200 to \$400. Details of the session will be determined between the artist and the winner.

Our prize winner will also receive a complimentary copy of Laura’s book *It’s Bedtime! (A True Story)* which is also available on her website, www.lauradallagata.com.

Laura runs a project on her website called “If You Dream It You Can Make It.” Parents share their kids’ dreams and Laura periodically selects a story and creates a custom illustration. To participate, please visit www.lauradallagata.com/if-you-dream-it-you-can-do-it.

Enter the contest by emailing contest@ggm.org with “Portrait” in the subject line. Winner picked at random. Thank you to our prize donor, illustrator Laura Dallagata. Check out her website, www.lauradallagata.com, for more information about her illustration work and her children’s book.

Congratulations to the winner of our last contest, **Ali Mickelsen**! She has won a complimentary sleep consultation valued at \$499 with Dr. Sarah Mitchell.

Finding Gratitude through Fatherhood

By Brett Harrison

You can read all the books in the world and listen to all the advice that is given to you, but nothing can truly prepare you for fatherhood. Twenty years ago I never thought that I would be changing poop diapers, watching Elmo, or singing nursery songs to my child (though my toddler, Gene, gets mad when I sing songs to him).

Becoming a parent has taught me what it's like to be selfless. Growing up as an only child, it was all about me. Recently, I have been really starting to understand that it's not all about me anymore, but now almost everything goes into caring for my children. I don't have time to be selfish! Until recently, I never knew what it felt like to care for someone else. There are times when I feel overwhelmed with the many responsibilities that come with being a dad. There are days I change a soiled diaper every hour. The constant need for attention and dealing with insane tantrums and meltdowns, one after the other (or both at the same time), can be overwhelming, but it grounds me.

You can put a price on diapers and food; however, hearing my Gene say a complete sentence and seeing Zack walk over to greet me when I come home from work is truly priceless. I couldn't believe how excited Gene got about Halloween. Every day after preschool, Gene couldn't wait to see the skeleton prop outside. He kept saying



“Becoming a parent has taught me what it’s like to be selfless.”

“Oooh, scary! What is that?”

He relieves my work stress by just acting goofy and making me laugh.

Last week I was having a bad day, and I couldn't even force a smile. Gene had me put a sheet over my head and act like a zombie. I couldn't stop laughing after seeing both of my sons' reactions. When I'm playing around with them, it's like being a kid again.

I see a lot of my own dad in me when I am coaching my sons in their early development. I was a lot to deal with as a child. My dad was always very patient and was there to comfort me when I got discouraged or angry. When I acted up or misbehaved, he was firm yet taught me the right next thing. I was very hyper and cried a lot. I never knew what my dad went through, but now that I have two kids running around, I get it.

I now know the sacrifices my dad made in encouraging my development. My dad was always there for me. He shaped me into who I am today. Now that I'm a dad, I am grateful to get to watch my sons grow and develop. That's what makes my day. My sons have unconditional love for me and I am their hero. My wife said I am the primary role model for these boys. I thought, “Wow! That's a scary thought.” Not

made in encouraging my development. My dad was always there for me. He shaped me into who I am today. Now that I'm a dad, I am grateful to get to watch my sons grow and

develop. That's what makes my day. My sons have unconditional love for me and I am their hero. My wife said I am the primary role model for these boys. I thought, “Wow! That's a scary thought.” Not that I would be a bad role model, but that I have never been in this role before. There are some days that I feel like I'm not cut out for this, but I know it's worth it when they look up at me and give me their big smiles while saying “Dada.”

Brett is originally from Jacksonville, North Carolina and has lived in different locations such as Hawaii, Texas, and Southern California as his dad was a marine. His career has spanned selling medical devices to helping fight cancer and heart disease in the Pacific Northwest.

Renata Stoica

Photo by Bhavya Thyagarajan

Renata Stoica is the founder of San Francisco-based tinyB Chocolate. She lives with her husband and two kids (ages 20 months and 3.5 years) in the Twin Peaks neighborhood. She was interviewed by Trips Reddy, a marketer and mother of a 2-year-old.



How do you balance motherhood with running your own business that requires you to physically be at work?

The phrase “time is valuable” had a whole new meaning after I started my company and had kids. I work like crazy four days a week to get things done and make it to school on time to pick them up and prepare dinner. Friday is my day off and I spend it with Emilia and Luke but sneak in some meetings during naps and after they're in bed. I don't think it will ever be a perfect balance between motherhood and running a business.

Tell us about your personal journey to starting your own truffle company?

Often, people only see a stereotype of the country of my birth, Brazil: beaches, Carnival, parties, sensuality, and soccer. Few know about brigadeiros, our national dessert, a delicious chocolate truffle you'll find at birthdays, weddings, parties, and any gathering. For me they also have a very different association: strength, a woman's freedom, and independence. I'm the oldest of three sisters and when I was 3, my mother, then aged 22, left my father (who was cheating on her), took a course in making chocolate, and opened a business that became our financial foundation. I went to nursing school vowing never to have anything to do with chocolate again until, in 2009, I was laid off from a job after a decade, and my serious relationship came to an abrupt end. I needed a radical change, so I packed up and came to San Francisco, on the other side of the world, where I knew no one. It was incredibly hard, but it opened me up to new experiences and people, and it's where I met my husband. One day a casual conversation with a friend led me to the idea of making brigadeiros for sale, this time with the best possible ingredients. And in 2014 I convinced my husband to join me.

Where would we find you if you had a day off?

You'll find me with Emilia and Luke at the Academy of Sciences, some playground in a sunny part of the city, b. patisserie indulging in passion fruit tea and chocolate croissants with my friends, or shopping at Target without feeling rushed.

Are there skills from running a small business that transfer into your daily life with your family?

Better management when kids are having tantrums. I try to see them as my clients, where I have to be patient and explain things in the best way. It works most of the time.

What are your favorite activities with kids in San Francisco?

I love being outdoors with them, playgrounds, museums, picnics, and our favorite ice cream spot.

As a family with international roots, what do you love most about San Francisco?

I'm from Sao Paulo, which is the largest city in Latin America, with a population of over 20 million people, so San Francisco feels like a small town with all the benefits of a big city. It's such a beautiful city with great outdoor activities. Despite the cost, I still feel lucky to be living here.

How do you help your kids stay connected to their Brazilian heritage and culture?

I speak only Portuguese with my children and we have Brazilian friends with kids the same age as mine and we try to set up playdates so they can practice the language. Also, video calls with my family in Brazil at least twice a week and visit at least yearly. I also like to read Brazilian books to them and cook Brazilian food often.

Know a mom you want to spotlight in the next issue? Email editor@ggm.org with her name, email, and a few sentences about what makes her an awesome mom for our next Member Profile.

San Francisco

By Laure Latham

In honor of the 150th birthday of Golden Gate Park, we are celebrating San Francisco in books. One of these books was written by a GGMG mom while others relate to places you visit regularly with your kids. To add to the San Francisco appeal, some of these books will be easier to find at local bookstores or GGNRA stores (Crissy Field, Marin Headlands) than on Amazon. Yay for the City by the Bay!

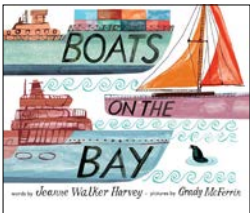


San Francisco: A Book of Numbers (Hello, World)

Written and illustrated by Ashley Evanson

One cable car rolls down the steep hill. Six boats go for a sail in the Bay. Little ones

learning their numbers will delight in finding them in familiar places and sights. Using vintage-style illustrations, the author makes this number primer a fun discovery of the city and, as a bonus, the sturdy pages can withstand much love. **Ages: 0 to 3 years**



Boats on the Bay

Written by Jeanne Walker Harvey, illustrated by Grady McFerrin

Written by an author living in Sausalito, this book features all kinds of boats and explains their jobs in simple yet interesting rhyming words and sound

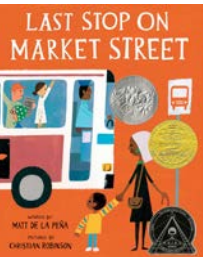
combinations. From fishing boats going out in the fog to ferries carrying passengers or the fireboat spraying water in the air, little ones will be able to follow maritime traffic over the course of a day without leaving their bed. Or if they prefer a day out by the water, this book is a great companion to a picnic and a hot drink at Crissy Field. **Ages: 2 to 7 years**



Golden Gate Park, An A to Z Adventure

Written by Marta Lindsey, illustrated by Michael Wertz

Did you know that a famous grizzly bear once lived in Golden Gate Park? Or that in 1921, 25 bison escaped their enclosure at night and roamed the streets of the nearby Richmond district? You couldn't make this stuff up. Written by a GGMG mom of two, this A to Z book will make your family look at GGP with new eyes and will probably inspire you to explore new spots. Fairy doors, anyone. **Ages: 4+ years**

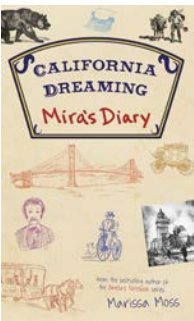


Last Stop on Market Street

Written by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Christian Robinson

After getting out of church, a boy and his grandmother hop on the bus to reach the other end of the city, at the end of Market Street.

Along the journey, the grandmother teaches life lessons to her grandson about anti-materialism, accepting others, and giving back to the community. You may look at "dirty" parts of the city differently after reading this book. Featuring people of color as the main protagonists, this book won the Newbery Award in 2016 and is a New York Times bestseller. **Ages: 3 to 8 years**



California Dreaming (Mira's Diary)

Written and illustrated by Marissa Moss

Fans of the Amelia Notebooks series will be happy to find out that Peninsula author Marissa Moss has written a time travel series called Mira's Diary. The third installment takes place in San Francisco, where 14-year-old Mira travels back in time in 1896, 1906, and 1934 to find her missing mother.

Expect to meet local historical figures and a reporting Mark Twain taken by surprise by the coldest winter he ever saw. It was the summer he spent in San Francisco, of course. **Ages: 9 to 14 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.

Love Issues Without the Long Face

By Gail Cornwall

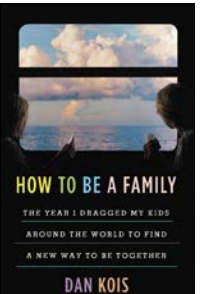
Many of us appreciate a little laughter when it comes to the momentous matters of marriage and family life; three recently published books attempt to provide just that.



Dear Girls

Since comedian Ali Wong shot to fame with her Netflix stand-up specials *Baby Cobra* and *Hard Knock Wife*, both filmed while visibly pregnant, it makes sense that her first book is styled as a series of letters to her daughters. Unfortunately, she opens with, essentially, "I don't want to write this, but I got a book deal and now I have to."

Fortunately, the material she begrudgingly generates isn't half-bad. As her husband, Justin Hakuta, puts it, "Wong takes her readers to church like a "preacher who offer[s] up profane salvation." I laughed at plenty of zingers, like "Daddy came... with his yoga mat slung over his shoulder in a yoga mat case, like a Santa Monica trophy wife running errands." But Hakuta's analogy is apt: It often seems Wong shocks and awes her audience awake so she can impart sober lessons on life's thorniest issues: "If our relatives had been able to Yelp America before coming over, they might have thought twice," she writes: "Those reviews would have been mixed: 'The opportunity is on point, but they kind of overdo it with the institutional racism and the guns. 3 stars.'" For the most part, Wong's purposeful rambling works, but I can't help but wonder what *Dear Girls* could have been had she crafted it with the unsparing perfectionism behind her standup and *Always Be My Maybe*.



How to Be a Family

When I heard that Dan Kois, *Slate*'s parenting editor and co-host of the podcast "Mom and Dad Are Fighting," had written a book, I assumed it would be about parenting, and it kinda is, sorta. Kois and his wife took their two kids on a four-country tour over the course of a year as "a chance to control-alt-delete the life we'd trapped

ourselves in." *How To Be a Family* is the resulting memoir-slash-travelogue and like the trip, it's both glorious in parts and disappointingly uneven.

Kois's self-awareness around his personal failings and privilege makes for refreshing and relatable mea culpas. He has a related knack for producing every-man imagery: "The bays carved out of the land like bites from an apple," he describes New Zealand. There, hikers with infants in front-packs and toddlers in backpacks proliferate: "One poor bastard had one of each, both of them squealing and waving their arms about; he looked like a stormtrooper being brought down by rowdy Ewoks." In these descriptions you can see the magically dry wit Kois has tucked in his pocket, sprinkling it like fairy dust amid observations about parents in New Zealand fostering independence and the consensus-based family decision-making of the Dutch. But Kois can be a stingy fairy, his style-shifting throughout, and parts of the book could certainly have been tighter.



How Not to Hate Your Husband After Kids

If *How To Be a Family* takes a magazine writer's "I-tried-it-for-a-month" approach to four different cultures' parenting, Jancee Dunn's book is the marital analog, only she seems to try all the strategies of all the experts. That includes home organizers, financial managers, and sex therapists. It can feel contrived, like when she says, "I research hostage negotiators ... [and] promptly phone [one] up." But Dunn's comprehensive gusto, as she marshals a truly extraordinary amount of information in prose that flows like strawberry syrup on a sundae—and her attempts at humor, which don't always land but consistently lighten things up—left me thinking the ends justify the imperfect means.

Which isn't to say I have no other issues with the book. Multiple times Dunn buys into sexist theories about innate gender difference and evolutionary biology. More fundamentally, her suggestions can be so diplomatic as to border on victim-blaming (e.g., "admit your role by finding some contribution you made to the problem"). And her overarching strategy puts yet another onus on women, asking them to employ a web of husband-management techniques.

The book is packed with helpful perspectives which, when paired with Dunn's revelatory, jocular style, make the it worth reading. Just don't forget the words of her couples counselor: "If you don't like something, change it, leave it, or embrace it." Dunn goes for options A and C, but one can also demand more fundamental change than making concessions and managing a mate.

Gail works as a mom and writer in San Francisco. Read about parenting and education from the perspective of a former teacher and lawyer at gailcornwall.com/articles or by finding her on Facebook and Twitter

Sibling Love: Worth All the Work

By Christine Chen

As a “geriatric” parent who had her firstborn at 44, one of the things that always made me sad was that my son would never experience the love and life companionship from having a sibling. I had resigned myself to being grateful for my sweet little baby boy, despite initially wondering, *What am I supposed to do with a boy?*, as I so desperately wanted a girl—a mini-me. Imagine my shock when I found out I was unexpectedly pregnant and that it was actually healthy AND a girl.

I was excited I would be able to give my son the best present ever, but I also worried how he might react to having to share all the attention that had been lavished on him throughout his first two years. To prepare him, we bought *The New Baby, I’m a Big Brother Now*, my personal favorite, *You Were the First*, and the one that still makes me tear up every time I read it, *I’ll Love You Forever*. To ward off sibling jealousy, we made sure



Despite this, or maybe because of it, he loves his little sister just as much as she adores her big brother. One of my proudest moments was at Alta Plaza park when a 3-year-old girl, who was bullying everyone in the sandbox, took the dump truck we had brought from home from my polite then 5-year-old son, who kept asking her to “please give it back, I brought it from home” to no avail. My then-2-year-old daughter swooped in to grab it from the girl, who was much larger than her, only to hand it back to her brother.

By no means does this mean our home is absent of fighting, teasing, or screaming. The better toy is always the one that the other has in their hands—

yes even still, though they are now four and six and starting to develop separate interests. Even the dump truck in the previous example? They’d been fighting over it not five minutes before the other girl dove in to take it. But there was no way my daughter was going to let an outsider take advantage of the sweet nature of her big brother, who is her absolute favorite person in the entire world and protector. (At the park, he regularly feels compelled to yell out to bigger kids to watch out for his sister, she’s really small!)

I can only hope their love for one another will continue to grow and that they appreciate they will always have each other. Though the first year of having two kids was difficult, they quickly became the best of friends and now play together well when they want to (which is about 70 percent of the time) and are always thinking about the other. If one goes to the doctor, they must get an extra sticker for the other not because it’s a clever way to get two stickers, but because they know the other really would want one, too. I love that they are so close in age as I hope it means that they will continue to be close throughout their lives.

By the way, the answer to what am I supposed to do with a boy? “Hug him, kiss him, love him,” said my son when he was three. A year later, he added “think he’s cute,” followed by “think he’s funny” a few months thereafter. I can’t wait to see how the list keeps growing. All I can say is it better not be “play with bugs or go camping... MAYBE glamping.” I know what to do with a girl.

she had gifts for him (Hot Wheels to be exact) when he came to visit at the hospital. Were we trying to buy his love for her? Yes. But does he still know which ten came from her despite the ridiculous amount he has now? Also yes.

When she came home, I made sure not to shortchange him on snuggle and story time before bed, which remains my favorite time with him. I would tuck him in before later putting the baby down (thankfully easily), with plenty of special time with Daddy out of doors during the baby’s nap time. Similar to many multiple-children families (including mine growing up), our schedules revolved around him for the first five years of his life, especially when we went through the kindergarten process last year.

Christine unconditionally loves her “little” brother who is 5 years younger and one foot taller, and to this day, feels compelled to protect him, though she used to take his toys too.



- Shannon E. Baby Finn Thomas
- Chana G. Baby Oscar Benoit
- Elisa H. Baby Mila Nova
- Kari Haws Baby Senia Grace
- Alina Howell Baby Vivian Me
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The Problem of the Blue Suede Shoes and Other Habits That Have Got to Go

An important part of parenting is to instill healthy habits and prevent unhealthy ones

By Clare Deignan

Photos by Mini Anna Photography

Shooooeesss! Shooooeessss!” squeals my daughter, while shoving her midnight blue suede Stride Rite right under my nose. Shoes in my face is how I wake up most mornings. My two-year-old won’t wear any other pair, except for her blue suede shoes. She cries—no, screams—when it’s time to take them off for bedtime. Even though she’s almost grown out of these beloved Velcro hand-me-downs, I don’t want to face the day when her toes-ies just don’t fit anymore. The trouble is, three children have worn them, and after an extensive internet search, these shoes are irreplaceable. So, I give in and let her wear them. This has definitely become a problem. Some may even say it’s a bad habit.

But whose bad habit? Her, with her habit of wearing these blue suede shoes, or my husband and me, who give into her each time she demands them?

GGMG Magazine spoke with the clinical director of the Child Mind Institute, San Francisco Bay Area and Clinical Psychologist Dr. Mark Reinecke, to learn more about habits and what we can do to change them.

Bad vs. unhealthy

Habits are just something we do without really thinking about it. According to Dr. Reinecke, they can be positive in one context and negative in another, but he thinks calling a habit “bad” isn’t helpful. Labelling a habit healthy or unhealthy is a better way to think about it.

Dr. Reinecke believes an important part of parenting is to instill healthy habits and prevent unhealthy ones. “It’s easier to establish a good behavior than it is to remove a well-established negative one. If you want a habit to be learned, reward it frequently and immediately,” he suggests.

So what’s a parent to do?

There they are. Your gorgeous child performing at the school play. And you’re so proud. Phone in hand, you record this precious moment and then, front and center, your child begins to pick his or her nose. The audience begins to snicker. Your child is oblivious and you’ve got it all on camera. You’ve told them a hundred times to stop picking their nose. Will they ever listen?

When it comes to nose-picking, Dr. Reinecke is practical. He says, “To be sure, it’s disgusting, but a lot of kids (more than 90 percent) do it. Moreover, it’s not particularly dangerous. Like most bad habits, children do it without awareness. The solution? Help them to be aware.”

When a child starts picking their nose, he advises parents to suggest an alternative behavior, such as offering them a tissue. A parent could also put a Band-Aid on the child’s finger or use saline spray, which will help the child become more aware and stop the habit altogether.

Dr. Reinecke points to thumb-sucking as another habit parents often want to change. It’s normal for smaller children and typically is not detrimental for older ones (although they may feel embarrassed).

To help your child overcome their thumb-sucking habit, Dr. Reinecke says, “Begin by encouraging them to limit it. Let them know it’s only for sleeping or napping, not for out in public.”

If they start thumb-sucking again, lovingly mention it and offer a stuffy or blanket they can cuddle. Dr. Reinecke notes, “Thumb-sucking often serves to reduce anxiety, and offering an alternative (such as a plush toy) may do the trick.” He also suggests for

parents to “Align with your child’s goals—to be seen as ‘grown-up’ and to have their parents’ approval.”

Alternatives to negative punishments

Gone are the days of washing a child’s mouth out with soap and a swift swat on the bottom. But there are times when a behavior or habit has to be changed, and quick, such as a child running in the street or climbing on the stove. These can be situations where a negative consequence might be necessary.

Dr. Reinecke suggests using time-outs if a negative consequence is unavoidable. He strongly discourages the use of painful or shaming punishments to change an unhealthy or unwanted habit. As he notes, “You can put cayenne pepper or Tabasco on your child’s thumb to stop their thumb-sucking. It will work, but it’s painful and could make your child anxious. You can accomplish the same goal without putting your child in pain.”

Positive role models

One of the best ways for parents to instill positive behaviors is to model healthy habits in action. Not only do parents need to watch their own habits, Dr. Reinecke recommends that parents expose children to positive friends and role models through playdates, extracurricular activities, and family events. As he notes, “Children learn from what they observe.”

“It’s easier to establish a good behavior than it is to remove a well-established negative one. If you want a habit to be learned, reward it frequently and immediately.”

Dr. Reinecke suggests a fun and relaxing way for families to help their kids learn healthy habits and gain social awareness without having to leave the couch. As a family, he and his wife would watch television with their daughter to identify appropriate social behavior and point out what not to do.

When his daughter was older, Dr. Reinecke and his family especially enjoyed watching reality TV shows together. “We would laugh as we were watching these



people and say, ‘Don’t do it. Don’t do that!’ In virtually every episode of *The Bachelorette*, there would be an example of what NOT to do in relationships, and on *The Apprentice* of how NOT to behave in a work environment.”

Beyond thumb-sucking

Sometimes a habit is more than just inconvenient or embarrassing. Some habits can be destructive, unhealthy, and even dangerous, especially as kids grow older. Dr. Reinecke suggests if a habit becomes harmful, parents may wish to seek help. Contacting your doctor or a mental health

From irritating to endearing

Like anything, change takes time, so patience is necessary to see an undesirable habit change.

“Be patient. Most habits can be changed if you’re patient. Although it’s frustrating, try to be calm while reinforcing and rewarding your child,” explains Dr. Reinecke.

Also, he suggests thinking about the behavior we want to change and asking, “Is this really a problem?” He continues, “What’s its impact on the child’s life? If it doesn’t have a negative impact, it’s not a ‘bad’ habit... It’s just a habit.”

As in the case of the blue suede shoes and my own child, Dr. Reinecke says this may be normal behavior. It’s definitely inconvenient, especially when she wants to sleep in these shoes and is growing out of them, but it’s not something to blow out of proportion.

“If she really loves her shoes, embrace it. It’s not maladaptive. It doesn’t hurt anything. You could call them her Elvis shoes. It’s kind of cute, and it’s just her preference,” he advises.

But Dr. Reinecke still suggests setting boundaries, such as no shoes in bed. He also recommends preparing her for when she will grow out of her “Elvis shoes” and for our family to look forward to shopping for new “special” shoes.

His own daughter went through a Peter Pan phase where she would dress in green tights, t-shirt, belt, and cap whenever they

went out. Although his wife would roll her eyes, he recalls, “Parents in the stores would smile when they passed, every parent knew what was going on.” He adds, “What touched us was how proud our daughter was. To her, this was the greatest outfit in the world.”

Embracing the Elvis shoes

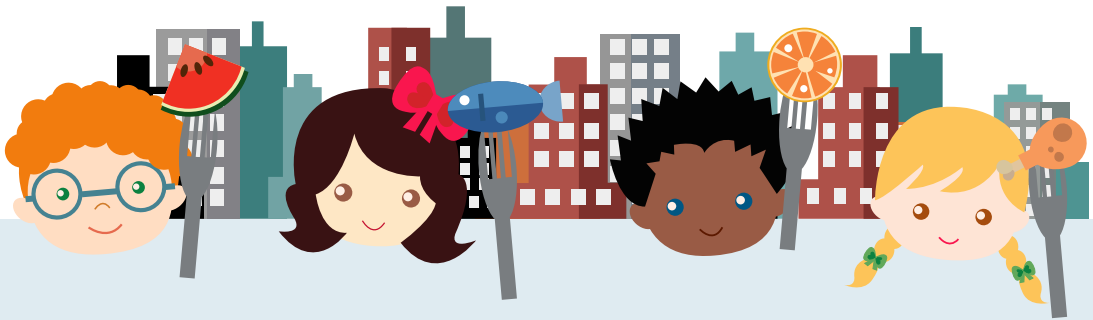
So taking Dr. Reinecke’s advice, we are

embracing our daughter’s beloved blue suede shoes, or as he called them her “Elvis shoes.” But no shoes in bed—we have standards.

As an experiment, I did leave out a pair of Minnie Mouse fuzzy snow boots in hopes of enticing her to try a new shoe. And you guessed it, within an hour she was clunking around the house in those Minnie boots. Problem solved? Too early to

tell. Except now, she won’t take off her puffy magenta coat. I guess with changing habits and life in general, it’s important to remember—this too shall pass.

Clare is a freelance journalist and mother of two.



DR. REINECKE’S 10-STEP PLAN TO HELP OVERCOME ANY UNHEALTHY HABIT, SUCH AS JUNK FOOD AFTER SCHOOL

1. Remove the cues.

Out of sight, out of mind. Put the junk food in a high cupboard.
2. Encourage conscious reflection on our actions.

Awareness is the first step. Gently mention to your child or teen that you’ve noticed they are eating junk food after school.
3. Reward positive and healthy behavior.

Point out some healthy snacks and give them positive feedback.
4. Use rewards that are developmentally important for the child or teen.

Keep track of how many days they’ve eaten healthy snacks after school and then pick some rewards that will entice your child to keep up this new habit.
5. Practice healthy behavior, build good habits.

Eat right and keep healthy foods in the house. Limit junk foods to only special occasions and treats.
6. Help the child see that their behavior is leading them to fall short of their goals.

If they slip back into diving for junk food after school, remind them of the reward they’ll be missing and encourage them to keep reaching for their goal.
7. Challenge maladaptive “permission statements”.

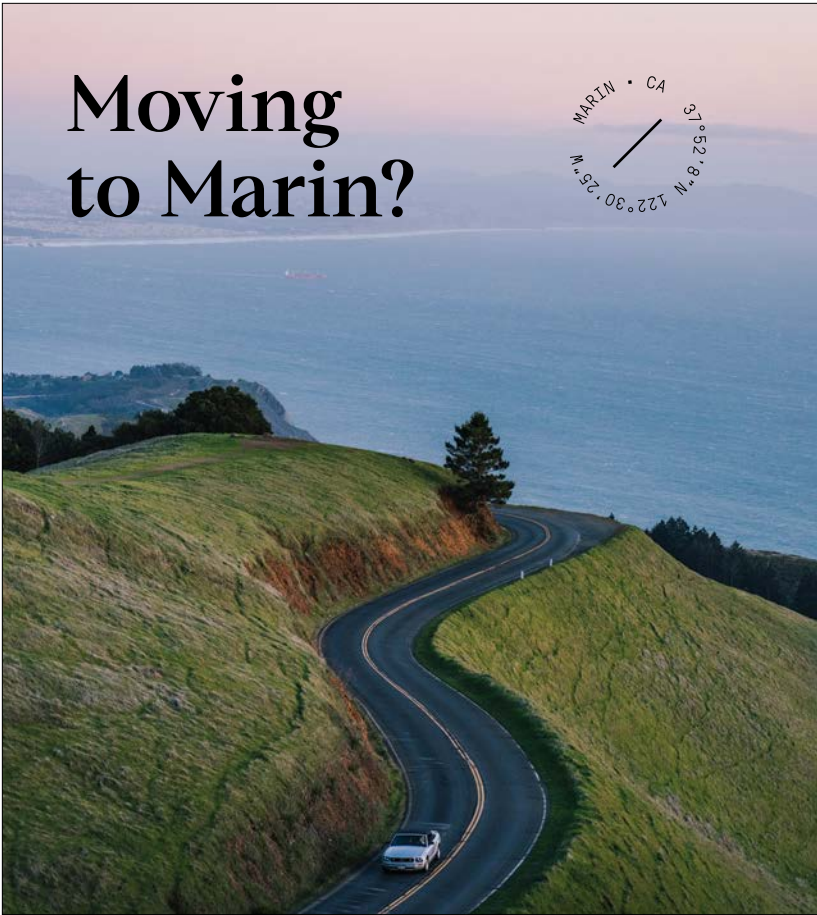
Permission statements are ways we excuse our unhealthy habits. We all use permission statements, “Oh, I’ll go to the gym tomorrow” or “I’ll just watch one more TV show.” Listen for your child’s permission statements and gently remind them that what we do every day makes us who we are—choose wisely.
8. Teach and reward new, healthy behaviors while the individual is under stress and drifting back toward a bad habit.

Stress is when we can easily slip back into unhealthy habits. This is a great opportunity for a parent or a caretaker to strengthen a new habit.
9. Discuss negative and positive outcomes.

Talk with your child about how they will feel when they naturally enjoy healthy foods. How will they feel if they keep eating junk food?
10. Be patient and help your child maintain a positive vision of their future as they develop a more positive, healthy habit.

Dr. Reinecke points out, “Simply admonishing your child to change most likely won’t work, nor will simple encouragement. Rather, help them to see, to visualize, how they will feel if they succeed in developing a more positive habit.”

*If you or someone you love is struggling with mental health issues or addiction, contact the Substance Abuse And Mental Health Service Administration at <https://www.samhsa.gov/> or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).



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Ch-Ch-Changes



The rapidly shifting landscape of parenting highlights the virtues of fundamental parenting

By Victoria Dvorak Photos by Amy Nghe Photography

It was late afternoon the day I “casually” ran into my uncle outside his apartment. I struck up conversation about this happy, accidental encounter, and then asked him if he had any mail for me to bring home to my parents so I could, you know, save both of them a trip. So thoughtful! My uncle handed me the short stack of mail from SFUSD, which contained the goal of my operation: the report card. Back then, SFUSD was a neighborhood-based system. My parents designated my uncle’s house as our home to help me get into elementary school*, and though it was no longer necessary in high school, they’d never bothered to change the address.

Knowing I had to hand over the mail to my parents later that day, I got to work fast. I ripped open the dreaded report card and proceeded to change my grades. I went from a below-average student to a believably average one. My trade craft was real. Using a blunt 4B graphite pencil, I reproduced the same New Times Roman font for the lettered grades

and numbers for the GPA. I then used a page of carbon paper—the kind that had a dry-ink coating all over it—and by gently rubbing it over the report card, it covered up any erasing that had taken place. My “good enough” report card bought me one day of freedom to go out, and I used that to go to my senior boyfriend’s prom at his school (while my parents thought I was at a sleepover). I’d like to thank Ms. Helenski, art elective teacher, for the great class focused on charcoal and all its wonderful attributes.

I can safely and confidently say that my children will never get away with this stunt. Aside from their innocent, isolated upbringing that has made coups like mine unnecessary, it’s not physically possible. Everything related to my kids’ education is collated neatly online where I can browse their progress anytime, anywhere. I know everything. I almost feel sorry for my kids,

“Don’t pave the way by clearing roadblocks. Let them fail. Let them feel the sting of not making the team.”

even in their privileged lives. Our school web portal gives me a daily schedule. I drown in emails from teachers and administrators on all the minutiae. I have direct and frequent access to all the teachers and every administrator in the school. Honestly, if my children did somehow pull off a scheme where they were able to break the school’s firewall and hack into the system, I wouldn’t care how bad their grades are. I’d jump for joy at the ingenuity of my little evil-masterminds.

It’s a well-known fact that parenting has changed. For the parents who grew up in the ’90s, we are one of the last, youngest people to remember a time when there were no touch screens, when computers only came in black and white, and the internet as we know it was in its primordial phase. Nowadays there’s no incubation period for parents to adjust to changes because everything is constantly evolving. There’s an app for everything and a hashtag with which to label everything. With the convenience comes the pressure to have more, be more; the competition for your attention is overwhelming. For every convenience and minute of time saved given to us by our devices, it also takes away our connection with one another. The annihilation of technology is unrealistic. Perhaps finding the fundamentals of parenting we lost along the way is the answer to balancing and managing the changes we face in this new world of parenting.

Perils of device addiction

We’ve become so dependent on our phones for everything that we don’t even remember phone numbers. Jessica, Southern California mother of two, damaged her phone and lost access to her car’s navigation all on the same dreadful day she was to take her boys to their second swim class. “I was so scared! We were driving to swim and I didn’t know how to get there fast without navigation and I couldn’t call Bobby to tell me how to get there!”

I’ve avoided thinking about the consequences of my kids seeing me at my computer or phone for so much of the day. My youngest child often physically puts herself between me and whatever device I’m on. I wish I could say that I oblige her every time she does this, but I don’t, and then I avoid thinking about what message I’m sending her. I often deny my kids the use of their tablets during the week, and on the weekends my husband and I have to push them out the door, most often under extreme resistance.

Go outside

According to a study by the Seattle Children’s Institute in *JAMA Pediatrics*, it was noted that because kids don’t spend as much time outdoors, they are missing out on spatial awareness navigation, not to mention natural exposure to vitamin D, use of imagination, and gross motor skills. The study maintains

that time spent indoors is more likely today to be time spent on a smart device. In South Korea, there’s a government-funded outdoor therapy program for kids who are addicted to their devices. An informal poll of friends’ childhoods tells me that compared to their children, these parents in their mid 30s to mid 40s spent on average, 50 percent more time outside and if not outside, time was spent on reading, music, or crafting.

In our home, we have to first deny tablet usage or television before our children will painfully and begrudgingly drag their tired, worn feet outside. They rub their eyes to adjust to the brightness. At first, they all huddle in a dark corner of the garage and say things to each other about me in hushed whispers like a scene in *The Hunger Games*. If mama sees us playing, maybe she will let us come back inside in four minutes. What



follows is a hilarious skit acted out for my benefit. Eventually, my kids will find their feet and imagination, but first we must do this dance.

The basics of parenting fundamentals dictate that we encourage outdoor and/or self-directed play. This can happen at home in the yard, a park, or indoors: just take away screens. Another essential principle is we ourselves put our devices down and connect with our children. This includes not experiencing their lives behind a camera. But where’s the balance? After all, not understanding how to navigate a tablet or computer puts anyone behind the masses today. There are good learning apps designed to help kids learn. Many kids use a device in school, which can be considered more “green” because assignments are accessed via school portals and papers turned in and graded online. And because it’s all online, parents can track their child’s progress in real time.

The downside of immediate technology

However, this visibility in real time can lead to an obsessiveness over our kids’ grades, which can lead to micromanagement and the clearing of roadblocks for our children’s benefit. Private tutoring has been on a steady, recession-proof rise. According to *Business Wire*, private tutoring is expected to grow 7 percent between 2018 to 2022, and the



market driver is pressure—to get ahead of test scores and the competition; in many cases, the end goal is a polished student who gets a spot in a coveted school.

Tutoring used to be a necessary means to help students who are struggling in a particular subject. Increasingly, it’s now used to help students stay ahead of the pack. So how does this affect our children?

In 2010, Dr. Peter Gray published an article, “The Decline of Play and Rise in Children’s Mental Disorders,” in *Psychology Today*. Though it’s ten years old, its overall message is strikingly relevant. Dr. Gray, in short, claims that there has been a shift toward extrinsic goals, triggered by a lack of free play, coercive schooling, over-parenting, and media. As a result, children experience increased anxiety and depression.

Simply put: pressure on grades, helicopter and snowplow parenting, and using devices are pushing kids to be hungry for immediate external approval. If we can find our way back to fundamental parenting, Dr. Gray believes that our children will learn how to self regulate and develop their internal locus of control. This is the bigger picture in parenting: teaching inner strength.

In a May 2018 article in the *Washington Post*, Amy Ellis Nutt cites a report in *The Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* that claims anxiety, not depression is on the rise. Everything from the current political and environmental situation to social media is to blame. In line with Dr. Gray’s study on extrinsic goals, Marco Grados, associate professor of psychology and clinical director of child and adolescent psychiatry, says, “With (social media), it’s all about the self image—who’s liking them... everything can turn into something negative.”

Among five friends with a total of 16 kids ranging from age 2 to 11, every kid has a smart-device and the kids 9 and over have social media accounts. Also in addition to all having private tutoring, the following professionals have been consulted: acupuncturist, allergist, behavioral, psychiatrist, craniosacral therapy, occupational therapist for speech, occupational therapist for fine and gross motor skills, yoga-therapy (yes, really), dialectical therapy, and good old fashioned talk therapy to help with family dynamics, like divorce, pressure, anxiety, and depression.

There are times when therapy is the only answer. But how do we determine what’s necessary to help our kids without hindering them? Whenever my children have issues at school, therapy and tutoring is the go-to answer. One daughter sits in a “W” on the floor so we’re told to try physical therapy to strengthen her core, which will in turn help her focus. One daughter fidgets, so occupational therapy was suggested. She also forgets to line up her numbers in subtraction—tutoring! I don’t disagree that there are issues that can hinder learning, but it would be refreshing to have someone say to me, “Try X,Y and Z to see if it will help first.”

At home, we try a mixture of “therapies” borne from “Dr. Google” and our school counselors. My “W” sitting daughter reads while standing on a boogie board, the ones where one must balance to prevent the sides of the board to hit the floor. She also has a water spray bottle and she stands on her board while aiming for the leaves on our lemon tree. My fidgeting daughter has a “sandbox” made up of dried rice, beans, lentils, and pasta. She sits for hours to sort and sift. After a long

day containing her emotions, the “sandbox” is integral to my sensory-sensitive child. To help with fidgeting at school, she has a small ball of clay she squeezes and shapes throughout the day. And as for the math hiccup? It will sort itself out, I hope. When we got involved as a family and implemented some fundamental parenting, the difference was measurable.

Of course this isn’t to say that every issue is amendable at home without therapy or that professionals should never be consulted. Things we did helped in part because we consulted professionals. For my family, these were small victories in line with what Dr. Gray preaches.

Changing habits and ourselves

So how does one help a child develop an internal locus of self-worth and control? Don’t pave the way by clearing roadblocks. Let them fail. Let them feel the sting of not making the team. Encourage play, indoor

or out, and let them get dirty. Create reasonable boundaries outside and build their confidence by having confidence in them. If they’re old enough, let them walk to the corner store and buy a stick of gum, and let them stay home alone for small (in my case, very small) chunks of time. Reward not with material goods, but experiences. Teach them how to delight in the effort, the journey and focus less on the end result. Finally, delay the introduction of social media for as long as you possibly can. This is fundamental parenting defined.

I know what you’re thinking. Okay, that is all sound advice, but really? Really. I say this because I know better, even though I don’t actually do better. I clear roadblocks. Because I don’t want to spend my days in the ER, I am overly cautious with my children. I too often will reward with stuff as opposed to an experience. There’s a large stick of artisanal cookie dough in my refrigerator that I’ve been meaning to bake with them. I meant to do this as a Valentine’s treat. Valentine’s has come and gone and instead I got them necklaces.

Fundamental parenting sounds easy. It’s anything but easy. It’s far easier to put my kids in front of screens and let them have packaged food for every meal all day because I can complete my tasks without interruption. My caution as a parent isn’t borne out of overwhelming concern for my kids, but overwhelming concern of how inconvenient it would be if they got hurt. These are all things I have to remain conscious about. Small steps are the answer and maybe, just maybe, I’ll get around to baking the bar of cookie dough in my fridge, but until then, Siri, send this to my editor.

Victoria lives in San Francisco, has recently added a guinea pig to her family, and needs to spend less time on her devices.

*SFUSD policy officially prohibits this practice.



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Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Join our Webinar to learn more on May 28th at noon. Email emily.beaven@compass.com to RSVP.

It is a common dilemma among young families living in San Francisco, to stay in the City or venture across the bridge to Marin. Meet SF expert, GGGM mom and volunteer, Emily Beaven, and Marin expert, Lori Docherty. We’re here to guide you home.



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COMPASS



Changing Schools? How to Maximize the Pros and Minimize the Cons

Change can be hard, but family support and planning can make the transition smoother

By Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss

If anyone has earned an advanced certificate in the fine art of changing schools, it's my 7-year-old daughter, Lilly. She will proudly state that she is now on her fourth school in San Francisco. Our journey through the complicated maze that is San Francisco's Educational Placement Center policy came close to imploding our happy little household. We floundered in our attempts to wedge our child's school into the perfect fit of an ideal commute, language program, neighborhood, and avoiding a third year of preschool tuition for her younger brother with a Transitional Kindergarten birthday (TK is for children who turn 5 between September 2 and December 2). Through a lot of trial and

error, plus confiding in fellow parents who had been through similar school-changing drama, a few best practices became clear for how to support kids when changing schools, whether changing schools is due to a geographic move, the need for a new fit or educational opportunity, or whether it is from a natural transition, such as moving from elementary to middle school.

Switching schools due to a geographic move

Child experts agree that the key to helping a little one transition to a new school, regardless of the reason, is to clue them into the possibility as early as possible. "There are no shortcuts," states Chaya

Rivka Mayerson, a San Francisco-based clinical psychologist specializing in children. "The kid needs to know they may be switching schools from the beginning. It can't be a surprise, and the child needs to be informed and know what's going on." So if you're house hunting in the East Bay or starting to have conversations about moving closer to grandparents in the Midwest, let your child know this is coming once an official plan is in motion. Anything earlier than that might be unnecessary, since plans often change.

It's also important that you and your partner are clear on your rationale for moving, and you are both able to share this often with your children in different ways to

help them get on board as well. If new job opportunities mean a chance for mommy to finally pursue her dream of running her own company, use this to model chasing a lifelong goal and communicate that this is what you want for your own children one day, too. If living near grandparents means a chance for your kids to spend quality time with more caring adults, be sure to emphasize this point.

Another way to ensure a smooth transition due to a move is to demystify the new location as much as possible. Kids can now watch short videos, do virtual tours, and even exchange messages with potential new classmates with the help of local forums or YouTube. You may even have some short trips planned before the official big move that kids can be included in as well. The more time you can spend virtually or in person in the new location, the easier it will be to imagine attending a new school. If you're lucky enough to have some contacts the same age or who attend the new school, even knowing a familiar face or two before that important first day will be a real lifesaver.

Moving to a new city means there could be an element of choice involved in selecting the ultimate school your child will attend. Older children can be involved in the research process as long as you make it clear that as parents, you will be making the final decision. Take them along on tours, have them participate in a shadow day, or just surf your laptop together and look at pictures of potential new schools. Use this as a bonding experience.

New fit needed

Sometimes your child's school simply isn't working out. Maybe there's a challenging dynamic with classmates or issues with a teacher. Proceed with caution before concluding that a change in school is needed. Whatever the underlying issues may be, seek to exhaust all interventions and remedies before resorting to something as drastic as switching your child's learning environment entirely.

"It's more about how long [the challenges] have been going on," explains Rivka

Mayerson. "Does the child have other friends? Is this the way they interact socially? For some kids, being in a difficult dynamic is how they relate to others." For instance, bids for attention can look more like instigating a

"With the right approach and thoughtful planning and involvement, tackling this change together as a team can be an opportunity to develop resilience and bring your relationship with your child even closer."

fight or causing conflict in lieu of invitations to play or finding commonalities.

Start by getting some objective perspectives from outside of the school or your own family. Ask a trusted friend or two for their observations of your child's demeanor and social interactions. Is there a pattern emerging across multiple settings and friend groups? Will this pattern simply repeat itself in a new environment?

According to Rivka Mayerson, "It's always better if they can stay at their current site. There is a resilience factor there, as well as an opportunity to develop confidence over time. It's important for parents to be proactive and to work with the teachers at school. You can't guarantee there won't be mean kids, and the teachers don't always see it. But they can certainly shut it down."

Whether you decide to stick it out with your child's existing school or transition to a new one, make sure you meet with staff members with a clear plan for supporting your kid that includes a few concrete asks.

Teachers will not know what you want if you don't specifically ask and put it in writing, ideally electronically so it can be referenced later if needed. Can the school staff help encourage some new friendships through an extracurricular club or a lunch bunch? Is changing classrooms an option or changing a few classes in

your older child's schedule?

Finally, continue to focus on strengthening your child's outside bonds and friendships, the ones formed beyond the school environment such as a church community, sports team, or performance group. The more close relationships she forms outside the walls of school, the more confidence this can give her to navigate whatever dynamics confront her on a daily basis.

Better opportunity

Sometimes, better opportunities await your child in the form of a school with a renowned arts program, language pathway, or STEM focus. Changing to a school that offers better financial assistance or has significantly less or no tuition can also open up better opportunities for families in the Bay Area. The key to making the





decision to move schools lies in deeply knowing your child and his needs, preferences, and aptitudes. For example, if your child has always shown a natural aptitude and interest in the arts, moving to an arts-focused school might be disruptive initially but ease up as he more fully develops this interest and passion with more like-minded peers.

On the other hand, if your child has always resisted learning a second language, prefers to answer only in English, and has exhibited other challenges in an academic environment, moving into a full language immersion experience might not be the best idea. It's hard enough adjusting to a completely new school environment, so adding the extra dimension of an entirely different language can be too much change at once for even the most resilient and flexible kids. Make sure the enhanced learning opportunity, whether it's a language or a content area, is one that your child has shown an interest in and affinity for so that the move is one that will help him more fully realize his potential instead of disrupting and impeding it.

One of the benefits of changing schools for a better opportunity is that often friends from the old school are still within a reasonable geographic distance. This makes relationships easier to maintain

and even strengthen as a change in schools forces increased out-of-school socialization.

"We kept the same relationships," explained mother of three, Lisa Rethier, of her move from a private to a public school. "We still go on [our previous school's] camping trip every year, even though we haven't been there for a while. We still have play dates. There's something special seeing familiar faces in our neighborhood from our different school communities. One day, [my daughter] saw someone from every school she's ever been to. Her community has actually broadened a bit and we have so many people to pull from."

Natural transition

If your child is aging out of his program and moving on to elementary or middle school, there are a number of things you can do to provide a sense of closure with his old school and get ready to embrace the new one. Many kids are excited to grow older and embrace changes, so capitalize on this by going shopping together for a big kid backpack or a new wallet to hold a Clipper Card for middle schoolers ready to brave MUNI. Involve your child in his new school's social events or activities to meet new families and learn about the school. Some schools offer summertime meetups, play dates, or an orientation session that

can help new families meet people and get excited for the changes ahead.

Many parents are surprised by how much they find themselves missing their old communities in periods of transition from preschool to elementary, or elementary to middle school. However, it's never been easier to stay in touch thanks to group text threads, Facebook Groups, or even monthly meetup rituals. The bonds formed at one school can continue long after the kids are no longer bound by the same site through extracurricular activities.

Regardless of your reason for moving schools, change is hard for many people. As a parent, your number one job is to help your child feel safe, secure, and loved unconditionally. Reassuring your child that you are there for her and on her side is crucial. With the right approach and thoughtful planning and involvement, tackling this change together as a team can be an opportunity to develop resilience and bring your relationship with your child even closer.

Jennifer is an educational consultant and mother of two school-changing children. One is a Spanish enthusiast who requested an immersion school in first grade, and one is a preschooler transitioning to elementary soon.

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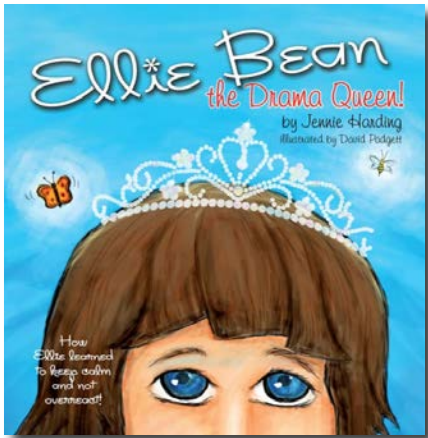
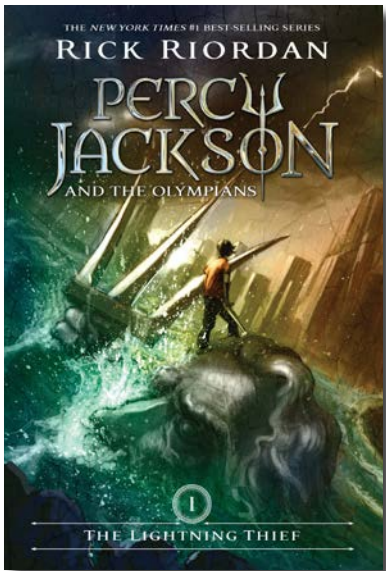
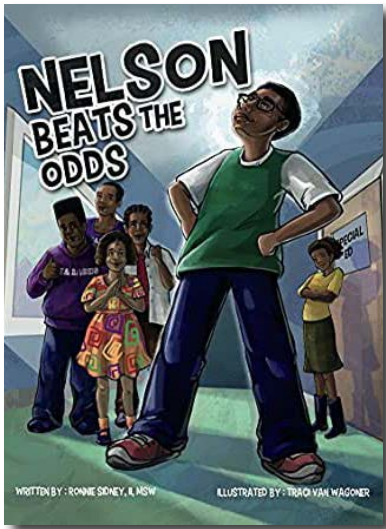
Embracing Differences

Learning differences can make kids feel different or misunderstood by their peers. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, sensory processing, all affect learning. For kids with these kinds of learning differences, taking medication or having special support staff and teachers can be a regular part of life. But these situations can raise questions that are hard for kids to talk about.

Books are a great way to open and explore a topic, and there are a growing number of children's and young adult books that feature main characters with learning differences. The *Hank Zipzer* series, by Lin Oliver and Henry Winkler (known as the Fonz from the TV show *Happy Days*), were born out of Winkler's personal struggles with his learning differences. The well-known *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan highlights ADHD and dyslexia as features for demigods. *Ellie Bean the Drama Queen* by Jennie Harding tells the story of Ellie, a child with sensory issues. *Nelson Beats the*

Odds by Ronnie Sidney also stems from the author's experience with dysgraphia. This book is also notable for featuring an African-American cast. The emerging neurodiversity movement aims to reframe the conversation around these learning differences, stressing that each person's brain is simply different, instead of the idea that some brains are "normal" and others are not. Reducing the stigma about the ways our brains are different can benefit both the kids with learning and thinking differences as well as the people who know them.

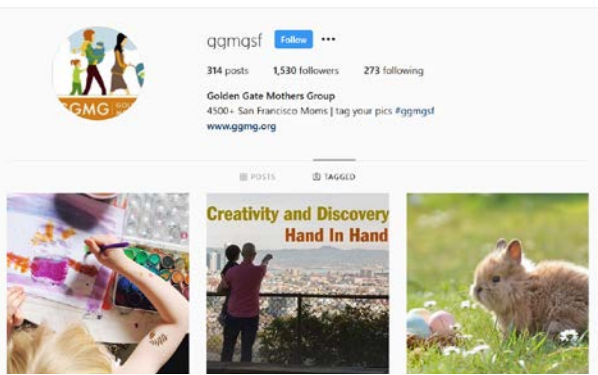
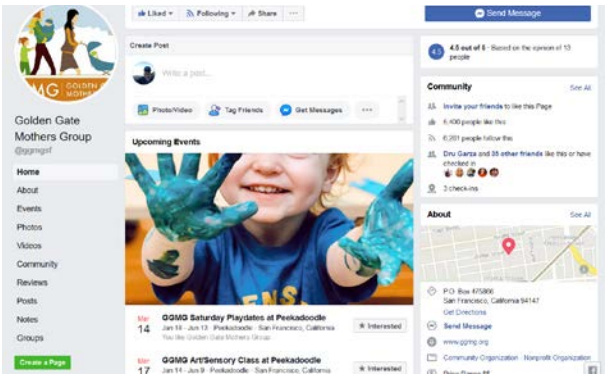
Like so many complex topics, talking about learning differences may take more than one or two conversations. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or go back to your child with new information or a new perspective. These conversations are meant as a growing process, for both child and parent, so you can always go back and reframe the things you wish you'd said differently.



PARTNERSHIPS

Are you looking for a way to use your skills to give back to the GGMG community? Consider joining the GGMG Partnerships Committee! Our team of amazing women works with local businesses to bring exclusive deals to our members. Through our Partners Program, the Partnership Committee works closely with GGMG partners such as JCCSF, UrbanSitter, Recess Collective, and Peekadoodle to obtain strategic benefits for all GGMG members on an annual basis, as well as additional benefits for GGMG volunteers. Through our Friends Program, we work with various local companies to obtain substantial promotions and discounts for members on a limited-time or ongoing basis. With thousands of members, we use the power of our community to gain exclusive deals on everything from child care to adult fitness classes to professional services. Check out the "Member Perks" section of the GGMG website for member discounts and benefits. And look for our monthly GGMG Member Perks email highlighting many of these great deals! If you are interested in joining our committee, please contact our new Director of Partnerships, Kimberly Newman, at partnerships@ggmg.org. We look forward to bringing you even more discounts and savings in 2020!

SOCIAL MEDIA



The Social Media Committee is thrilled to start a new year with even more engagement on all platforms! Our first step has been to expand! Please join us in welcoming new volunteer **Shannon Higa** to our committee. She'll be starting off by assisting with Eventbrite creation so all of you can more easily manage your events. A reminder to all that requests for publicity on social media should be submitted at least one week before the event to be promoted. All requests should include:

- the exact wording to be used for the brief description;
- for events, the name of the event, date, times, location, and any link to the GGMG calendar, Eventbrite, etc.; and
- any images to be used.

All of this will help us help you! We'll make sure your post is taken care of, on the appropriate channel, within 72 hours of receipt. Remember to like/follow us on all forms of social media (@ggmgstf) and re-post/re-tweet/share to your heart's content!! And if you attend our events, don't forget to post your pictures and include the hashtag #ggmgstf. You may just get re-posted/re-tweeted/shared yourself!

MEMBER SUPPORT



Member Support's goal is to be a helping hand for our members who are experiencing tough times, looking for member-vetted resources, or need a lighter load. You may occasionally see us responding to forum posts, but much of our work occurs behind the scenes as we offer meals, babysitting credits, and membership scholarships to moms seeking support. Last year, we helped our community through challenges including illness, divorce and marriage counseling, challenging kids, and postpartum depression. We also began single moms group meetups and look forward to offering more connection opportunities in the future. If you are experiencing a tough time and need assistance, please reach out to *member.support@ggmg.org*. We're also looking for volunteers for our highly impactful committee! It's a great way to have a direct impact on other moms in our community.

The COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving. GGMG is currently cancelling all events through Sunday, April 12. Please check ggmg.org to see the status of all upcoming events.

CAREERS & ENTREPRENEURS

Career Change Workshop

Do you feel stuck in a soul-sucking job and long to do something that feels more fulfilling...even if you have no idea what that might be? Do you know you're in the wrong career but feel stuck because of fear or self-doubt when you think about trying to make a change? Do you think about starting your own business but feel scared to take the first step? Whether you're going back to work after maternity leave, thinking about returning to the workforce after a break, or are currently in a job and just know you're meant to do something more, this workshop is for you. Join career coach and GGMG mom Julie Houghton for this popular workshop from the Careers & Entrepreneurs Committee and take the first step towards finding work that is in alignment with who you are!

DATE: Friday, April 24
TIME: Noon to 1 p.m.
PLACE: Women's Building, Room A, 3543 18th St
COST: \$5

Resume Development Webinar

Does your resume need a refresh? Have you been out of the workforce for a while and want to make a comeback? Or are you eyeing a new position and want to tailor your resume towards a different career path? This webinar will help you update and improve your resume to present your background and experience in the best possible light. We will cover basic topics, such as typical sections and content, as well as offer insight around the most effective ways to present your skills and experience, how to customize your resume for a specific industry or opening, and how to deal with gaps. We will also spare time at the end of the webinar to address questions not covered by the presentation.

DATE: Friday, May 8
TIME: Noon to 1:00 p.m.
PLACE: 218 Montgomery St. (Cafe Venue)
COST: \$5

May Moms Networking Lunch

Join us for this month's networking lunch. Look for the GGMG Moms Networking Lunch sign on the table. All are welcome!

DATE: Wednesday, May 6
TIME: Noon to 1:00 p.m.
PLACE: Specialty Cafe & Bakery, 100 California St.
COST: FREE

KIDS ACTIVITIES

Family Mani-Pedi Day at SF Nail Spa

Celebrate Mother's Day by pampering yourself and your kid(s) to a manicure and/or pedicure at SF Nail Spa. Kids Activities is hosting this event so it is open to moms and children. SF Nail Spa offers special junior treatments so your child can join in the fun! Spots are limited so please RSVP early.

DATE: Sunday, May 3
TIME: 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
PLACE: 1324 Noriega St.
COST: \$10/adult for manicure OR pedicure; \$20/adult for both; \$7.50/child for manicure OR pedicure; \$15/child for both

PARENT EDUCATION

Retirement Planning Tools

In this webinar, you'll find out which retirement vehicles to consider when building your nest egg, how to choose investments in 401(k) and 403(b) Plans, whether traditional or Roth IRA make more sense in different scenarios, and basic rules of thumb for Social Security Planning. This is the second webinar on a series of four webinars on financial planning with Courtney Jones, CFP®.

DATE: Thursday, April 9
TIME: Noon to 12:45 p.m.
PLACE: Online
COST: FREE



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The COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving. GGMG is currently cancelling all events through Sunday, April 12. Please check ggmg.org to see the status of all upcoming events.

Playgroup Formation Mixer



You've had a baby or will have one soon. Congratulations! You've embarked on the treacherous journey of motherhood, but you don't have to walk alone. Come and meet the women who will support you along the way.

At this Playgroup Formation Event, you will get the chance to start building your mom village and join a Mom & Baby Playgroup. While you relax, mingle, and nosh on treats, we will organize you into playgroups based on your baby's age and your neighborhood. We hope these playgroups will provide the support you need during this heartwarming, awe-inspiring, and sleep-deprived time of your life.

If you are a new member of GGMG, this is the event where you can find out all the ways to take advantage of your membership, and we'll send you home with plenty of giveaways and raffle prizes!

This event is targeted to moms with babies under 1 year old. Feel free to bring your baby, your partner, or even a friend who has not yet joined GGMG. Non-members can attend for a fee that will be applied to their membership if they decide to join. We can't wait to meet you!

- Date:** Saturday, May 16
- Time:** 1 to 3 p.m.
- Place:** 254 Laguna Honda Blvd. Parking is free at the Forest Hill Church lot next door.
- Cost:** FREE for GGMG Members

Drop-In Support for LGBTQ+ Parents

Meet the Queer-Friendly Doulas
Enjoy a meal with your kids and other LGBTQ2SIA families, then parents and caregiv-ers break off for facilitated discussions about family and child-rearing issues with their peers. This monthly group is held on each fourth Tuesday from 6 to 8 p.m. at Our Family Coalition's Main Office. Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m. and the parent group will start at 6:30 p.m. to allow ample time for discussion and peer support. First-time participants will need to complete a brief intake upon arrival. The group does not meet in June or December.

Dinner and childcare are provided FREE with registration at least 24 hours in advance. Please register all family members who plan to attend, including any dietary restrictions as well as ages of children so staff can make arrangements. For more information, please contact SF Programs Coordinator, Jeannette Page at jeannette@ourfamily.org or 415.981.1960 x309.

- Date:** Tuesdays 4/28, 5/26
- Time:** 6 to 8 p.m.
- Place:** 1385 Mission St., Suite 340

Monthly SF Queer Family Meet-Up and Playdate
Join queer families at Community Well for our monthly gathering, which includes casually mingling, a snack "potluck," discussions on agreed upon topics, and sharing unique experiences and issues we have encountered as queer families. Currently, a majority of families in the group have babies 3 years of age or younger, but all queer families are welcome!

We meet at Community Well, which is a great community space that has everything needed for babies: changing tables, compostable diaper system, lots of space and toys for the kids, a ball pit, etc.

This event is open to moms, dads, friends, members, and adult non-members. All are welcome!

- Date:** Saturdays 5/2, 6/6, 7/4, 8/1
- Time:** 3 to 5 p.m.
- Place:** 78 Ocean Ave.

Coffee + Stroller Walks

Calling all GGMG mamas and babies! Would you like to meet neighborhood moms, grab a coffee, and enjoy a stroller walk together? We're organizing this Coffee + Stroller just walk for you! You'll meet at a coffee shop before you go out for an hour of fresh air, light exercise, and great conversations!

- Date:** Every third Wednesday: 5/20, 6/17, 7/15, 8/19, 9/16, 10/21, 11/18, 12/16
- Time:** 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Place:** More than 10 locations throughout the city. Please select the date of your walk and a list of locations will be available for you to choose.
- Cost:** FREE

This event will be on every third Wednesday of the month. Please remember to RSVP so we can put you in touch with other attendees via email prior to the walk.

North Beach Stroller Walk:
Beacon Coffee & Pantry, 805 Columbus Ave.

Marina Green Stroller Walk:
Peet's Coffee, 2080 Chestnut St.

Lower Pac Heights Stroller Walk
B.Patisserie, 2821 California St.

Richmond/Golden Gate Park Stroller Walk:
Rise & Grind, 785 8th Ave.

Baker Beach Stroller Walk:
Bazaar Cafe, 5927 California St.

NOPA Stroller Walk:
The Mill, 736 Divisadero St.

Duboce Stroller Walk:
Duboce Park Cafe, 2 Sanchez St.

Mission Stroller Walk:
Dolores Park Cafe, 501 Dolores St.

Noe Stroller Walk:
Bernie's Coffee, 3966 24th St.

Sunset/Golden Gate Park Stroller Walk:
Beanery, 1307 9th Ave.

Cole Valley Stroller Walk:
Flywheel, 672 Stanyan St.

South Beach Stroller Walk:
Crossroads Cafe, 699 Delancey St.

Potrero Stroller Walk:
Farley's, 1315 18th St.

Mission Bay Stroller Walk:
Cafe Réveille, 610 Long Bridge St.

Bernal Stroller Walk at Pinhole Cafe:
Pinhole Coffee, 231 Cortland Ave.

Visitacion Valley Stroller Walk:
Mission Blue Cafe, 144 Leland Ave.

Weekdays

GGMG x Play Haven \$5 Afternoon Special

GGMG x Play Haven makes every third Wednesday afternoon special for you and your little ones. Come anytime after 1:30 p.m. and stay as late as 5 p.m. and meet other mommies and kiddos for a fun afternoon! Play Haven is perfect for infants, crawlers, toddlers, and preschoolers, but of course older siblings are welcome, too! Get some cash ready as coffee, tea, and snacks are available in the kitchenette for \$1 each.

- Date:** The third Wednesday of each month (4/15, 5/20, 6/17, 7/15, 8/19, 9/16, 10/21, 11/18, 12/16)
- Time:** 1:30 to 5 p.m.
- Place:** 254 Laguna Honda Blvd. Parking is free at the Forest Hill Church lot next door.
- Cost:** GGMG members enjoy a special price of \$5 per kid. Parents, caregivers, and infants 6 months and under are free. Spots are limited. Must RSVP & prepay. Non-members please pay \$16 at the venue.

Please enter GGMG Members' special code to reveal hidden event ticket created exclusively for GGMG members: GGMGPlayHaven20

Play Haven Friday Morning Playdate for Crawlers and Early Walkers

Moms of crawlers and early walkers, come join GGMG for a monthly playdate at Play Haven. We'll meet on the third Friday of each month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. If that doesn't work for your child's naptime, please come early or stay late. Play Haven is a fun place for babies to work on tummy time, crawling, and early steps in the designated baby and toddler area. GGMG will provide sweet treats for you and other snacks and drinks are available for purchase (cash only).

- Date:** The third Wednesday of each month (4/17, 5/15)
- Time:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (participants can stay until the end of the day)
- Place:** 254 Laguna Honda Blvd. Parking is free at the Forest Hill Church lot next door.
- Cost:** GGMG members enjoy a special price of \$5 per kid. Parents, caregivers, and infants 6 months and under are free. Spots are limited. Must RSVP & prepay. Non-members please pay \$16 at the venue.

GGMG members use code CRAWLERS to enjoy a special price of \$5 per kid.

Weekday Playdate for Moms and Toddlers

Are you a stay-at-home mom looking to connect with other stay-at-home moms of toddlers? Would your little one like to make friends with similar-aged little people? Then join us at this month's Weekday Playdate for Moms and Toddlers!

Being a stay-at-home mom in the toddler years can be especially isolating. Little ones are not quite ready to forge their own relationships, but you want to make connections with other moms and build your village. This event is for you!

We will provide refreshments and a jumping-off point to form a playgroup for you and your toddler. Please look for the GGMG sign and add your info to the sign-in sheet when you arrive. We can't wait to meet you!

- Date:** The third Wednesday of each month (4/24, 5/22)
- Time:** 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Cost:** FREE
- Place:** TBD

GGMG x Little Oceanauts \$5 Afternoon Special

Looking for a fun after-school activity? Little Oceanauts in Ingleside is the perfect place for children to run off their energy before dinner-time. Sign up now!

- Date:** Second Wednesday of each month (5/13, 6/10)
- Time:** 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.
- Place:** 1917 Ocean Ave.
- Cost:** GGMG members pay a special rate of \$5 per kid. Parents, caregivers, and infants 6 months and under free. Must RSVP and prepay as limited spots are available. Non-members please pay at the venue.

Please enter GGMG Members' special code to reveal hidden event ticket created exclusively for GGMG members: GGMGOceanauts20

GGMG x Imagination Playhouse \$5 Afternoon Special

Looking for a fun after-school activity? Imagination Playhouse in the Richmond is the perfect place for children to run off their energy before dinnertime. Sign up now!

- Date:** Second Wednesday of each month (5/13, 6/10)
- Time:** 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.
- Place:** 5628 Geary Blvd.
- Cost:** GGMG members pay a special rate of \$5 per kid. Parents, caregivers, and infants 6 months and under are free. Must RSVP and prepay as limited spots are available. Non-members please pay at the venue.

Please enter GGMG Members' special code to reveal hidden event ticket created exclusively for GGMG members: GGMGImagination20

Weekend Playdates

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Looking for something to do on Sunday afternoon after your little one's nap and before dinner? Sunday Afternoon Open Studio Playdate at Messy Art Lab is the answer!

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- Date:** First Sunday of each month (5/3)
- Time:** 3 to 5 p.m.
- Place:** 345 Judah St.
- Cost:** GGMG members pay \$5/kid. Perfect for children ages 1 to 5 but all ages welcome. Caretakers/parents are free. Spots are limited. Must RSVP & PREPAY. Non-GGMG members please pay \$20 at the venue.

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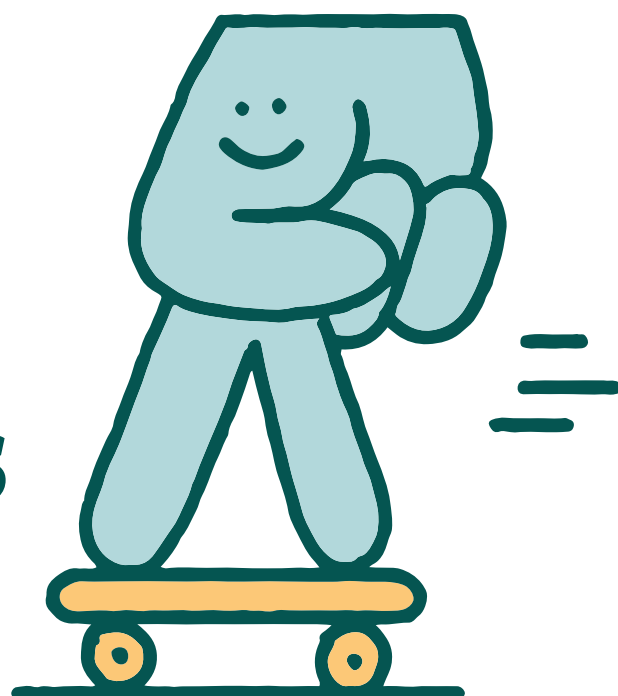
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The Evolution of a Mom

By Emily Beaven

Change. It seems like the only constant in parenthood and life for that matter. Having a child has been the biggest change in my life—as it is for many parents and caregivers. When children are young it can feel like they are changing sometimes daily—there's always a new sleep regression, growth spurt, and tooth coming in. The physical demands of keeping up with babies and toddlers can be overwhelming, and it can feel challenging to try and get ahead of the next phase and think about things such as your parenting style, how you'll discipline your child, your educational philosophy, and more. Most of us come to these answers with some preconceived beliefs, many shaped by how we ourselves were raised.



to be present, more engaged, more diligent, and watchful. There's no way I would let my kids spend as much time alone and unsupervised as I did. And besides, that was then and this is now. I couldn't raise my kids like that if I wanted to—especially in San Francisco. Terrible things happen to children in our modern era—things that never seemed to happen when I was growing up, or did but were never reported. What if my child was taken from the playground while I wasn't looking, or assaulted in a restroom, or fell into an animal habitat at the zoo? Or a million other what-ifs.

But after having kids, I changed. I couldn't help it. It's what felt natural to me as a mother because it's how I was raised. As I read more about the

For me, growing up in the '80s in Ohio meant no car seats or bike helmets as well as playing outside all day completely unsupervised. I have vivid memories of roaming the neighborhood and woods while terrorizing my younger brother. To say that we had a long leash was an understatement. As a Montessori educator, my mother saw me as a fiercely

free-range parenting movement, the more common-sense it appeared to be, and as I did more research on child abductions and crime rates, I realized the media might be to blame for a lot of unsubstantiated fears.

“As I read more about the free-range parenting movement, the more common-sense it appeared to be, and as I did more research on child abductions and crime rates, I realized the media might be to blame for a lot of unsubstantiated fears.”

independent child and she gave me the space she thought I needed. Her style of parenting can best be described in today's terms as free-range parenting—a style of child-rearing in which parents allow their children to move about without constant adult supervision, aimed at instilling independence and self-reliance.

Looking back as an adult, I thought “how was I not kidnapped?” My mom seemed downright absent—and I vowed that when I had kids I'd do things differently. I wanted

So what does free-range parenting look like for my oldest, a four-year-old boy? At the playground he has always been off on his own—I'm close by on the bench, but he's exploring at his own pace. At home, he loves to make his own toast and cereal and practice cutting with his crinkle cut knife. He's also in the backyard a lot while I'm inside, and he's allowed to go a few houses down to visit the neighbors. In public places like the library or bookstore, he's encouraged to go to the kid's section while I'm usually off in the cooking section. At Starbucks, I often give him money to order his own snack while I sit at the table. I think it's important that he's comfortable talking with adults, practicing good manners, handling money, and having a sense of responsibility.

I don't know how this will translate as my son gets older, and perhaps it will change as his needs change. What I do know is that it's okay to change your mind, question your values, and adapt your parenting style to fit where you are in your life. We're quick to label ourselves and others, but it's also okay to live in the gray. I wouldn't call myself a free-range parent, but there are a lot of elements that I subscribe to. The truth is I don't know who I am yet as a parent—it's evolving as my children grow and change themselves.

Emily is a residential Real Estate Agent at Compass, mother of two, and passionate supporter of reproductive rights and Waldorf education.



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