**Letter from the Editor: Pruning the Friendship Tree**  
*By Sonya Abrams*

I was part of a three-member best friend group in high school. After our yearbooks were signed and our mortarboards tossed, we vowed to stay close, even as colleges pulled us in different directions. A year into our new lives, however, one of my friends called me in tears. She had written a casual catchup email to the other member of our trio. In response, she had received a polite but dispassionate message announcing an intention to dissolve the friendship between the two of them, stating that there wasn’t anything substantive holding them together anymore. Why continue to risk precious energy by catching up, our third friend wrote, when both people could focus on establishing college friendships? Goodbye, don’t reply. It was a staggeringly callous move by an otherwise warm person. I was floored.

New motherhood is a time when many of us actively reach out to forge new bonds with other moms. I was aggressive in my efforts to connect, joining numerous mothers groups, book clubs, coffee meetups, and later hitting up every preschool moms’ night and school campout that came my way. Consequently, I made a lot of friends. But as my holiday invite list grew, so did my confusion. It became harder to tell which friendships had depth and which were just the result of briefly shared experiences. Who could I trust in times of crisis, and who was just a passing acquaintance? Add to this social media’s tendency to artificially keep friendships alive, and I began to feel very insecure, wondering which connections were actually real.

In this issue, our writers think about how we connect and reconnect with each other. On page 20, Jennifer Butterfoss explores the wild world of mom friends, sharing best practices to land your friends for life. Victoria Dvorak explores on page 24 our connections with our partners and how parenthood must force us to be united. And on page 56, Sandy Woo takes it back, way back, in a discussion of our ancestral connections and the growth of the DNA-testing industry, the promises and pitfalls.

Although my instinct is still to click “yes” on every Evite, I’ve been working on disciplining myself to replace quantity with quality and focus on deepening friendships with people whose values and personalities resonate with my own and who I can help support along life’s bumpy road. It’s been hard to consciously let some relationships wither, but I know I’ll be a better friend to the other people in my life. It takes courage and laying bare one’s emotional vulnerability to pursue meaningful friendships at the risk of rejection, but as someone who’s constantly coaxing my children to be brave and face their fears, it’s time to follow my own advice.

*New motherhood is a time when many of us actively reach out to forge new bonds with other moms.*

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**Letter from the Board: Reflections on 2019 and beyond**  
*By Karen Brein*

As I end my tenure as GGMG board chair, I can’t help but reflect on the myriad connections I have made through this fantastic group of mothers I did not know any other moms my age prior to joining GGMG, and I will forever be grateful to this group for welcoming me into motherhood with open arms. Volunteering for GGMG has made a lasting impact on my life. I am grateful that I took the leap to show up at my first volunteer meeting, even when I was terrified of knowing no one. I was welcomed with open arms and talked to several smart and funny moms who would later become my friends. I make new connections each month as I get to know more and more GGMG volunteers and members. It’s not always easy to show up. As mothers, we are always tired; trying to “do it all,” and carrying the brunt of the domestic load, but carving out time to connect with other moms is invaluable. I urge anyone reading this to make a commitment to yourself.

“As mothers we are always tired, trying to ‘do it all,’ and carrying the brunt of the domestic load, but carving out time to connect with other moms is invaluable.”

That you will show up this month—with yourself and others, whatever it’s with the GGMG community or elsewhere. One of my goals this year as GGMG board chair was to increase the number of connection opportunities for our members. This goal has been realized thanks to the dedicated volunteers who have worked with me. To name a few accomplishments this past year, we increased the number of Neighborhood Meetups events from 65 to over 150, partnered with an astounding number of businesses, nonprofits, and local organizations to increase our impact on our community, and we continue to make enhancements to our website to best suit the needs of our members. I am so proud of the work we’ve done and can’t wait to see what the GGMG board and volunteers accomplish next year under the leadership of new board chair Virginia Green.

Thank you to everyone I have connected with so far on my motherhood journey. We are all extremely lucky to be a part of the GGMG community. My wish is that every member is able to find meaningful connections through this group and takes time to connect to oneself in the process.

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**Housekeeping**

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

**ADVERTISING:** Advertisements are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. For submission information, email advertising@ggmg.org.

**COMING NEXT:** February/March: Love & Passion

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

**THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY:** Girls’ weekend in Santa Fe; Gin and Tonic by the pool in Tucson; surviving potsy hair; regretting having the kids sort and count their Halloween candy because now they notice if I eat one; learning to balance my priorities; a broken toe and vain decision to reject the hospital boot and buy some new comfy Uggs instead; computer hard drive failure—horrify for cloud backed-up, debating, during the power outage, whether moving to the North Bay was a good idea; trip to Thailand to visit mom and seeing wild elephants in the mountains for the first time; almost done photographing 75 families this season!

**Cover Outtakes**

Only one shot can make it to the cover. Here are some of our other favorites.
**Holiday Adventures Around the Bay**

By Christine Chen

**San Mateo’s CiruOdyssey’s IlluminoDyssey** is a dazzling winter light experience on tour levels for kids. It opens November 9 through January 5 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with 30 am hours until 8 p.m. on December 6 and January 3.

**Oakland ZooLights,** December 6 to January 5. Experience the Oakland Zoo with a million glowing lights from the gondola ride and Outback Express Train. Enjoy as swirling snow falls over a Winter Wonderland attraction and meet Santa every night from December 7 to 23.

**Free Pop-Up Glowing Hanukkah Party** at Ghiradelli Square December 22 from 3 to 6 p.m. Celebrate the first night of Hanukkah by dressing up in your favorite light-up, glittery, and glowing outfits. Play with dreidels and enjoy arts and crafts and fresh Harvey’s donuts. Candle lighting at 4:30 p.m.

**Celebrate Hanukkah at the JCCSF,** December 22 to 30. Celebrate Hanukkah by attending the lighting of the hanukkiyah at 4:30 p.m.

**Contemporary Jewish Museum Community Free Day,** December 25. View the exhibitions while on a scavenger hunt and participate in fun activities like playing with puppets and embroidery.

**Li’l Kid, Big City:**

**Salesforce Park**

By Sonya Abrams

Finding its way across 5.4 acres, several stories above the streets of SoMa, Salesforce Park is a lush oasis and a family-friendly escape from the hustle and bustle of the city below. For maximum thrill, start your downtown adventure by ascending in style aboard the park’s free gondola, a one-way ride starting near the corner of Fremont and Mission Streets. When you exit, 70 feet in the air, you will have a view of 1,200-foot play area, featuring an intricate rope course. A 1,200-foot interactive fountain display will delight little water explorers. A path dotted with 600 trees and shade of Fremont and Mission Streets. When you exit, 70 feet in the air, you will have a view of 1,200-foot play area. In the bay are open year-round, several stories above the streets of SoMa, Salesforce Park is a lush oasis and a family-friendly escape from the hustle and bustle of the city below.

**Volunteer to Support the Elderly**

By Jennifer Sato

I have loved volunteering at Bay Area senior centers, including Kimochi, Inc. and the Institute on Aging. Since I was a teen, I first volunteered serving lunch in the Nutrition Program at Kimochi, Inc. The holidays are an especially wonderful time to volunteer. Here are local organizations with ways to help out during the holidays and beyond.

**Institute on Aging,** 3575 Geary Blvd

- **Locations:** San Francisco, Peninsula, Santa Clara
  - **Friendship Line, arts, day program, office support, data entry**

**Kimochi, Inc.,** 1715 Buchanan St

- **Locations:** San Francisco’s Japantown and San Mateo
  - **Nutrition Program:** Food prep, serving meals on-site, delivering meals to home-bound seniors
  - **Kimochi Home SF and Kimochi San Mateo:** Daily walks, social day care, companionship, receptionist, group activities (bingo, arts and crafts, calligraphy), various projects (gardening, clerical)
  - **Kimochi Lounge:** Great visitors, assist with Japanese books/visual rental, organization and labeling
  - **Special events, escort/home visitor**

**Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly San Francisco**

- **Bay Area,** 509 Hyde St., Suite 628
  - **Volunteering:** Holiday home or birthday visits, medical escort, office/phone, social excursions, and special events

**San Francisco Village,** 3220 Fulton St

- **Board of Directors/Advisory Council, Companion/Friendly Visitor, special events, personal assistance, transportation, technology, wellness program**

**Self Help for the Elderly,** 731 Sansome St., Suite 100

- **Locations:** San Francisco, Daly City, Oakland, San Mateo, San Jose
  - **Senior Center, office work, data entry, tutoring, phone line, projects**
What is a Women's Health Physical Therapist?
A Women's Health Physical Therapist (WHPT) is a physical therapist (PT) who specializes in the pelvic floor and is trained to do internal pelvic floor assessments and treatments. She has earned a PT degree from an accredited education program, has passed a state licensure exam, and has completed advanced training in the area of women's health. She usually has special training in treating pregnancy and postpartum conditions and can evaluate and treat all pelvic floor dysfunctions (pain, urinary leaking, prolapse), abdominal separation, core weakness patterns, and pain in the pelvic joints, low back, or hips. In my practice, I also treat all orthopedic issues such as neck/shoulder/upper back pain.

What inspired you to focus your PT practice on women's health?
I’ve always been interested in pregnancy as a transitional time in a woman’s life and was raised with a feminist mother who is very birth positive. Early in my career, I noticed a trend in my female patients: Many of their orthopedic injuries could be traced back to unresolved postpartum issues such as core weakness, compensations, and poor posture/body mechanics. After my own pregnancies, I used my knowledge to heal my body. These experiences inspired me to provide PT for mothers during pregnancy, postpartum, and beyond so they have the care and support they need and deserve.

Six weeks after a vaginal birth, most women are cleared by their OB/GYN for a return to pre-pregnancy exercise at 6 weeks postpartum.

What about sex?
Some women get back to sex postpartum without issue, but the majority of women do not feel ready, mentally or physically, for sex at 6 weeks postpartum. Depending on your tissue, the tissues may not be ready for penetration and need more time to heal. My recommendation is that when you are ready, start with non-penetrative sex and remind yourself how to feel connected to pleasure, your own body, and your partner. Then the progression to penetrative sex will feel more natural.

Are there special considerations after a cesarean birth?
Since a cesarean section causes multi-layer tissue injury, it is common to have a difficult time reactivating the deep abdominal muscles. The presence of incisional scar tissue can also contribute to pain in the abdomen, pelvis, hips, or back, as well as disrupt the abdominal muscle function. One tip is to gently massage the scar to increase its mobility. It’s a myth that pelvic floor exercises are not normal and may experience pelvic floor dysfunction, such as painful sex or leaking urine. Regardless of vaginal or cesarean delivery.

What else do women need to know about postpartum pelvic health?
For decades, the French government has subsidized 12 weeks of pelvic floor PT for all postpartum women. Unfortunately, since postpartum PT is not normal and many women accept postpartum conditions as their new normal. We need to ask for help and find specialists that can help us even when we are told by the medical system and prior generations, “You had a baby, what do you expect?” With the right guidance and support, a woman’s body has the ability to heal after giving birth. It’s never too late! Whether you had a baby 6 weeks ago or 16 years ago, your body deserves to feel good. Every woman has the right to reclaim her body as her own and feel confident and healthy so she can show up for herself and her family.

What’s next?
She usually has special training in treating pregnancy and postpartum conditions and can evaluate and treat all pelvic floor dysfunctions (pain, urinary leaking, prolapse), abdominal separation, core weakness patterns, and pain in the pelvic joints, low back, or hips. In my practice, I also treat all orthopedic issues such as neck/shoulder/upper back pain.

“arcesarean birth. We need to treat postpartum women like we after vaginal birth and 6 to 7 months for the abdominal fascia that it takes 4 to 6 months for the pelvic floor tissue to recover recommendation and unrealistic expectations. Studies show failing postpartum women by giving them a generalized to support the 6-week clearance mark. The medical system is nancy exercise at 6 weeks postpartum. There is no evidence I’ve never met a woman who is ready to return to pre-preg- mini exercise at 6 weeks postpartum.”

Women’s Health Physical Therapy
with Alicia Willoughby
Alicia Willoughby (www.aliciapt.com) is a Women’s Health Physical Therapist who specializes in pregnancy and postpartum. She works in Marin and San Francisco and is a mom to two kids. She was interviewed by Colleen Morgan, a fellow physical therapist and GGMG Magazine contributor.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH
Give Homeless Kids Bedtime Essentials for the Holidays
GGMG is partnering with Project Night Night (PNM) to host our annual holiday fund drive. PNM delivers packages of bedtime essentials to homeless children ages 0-12 to provide a sense of security and support learning. Each Night Night package contains a new security blanket, an age-appropriate children’s book, and a stuffed animal—all nestled inside a new canvas tote bag. Every year, PNM delivers over 25,000 packages to children in need.

You can donate funds via www.crowdrise.com/erin/campaigns/ggmg-fundraiser-for-project-night-night. Any donation amount is greatly appreciated and will be put to good use by providing nighttime comforts for homeless children throughout the Bay Area.

Please read carefully:
• Drop off by December 10 at one of the listed locations.
• Tightly bag up donations for drop-off so they won’t get dirty or played with.
• Stuffed animals must be store-bought with tags.
• Books must be new and no sew.
• Blankets must be new, child friendly, not handmade or
store-bought with tags still on.

Movie Night!
Enjoy movie night (with or without kids) with Alamo Drafthouse at its family friendly San Francisco location at 2250 Mission St. Founded in 1997, “The Alamo Drafthouse is good food, good beer and good film, all at the same place”

Viewing a film at Alamo is an experience different from the average multiplex cinema. Ticket holders conveniently order food and drinks from their seats, and friendly film-loving servers fulfill your order (even during the movie!) without you ever having to get up. Free popcorn or soda refill? No problem! Alamo also highlights great local craft breweries on its menu.

Contest
Enjoy movie night (with or without kids) with Alamo Drafthouse at its family friendly San Francisco location at 2250 Mission St. Founded in 1997, “The Alamo Drafthouse is good food, good beer and good film, all at the same place”

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The Best Connections Are the Ones You Don’t See Coming

By Robert Kopniske

Growing up in the bucolic Midwest in the ’60s was blissful. Family, security, and economic stature were sound. I formulated my values from the ’60s and economically secured myself in the late ’70s and early ’80s. I was happy at my job and thought marriage was just something other people did. As far as I was concerned, life was complete.

Then, in 1986, I was found by someone who believed in us and our love more than I could ever imagine. All of a sudden, I became one of those “married people.” By getting married, I was lucky enough to have an instant family via a 12-year-old stepdaughter. Within the next five years, my wife and I had two more daughters. My thought process changed from “couldn’t imagine being married” to “cannot imagine being single.” I was fortunate to be part of something so loving. Once again I felt that life was complete. Fast forward to 2015. My daughters were grown, and it was just my wife and me at home. What we thought would be a gentle ride into retirement came at us in warp-speed; I was disabled from a misdiagnosed foot injury, and my wife was diagnosed with early-onset dementia. Life dealt us a setback. I have found myself relaying to the words of wisdom more and more each day. Now it seems my life has become a “quote-of-the-day” as I find myself speaking in platitudes that ring true from my life experiences. If I have learned anything from life—It’s truly never complete.

The best connections in life are the ones you can’t even imagine for yourself.

Kwanua Robinson

Photo by Katsy Mizrahi Photography

Kwanua Robinson is a mother of two living in San Francisco’s SoMa neighborhood. Kwanua is a personal trainer and instructor who founded PowerPlaySF, a family-centric fitness studio with personal training, classes for moms, and creative play for kids. Kwanua was interviewed by UrbanSitter CEO Lynn Perkins, a fellow entrepreneur and SF mom.

What was your inspiration for PowerPlaySF?

When I was pregnant with my now 6-year-old, I couldn’t really find a space that gave me a good mix of workouts for each phase of my pregnancy. I still wanted to do a lot of the same workouts: lift, bar, pilates, not just yoga. My frustration increased post-baby. The only available option seemed to be yoga.

Which of your kids’ classes do your own children most enjoy at PowerPlaySF?

Kia has pottery on in each phase of our programming. She loves baby music and toddler art, but I would say her all-time favorite is tap and the tot gym. She’s a little something on pre-ballet. Kaiden was all about the art classes and then our tinker and build class.

What keeps you motivated?

I’m motivated to help my extended family in Ghana. I came to the United States for college, as did my two younger sisters. Our parents have set the example of always helping family and community. Right now, my mom and grandmother, both breast cancer survivors, are raising awareness and education about breast cancer and breaking the stigma that can be associated with it in Ghana. I want to build something for my own family—then something that goes well beyond that—to help my cousins and cousins-of-cousins in Ghana.

What are a couple of things families can do to create a balanced life for the whole family?

I suggest creating a “no-media” block of time. My husband came up with this idea. We have trouble switching off as a mom entrepreneur and felt compelled to answer work texts and calls. Now that my children are three and six, and have some media access, we all participate in a family “no-media” block of time on Sundays. The kids sometimes protest, but after 10 minutes or so they adjust.

Do you have advice for parents whose kids prefer to be sedentary and don’t love physical activity?

Get outside with your child and focus on the play aspect of physical activity. One of the reasons I named my business PowerPlaySF is that when you focus on the play component of physical movement it becomes more fun, while a ‘workout’ can feel like a chore.

Do you have any tips for moms who are struggling to find the time to work out or get back into a fitness routine?

Start by blocking off 20 minutes, one day a week.

Robert is originally from Cleveland, Ohio, where the spot of his career was in the business forms industry. He is now retired, living in San Francisco, taking care of his bride of 30 years and enjoying every minute with his grandson.
**Holidays**
By Laure Latham

Candy canes! Snow fun! Hot chocolate! The holidays are one of the best times of the year to snuggle up and enjoy a good book with a comfy blanket in a warm bed. Whether you’re celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, or just the pleasure of the festive season, these books should become holiday classics for your home library.

**The Snail and the Whale Festive Edition**
Written by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler

*The Snail and the Whale* has a classic story of a snail who wanted to sail around the world and hitched a lift on the tail of a whale. With a beautiful snowy festive cover, this story takes the unlikely duo past icebergs and volcanoes, through storms and sunny weather, until the whale teaches himself. Small in size but big in brains, snail saves the day! Young ones will appreciate this story of friendship that focuses on opening your heart and loving others. **Ages: 0 to 3 years**

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**Snow Much Fun!**
Written by Nancy Saxow, illustrated by Sabrina Gibson

Sledging, skating, and baking cookies are only some of the winter activities enjoyed by these animal friends in this book that celebrates winter inside and outside. Indeed, when a pale blue bunny named Willow prefers staying inside with hot chocolate and marshmallows, Berry the white bear and Ginger the beige squirrel encourage Willow to try ice hockey. The scenes are illustrated with photographs of the felt animals alongside small fabric sculptures, tiny props and costumes such as felt skates and knitted sweaters, and hats in miniature scenes of snowy outdoor settings or cozy, pink interiors. Winter has never been so charming. **Ages: 3 to 6 years**

**Goodnight Bubbala**
Written by Sheryl Haft, illustrated by Jill Webber

This is a festive reimagining of the Goodnight Moon bedtime story with a Hanukkah setting. “In the small blue room there was a bubbala, and a little shmatta, and then—oy vey!—came the whole mishpacha!” Each page introduces young readers to fun Yiddish words, and the book ends on a culinary note with a recipe from Ina Garten, the Barefoot Contessa, for potato latkes. Oy vey, indeed! **Ages: 2 to 5 years**

**Nutcracker Night**
Written by Morville Micaier, illustrated by Gabrielle Germain

Often the first ballet that children attend, *The Nutcracker* is a timeless story for the holidays. This book follows a little girl and her dad who attend a performance of the ballet together. With a diverse audience and delightful observations, *Nutcracker Night* captures the magic of a school-aged child’s visit to the ballet where the ballet comes to life as a true auditory experience. The endnotes include a synopsis of the story told by The Nutcracker as well as the history of the ballet and its current cultural significance. **Ages: 2 to 5 years**

**Mimi and the Mountain Dragon**
Written by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Helen Stephens

This book tells the story of a village living in fear of a mighty dragon. One winter, a little girl finds a baby dragon asleep and makes a perilous journey to return it to mother—the dragon the villagers fear. Set in the mountains of Switzerland, this story offers a rare combination of dragons and Christmas in one book, with the added bonus that this book will soon be turned into an animated musical by the BBC. **Ages: 7 to 11 years**

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**Perspective**
By Gai Cornwall

A lot of what we read about parenting is written by women in the thick of it. While there’s value in capturing what it’s like to tread water in a pool of noise and need, there’s also much to be said for getting the perspective of a veteran, someone who’s experienced multiple iterations of the birth and rearing process.

**Push Back: Guilt in the Age of Natural Parenting**
Obstetrician and mother of four, Amy Tuteur, M.D., is on a no-holds-barred mission “to help women escape the feelings of guilt (attendee to) the currently popular philosophies of natural childbirth, lactavism, and attachment parenting.” Though Tuteur readily admits that aspects of these movements have value and that those who embrace them mostly mean well, she takes each phenomenon to task for using falsehoods and pseudoscience to disempower women while claiming to do the opposite. It can be difficult to swallow Tuteur’s unflinching assessment. “You or I might imagine that dead babies would cause midwives to reassess their aversion to technology,” she writes: “Instead it has caused them to reassess their aversion to dead babies.” But Tuteur makes a convincing case that her bitter medicine needs to be taken, and I found it manageable in small doses over the course of a week or two.

I ultimately decided that while Tuteur may lay on the vitriolic gas and flag quite a few horses already gasping for air, she ain’t wrong. For one thing, labor is dangerous. The idea that it’s not has caused many women to internalize the message that an unmedicated vaginal delivery is both possible and ideal in all but the rarest cases. From this “glorification” of one birth method, we get the disappointment and shame that come when interventions are required for maternal and fetal well-being. One could make the case that Tuteur acts as an apostle for modern obstetrics, which isn’t without its flaws. But she acknowledges many of them, and her bottom line is difficult to argue with: When it comes to birth, feeding, and parenting, several methods are reasonable, and it should be up to individuals to decide, unencumbered by the pressure to conform to ideals of dubious origin and validity.

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Laure is the author of the parenting 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调侃y cream tea stops. You can find her on social media t/frogmomlaure.

Gai works as a stay-at-home mom and writer in San Francisco. Read about parenting and education from the perspective of a former teacher and lawyer at gailcornwall.com/articles.
Creating a Lasting Moms Group
By Jessica Perry

When people say "it takes a village to raise a child," they are not joking. I went into labor with my first daughter less than 12 hours after going on maternity leave, with little more than a trip to the local taqueria to help me decompress and get in the mindset for my new life. I was the first of my friends in the Bay Area to have kids, and although we had a mountain of baby supplies ready to go at our house and a hospital bag packed several months in advance, I remember thinking to myself as we left the hospital, "Are we really allowed to take this baby home?" A few weeks later, I joined GGMG and tried again. I responded to a post from another mom, titled something like, "I'm struggling. Are you, too?" A few days later, I met up with some other local moms in my neighborhood and I went into labor with my first daughter less than 12 hours after giving birth, I hadn't been ready to be out in the world just yet. A few weeks later, I joined GGMG and tried again. I responded to a post from another mom, titled something like, "I'm struggling. Are you, too?" A few days later, I met up with some other local moms in my neighborhood and we all caffeinated and bonded with babies in tow. Once we got into a groove, we met up a couple times per week for more than a year to do various activities—always keeping the conversation real. We talked about our struggles with breastfeeding and formula, the sleepless nights, teething, and general sensibilities. If you're looking to meet up with other moms in your area who like to run, knit, or do something esoteric, and that group doesn't exist, start one yourself! You'd be surprised how many people out there are looking to connect with you. We were each other's confidants and back-up babysitters. We were each other's confidants and back-up babysitters.
It’s never been easier to trace your heritage via DNA, but what does that actually mean? Does it really work? And is it worth it?

By Sandy Woo

O n an otherwise prosaic ride home the other day, my 6-year-old son sang-hummed Lizzo’s “Truth Hurts,” complete with “I just took a DNA test, turns out I’m 100 percent that [unintelligible].” Fortunately it was the kid version (yes, there is one), and I didn’t have to explain anything. It’s official: DNA testing is pop-culture cool. Approximately 80 percent of mail-in DNA testers report wanting to know about where their families came from, 36 percent wish to know due to medical or health history, and 36 percent also say they want to connect with relatives they didn’t know about (numbers not meant to add up to 100).

Julia Backer, a genetic counseling student who received an ancestry kit as a birthday present, muses that she “held on to it for almost a year and finally sent in my DNA. I think it was just out of curiosity, but maybe also because I was sick of looking at it on my bookshelf.” Local mom Karla (not her real name) was a “sympathy” tester. “I did the ancestry test mostly to support my husband in doing it,” she says. “My mother-in-law had been trying for more than 20 years to find the child she had given up for adoption. She asked my husband and his brothers to do the test with her to try to find her adopted-out son. For myself, I was curious about the process of testing, and I thought it might be interesting to see my ancestry results. My grandfather was an orphan, and he had no information about his background—not even where he was born.”

The drive for wanting to know where we come from is strong. Possessing this knowledge may have a therapeutic effect as well. A 2010 Emory University study showed that when children know stories about relatives who came before, they demonstrate higher levels of emotional well-being. This study is often used to promote DNA testing even though it didn’t specifically look at the psychological benefits of DNA testing to gain information about family. The benefits found in this study were gained the “old-fashioned” way, from conversations and family research through genealogy. Ancestry testing hadn’t even really taken off yet then.

Is the testing reliable? People often ask how can DNA results be wrong—it’s a code after all. Answering this question is complicated and “the devil is in the details.”

The DNA testing used by ancestry testing companies uses SNPs (single nucleotide polymorphisms), which are natural DNA spelling variations. A nucleotide is a chemical base that make the backbone of DNA. The SNPs are chosen due to their frequencies in a specific geographical population. Once a SNP is established as common in a population, it may have some significance or importance. It becomes an ancestry informative marker (AIM) if it exhibits substantially different frequencies between different populations. Propotion of ancestry derived from each population can be estimated from a group of AIMs.

Using SNPs allows for quicker and more cost effective testing, but that also means large amounts of DNA are not being used by the services. Each company has its own proprietary platform and algorithm for interpreting the data. Unlike DNA sequencing, mail-in DNA tests are only looking at certain variants across an entire genome. Variants first need to be identified prior to any interpretation. To use a simplistic analogy, it would be like just checking the spelling of five out of the 10 words in a sentence. Perhaps there are errors in other non-checked words as well. This type of DNA testing is different from clinical gene sequencing, which spells out every letter of each word in the sentence, after which the results still need to be interpreted for significance. This is also one of the reasons why health information from such testing can be wrong.

The testing companies compare your DNA to a sample population, which is derived from a certain country is based upon comparing your DNA to their private database. The larger the company’s database, the more likely the results will be accurate. On a related note, to find the most number of relatives, it is best to also test with multiple companies. Camille Panrod, Senior Public Relations Specialist of Ancestry, says, “Determining AncestryDNA ethnicity estimates is not a guessing game. The estimate is based on shared DNA, probability, statistics, and ongoing research and science. AncestryDNA calculates your ethnicity estimate by comparing your DNA to a reference panel made up of over 40,000 samples from people with a long family history in one place or as part of one group.”

Can the results be believed? Many testing companies report that their estimates are 99.9 percent accurate, which simply means true. For example, a test is accurate if it reports someone’s ancestry is European. Precise is the exact determina- tion of ethnicity. Some companies may list several hundreds regions on their reports, but have only tested 20-30 regions, and

Seeking Answers in Ancestry May Yield More Questions

“It is best to take percentages with a grain of salt, especially if they don’t match up to traceable family history.”
This incomplete information is one of the reasons Emily Chen, clinical geneticist and co-director of the Regional Genetics Molecular Laboratory at Kaiser Permanente, has expressed hesitation with testing. "The data are incomplete and biased due to insufficient data, so the results may not be accurate, and the results are dependent on what the testing platforms are."

Other concerns about testing? Privacy is often a given reason for hesitation on such testing. The fine print details what each company does with your data. This data is a valuable asset and is sold to other companies, which can then do what they wish with your data. Data privacy, such as HIPAA, doesn't apply to direct-to-consumer testing. The scope of what each company can do with your data is broad, and it would be wise to carefully read the privacy policy of each company. Some companies may allow law enforcement to search the database while others don't allow it without a warrant. Recently, a judge ruled that these databases could be searched without consent. Data breaches are a real concern as well.

Karla's results somewhat surprised her. "For the most part, my ancestry results matched what my parents had always told me. I was quite surprised, though, to discover that I am [about] 20 percent Spanish/Portuguese. This surprising information prompted my daughter to do a deep genealogy search over a summer...she found no evidence of any Spanish/Portuguese ancestry in her eight-genera- tion search. A year or two later, I got an update from the ancestry service saying they wished to your data. Data privacy, such as HIPAA, doesn't apply to direct-to-consumer testing. The scope of what each company can do with your data is broad, and it would be wise to carefully read the privacy policy of each company. Some companies may allow law enforcement to search the database while others don't allow it without a warrant. Recently, a judge ruled that these databases could be searched without consent. Data breaches are a real concern as well. It is best to take percentages with a grain of salt, especially if they don't match up to traceable family history.

People can opt out as Karla did. "The test results and new family connections can have an impact on your identity. And whatever you discover, it is not just your information, it also ripples out to your people. I think we learned it is important to be mindful about these issues, before choosing to do the test and after."

Turns out, I am 100 percent...Unconvinced. After all that research, I'm fairly certain that my results would be 'boring.' My ancestry is Chinese as far back as I can tell. I suppose it would be fun for me to discover that I'm a descendant of an emperor, but it's doubtful there is enough reference data for that. The potential for finding unknown family members was far too anxiety producing so that was never a draw. (My mother disappeared from my life at age 10.) I am ultimately ambivalent about my DNA testing in some company's database; this feeling is my own personal discomfort, curiosity be damned. On the other hand, my husband has ordered a DNA testing kit, under a pseudonym. He has expressed hesitation with testing. The fine print details what each company does with your data. This data is a valuable asset and is sold to other companies, which can then do what they wish with your data. Data privacy, such as HIPAA, doesn't apply to direct-to-consumer testing. The scope of what each company can do with your data is broad, and it would be wise to carefully read the privacy policy of each company. Some companies may allow law enforcement to search the database while others don't allow it without a warrant. Recently, a judge ruled that these databases could be searched without consent. Data breaches are a real concern as well. It is best to take percentages with a grain of salt, especially if they don't match up to traceable family history.

Most DNA testing companies provide more detailed results to people of European ancestry since this testing was initially only available in the United States. Understandably, the lowest concordance is with individuals of South Asian, East Asian, African and Hispanic descent. In certain populations such as Ashkenazi Jewish, values less than 2 percent are very unreliable. These companies recognize this racial bias and have goals to increase collection of samples from these regions...
Building Your Local Mom Village, According to Research

Friendships are built through a delicate balance of introspection and outreach

By Jennifer Kuhru Butterfoss

In September of 2019, an anonymous post on the GGMG forums caught my eye:

“Where and how does one make friends? Is there any hope? I used to post on Craigslist [sic] 15 years ago for book group friends, but that seems weird now. I tried organizing book groups and wine nights through GGMG, but came up short. Many moms are busy and at this age, already settled with family and friends. School events are a bust too. At the annual fundraiser, moms who know each other stuck together. I tried to have some small talk, but it went nowhere. And then there were the other events at school amounting to one play date here and there and then cricket, sigh. I tried to make friends in my neighborhood play group and I’ve been to a few events but no one really stuck. It’s so hard making friends!”

It’s an all-too-common vent echoed far and wide, especially in urban areas like San Francisco, where the bulk of the adult population has moved for work-related reasons—in fact, only 37 percent of San Franciscans were even born in California—so close ties and family networks are far away. The ease of making friends during childhood gradually evaporates as opportunities for daily interaction and socializing that a school or campus environment used to provide gives way to the responsibilities and formalities of the professional world. Studies support the notion that our social bonds are diminishing. A 2006 article in the Journal of Sociological Review showed that nearly 10 percent of adults in 1985 self-reported that they had zero confidants. About two decades later, this number jumped to 25 percent. In a grim and lonely reality check, it would appear that one out of four American adults have no one to talk to about the real things that matter. Other life transitions like marriage, childbirth, and aging parents further erode our capacity to make meaningful new friendships. However, these very friendships and connections are critical during life’s major transitions...and as research shows, to studies on the causes of friendship conflict and found the most common reason for problems was due to time commitments. Our schedules may simply be too full with balancing soccer games, weekly swim classes, and the demands of school and work. In her November 2019 article “Why You Never See Your Friends Anymore,” Judith Shulevitz makes the claim that our overburdened schedules are taking a toll on American society. In it she writes, “A calendar is more than the organization of days and months. It's the blueprint for a shared life.”

Author Jenny Odell writes in her book How to Do Nothing about the “opt out” movement. Proponents call for people to “reject our culture of busyness and reject the notion that our every minute should be captured, optimized, or appropriated as a financial resource by the technologies we use daily.”

A mother who bemoans that fact that she has no friends will never be able to overcome this predicament if she’s never available for that impromptu mani-pedi date or a ladies night out. It may be time for American moms to go Marie Kondo on our calendars, thank those activities and extracurriculars for what they brought into our children’s lives, and consider paring down. Rather than fantasizing about our child becoming the next Simone Biles, maybe the entire family could benefit if Wednesdays are allocated to a weekly game night with a few neighbors instead.

Form social groups in your sphere

Dutch Sociologist Rut Veenhoven is the founding director of the World Database of Happiness and a founding editor of the Journal of Happiness Studies. In a recent report, he determined that Denmark has some of the happiest people in the world. One reason is that 92 percent of its population belongs to a social group, including things like book clubs, sewing circles, sports, and cultural interests. How is this different from the schedule cluttering discussed above? One key difference is to strategically limit after-school or evening activities to the ones that will yield the most social connection. Also, consider focusing on existing social groups within your sphere: your child’s school, your neighborhood, your church. Toss out the dance class that has a small group of bored parents from all around the city sitting on a bench staring at their iPhones, and start ralying the soccer moms at your kid’s school to form a book club. Finding your next BFF at a weekly dance class is less likely when no one really talks to one another and the kids scatter to different schools during the week. It’s infinitely more possible with other moms from your child’s school when you already have built-in Saturday hang

Friendships are built through a delicate balance of introspection and outreach

By Jennifer Kuhru Butterfoss

Our overall happiness, Nicholas Christakis at Yale found that relationships are the number one promoter of happiness in life. According to his study, having a bigger network of friends and acquaintances can lead to greater happiness overall. This includes one’s number of friends, closeness of friends, closeness of family, and relationships with co-workers and neighbors. “Once I became a mom, the saying ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ sounded less like a nice little proverb about the value of community and more like a warning to parents. Seriously, you can’t do this alone,” writes Kelly Anderson in her 2017 article, “They say it takes a village to raise a child. But what if you don’t have one?”

Heeding Anderson’s warning, there are a number of actions moms in San Francisco can take to intentionally build up and fortify their village. While making, keeping, and strengthening our friendship bonds may seem like work no one quite has the time for, committing to a few key actions may actually make things much simpler. Our lives and happiness quite literally depend on it.

De-clutter your schedule

Arizona State University Anthropology Professor Daniel Huishka reviewed

Captured, optimized, or appropriated as a financial resource by the technologies we use daily.”

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time on the sidelines of the soccer field.

Indeed, while it may seem like more work, starting your own group with folks in an existing circle might actually be one way to ease the logistical burden of adding another activity to your plate. You can choose the shared interest, meeting location, meeting days and time and people to include. Socialization occurs largely on your own terms and you can work it around your family’s needs.

Finally, consider stepping up your friend game at work. After all, for many people that is where most of our daylight hours go. As a parent, happy hours may be a thing of the past, but what’s stopping you from organizing a weekly outing to try a different restaurant (gasp) outside the workplace cafeteria or raliing a few folks to check out the next Daybreakers event and do some early morning yoga and dancing before hitting the desks?

Check in regularly

If you want to stay close friends with someone, how often do you need to check in? A group of physicists from the University of Notre Dame studied over 2 million people and 8 million phone calls made amongst their sample group, noting frequency of calls to the same number.

From this study, they determined that the leading cause of pervasive friendships was reciprocity, or put more simply, returning a friend’s communication. When the phone data was drilled down even more, they saw that key action among these “super-connectors” was the frequency and reliability of a returned phone call.

So how to translate this into mom-life? Consider putting a weekly reminder in your calendar and dedicate a small block of time twice a month to reaching out and saying hello.

Honor and enhance your commitments

In an analysis of the often quoted University of Kansas study that concluded it takes approximately 40-60 hours to form a casual friendship, 80-100 hours to become a friend, and 200+ hours to become a good friend, author Wanda Thibodeaux breaks down what this actually means for the average person. Using the Bureau of Labor Statistics time use study that states people spend an average of 39 minutes a day socializing with others, she makes the bold claim that it would take two months of spending time with someone every day to become casual friends. A more realistic amount for most people might be once or twice a week, meaning it could take over a year to make a single good friend, with deeper friendships taking up to five years. Frequent jumping from one commitment to another is what is wreaking havoc on our deeper friendships taking up to five years.

Frequently jumping from one commitment to another, skyrocketing housing prices are driving families out in droves. This is all the more reason to heed some of the advice above and take a few small, deliberate and ongoing steps to slowly build that mom tribe and keep it going for years to come. Now if you’ll excuse me, it’s time to go make a few bi-monthly friend-phone-calls.

So once we’ve decided to commit to a social group or school community, how do we enhance this commitment? Consider going digital. Offer to start a Facebook or email group for your child’s class and send a periodic community-building question out, like “What’s everyone planning to do for Halloween?” or “What’s one thing you are looking forward to for the long weekend?” Don’t just volunteer in isolation for a one-off event like setting up for the school carnival, but rally a few other parents in your child’s class to join you for the explicit purpose of getting to know one another.

It takes work to have a strong marriage. Couples often schedule things like regular date nights or enlist the support of professionals to help work through communication issues. There are countless books on the keys to finding love and having a successful partnership. The same can be said about friendships. Making and keeping friends in San Francisco may indeed be getting harder and harder. After all, skyrocketing housing prices are driving families out in droves. This is all the more reason to heed some of the advice above and take a few small, deliberate and ongoing steps to slowly build that mom tribe and keep it going for years to come.

Now if you’ll excuse me, it’s time to go make a few bi-monthly friend-phone-calls.

Jennifer Kuhl Baberloff is an educational consultant, husband-fanatic and mother of two fantastic little friends she and her husband made themselves! Find out more at jenniferkuhlbaberloff.com.
Connecting Across the Chasm
Learning to Reconcile Different Parenting Styles Between Partners
By Victoria Dvorsk

One of my biggest fights with my husband began one night as I was buried torso deep in a corner cabinet trying to fish out old checkbooks. My husband was sitting at the dining table, and my stepdaughter came out modeling an outfit for a concert she was to attend the next day. “Dad, I’m going to wear these shorts. Either find something else to wear or go to the concert!” These were the words that flew in the middle of my husband and stepdaughter’s argument and then fight with my husband after. My husband doesn’t just say “no” to his daughter. He negotiates and mediates, which opens the door for pushback and accusations. In contrast, I find giving direct answers leaves little to no room for negotiation. We didn’t just have different parenting styles. Our parenting styles were like the East African Rift Valley. We were two divergent parental land masses pushed apart, fueled by forces well beyond our control.

Parenting styles explained
No one plans to fight with a partner over parenting, so how do so many of us get here? Different approaches are one culprit. Parenting differences cause fractures in families. Children are experts at identifying these differing styles and exploiting the situation to their own benefit. In the 1960s, a clinical and developmental psychologist created what would become one of the most commonly referenced parenting styles by category. Diane Baumrind classified parenting styles into four broad categories: Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

Parenting styles explained

The Sound Of Music cast provides a good cheat sheet. Authoritarian is Captain Von Trapp. He’s strict and rigid about rules. He’s punitive, communication is a one-way street to his children, and he’s not a warm father. Franzlina Maria is the authoritative parent. She has boundaries. She’s affectionate, loving, and warm. Communication with children is a two-way street and she’ll remind you of the rules with a song. The character Max Detwiler, who plays the entrepreneurial family friend, is like a permissive parent. He’s more friend than parent. Do what you want, kids—mom and dad are on their honeymoon. The uninvolved parent can also be defined as uninterested.

Case studies in parenting styles
I did an informal poll. Of the couples I spoke with, all had talked about what they wanted their family life to look like to an extent: Would they attend church? Would they participate in sports? No one discussed how to parent together.

Elizabeth, mother of three, is an authoritarian-authoritative parent, or in simple terms, strict, warm, communicative. Her husband, Peter, is either all strict or all permissive, his behavior varies according to the gender of his children. Elizabeth feels Peter unfairly focuses on their son, devoting time and energy to his activities and entertainment while spending time with their girls seems like a chore. Furthermore, Peter’s patience with his girls is thin. “Peter goes from zero to punish”, sighs Elizabeth. “But I think he’s getting it.” Our newest said “bye uncle” one day.

Ouch.

And what about therapy? “It’s not going to happen. Peter won’t go. There’s too much to get through, not that we could go anyway. I think it would take us years to even get to our parenting differences.”

Family systems like Elizabeth and Peter’s are common, and couples with babies can be even more volatile, because parents suffering from exhaustion and shifting hormones are more likely to fight while impaired. Jenni and Taylor are new parents to Mae. Their parenting differences were immediate. “We got home from the hospital and within two nights, I was daydreaming about putting a pillow over Taylor’s head while he slept,” Jenni confessed. Then, in a hurried whisper, “I bet I could get away with it too!”

“Understanding the root of one’s own parenting style can lead to a more empathetic view of our partner’s style.”

Jenni is not homicidal. She’s a new mother suffering from the I-want-to-kill-my-incompetent-spouse syndrome, or simply co-parenting postpartum. Things continued downhill. Everything, from how often to change Mae to free-range versus helicopter parenting, bubbled to the surface, and soon they were spiraling out of control.

How to parent together effectively
So what can couples do when co-parenting fails and different parenting philosophies affect the union to the point that they start disagreeing about first-degree murder or divorce? And what if, like Elizabeth and Peter, therapy just seems impossible or the problems seem insurmountable? There are no quick fixes, but there are some basic couple agreements, grounded in respect, that I learned about from a co-parent counselor.

1. Fight fair: What this looks like in action are “I feel” statements as opposed to “You always/never” statements.
It's easy to see examples of this phenomenon at work. My husband and I got into what most would consider a minor exchange. The kids get a couple of vitamins daily. Because he wasn't paying attention, my husband gave the kids a full dose of melatonin. Matter of fact, it was three times the dose I would normally prescribe. My frustration was immediate. I ratted off all the obvious: It's too much, it's as-needed, not nightly, youngest has never taken melatonin and has basically gone from none to a full knock-out dose. My anger took me by surprise. After all, logically speaking, the kids were not in danger. The melatonin were mine, and confusion was easy as I take melatonin three times the dose I would normally prescribe. My frustration was immediate. I ratted off all the obvious: It's too much, it's as-needed, not nightly, youngest has never taken melatonin and has basically gone from none to a full knock-out dose. My anger took me by surprise. After all, logically speaking, the kids were not in danger. The melatonin were mine, and confusion was easy as I take melatonin three times the dose I would normally prescribe.

Agreements, even small ones, are the base that strong unions are built upon. Parenting styles are heavily colored by our own childhood traumas. Alice Miller, researcher and author, once said, “Children are the garden of the parents’ unconscious.” Miller maintains that childhood traumas are messages stored in our unconscious and manifest when we become parents. If unresolved, we parent under the shadow of our childhood fears. Furthermore, these same fears bubble to the surface when we are in conflict with our partners, especially when the conflict deals with parenting differences.

It’s not all freshman bio seminars or online matchmakers—many of us originally connected with our spouses or partners in unusual ways that cover the spectrum from weird to whimsical. Here is just a sampling of the fun, fortuitous, costumed, and occasionally absurd ways that members of the GGMG community met ‘The One’ (or in some cases, The First One).

My senior year of college, I finally had a single room, but was in a dry spell. (My line was, “I’m celibate by choice. Someone else’s.”). A friend said he’d give me two beers if I got someone to sleep in my bed. Some cute random Swede was visiting my old roommate and so I told him I’d give him one of the beers if he slept in my bed. We ended up getting married a few years later. I was with him for 10 years (pre-kids)—longest one-night-stand ever!

My husband was my customer at the restaurant I worked at in college. He came in every week and sat in my section, even if it meant he royally screws up. Agreements, even small ones, are the base that strong unions are built upon. Parenting styles are heavily colored by our own childhood traumas. Alice Miller, researcher and author, once said, “Children are the garden of the parents’ unconscious.” Miller maintains that childhood traumas are messages stored in our unconscious and manifest when we become parents. If unresolved, we parent under the shadow of our childhood fears. Furthermore, these same fears bubble to the surface when we are in conflict with our partners, especially when the conflict deals with parenting differences.

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Gender is More Than Binary

As kids learn about the world, they naturally have questions. Some of these are complex, including questions about gender and identity. It’s important to note that gender is not binary: there are more than two genders. Many cultures across the world celebrate a variety of genders. Gender Spectrum out of Oakland offers a wealth of resources about gender (gender_spectrum.org).

Our engagement on all forms of social media has steadily increased. We now have over 1,300 followers on Instagram and nearly 6,000 on Facebook. Remember to like/follow us @ggmgirl (we’re on Twitter too) and post GGGMG event pictures with #ggmgirl.

NEW ARRIVALS

Sarah Woock Browne
Baby Lazlo Daniel
Gillian Bruce
Baby Jack Thomas
Geri H.
Baby Wilhelmina Oriana
Laura K.
Baby Margaret Elise
Catherine T.
Baby Ecorle Quang Thai

The Social Media Committee is thrilled to be supporting all GGGMG committees and volunteers by attending various GGGMG events (albeit behind our cameras and phones), and by documenting the hard work of our volunteers in real-time. If you’d like someone from the Social Media Committee to be present at your GGGMG event, give us a holler in advance, and we’ll do our best to make it happen.

We’d like to remind you 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 following:

- 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 GGGMG calendar, Eventbrite, etc.; and
- any images to be used.

We’ll make sure your post is taken care of, on the appropriate channel, within 72 hours of receipt.

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MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT

Do you love planning a good party? Know what makes an event amazing?

- The role includes partnering with brands, creating relationships with vendors and service providers who offer special pricing or discounts for GGGMG members.

- Our goal is to engage moms in the early stages of motherhood. If you have questions or want to learn more about volunteering for our committee, please contact us at member.support@ggmg.org.

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

To announce your new arrival in the magazine and for a chance to win a $50 gift card from Mini Anna Photography, fill out the form at tinyurl.com/ggmgnewarrivals.

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SOCIAL EVENTS

Volunteer with the Social Events Committee

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- The role includes partnering with brands, creating relationships with influencers, and helping with social media strategy, etc. Come put your amazing party planning skills to use with us!

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

The Membership Engagement Committee welcomes new members and helps them meet other moms face-to-face, turning online connections into real-life friendships. There is nothing quite as rewarding, bewildering, and isolating as being a new mom, but having the support and kinship of other mothers sharing the same experiences can make all the difference. We are excited to help you find that support system and build your mom village! We facilitate this by organizing three types of events each year: Newborn Playgroup Formation events for new moms, Mom & Toddler Playgroups, and Member Mixers. These events are posted on ggmg.org and on our Facebook page. Please RSVP for all events through ggmg.org.

- We also send out new member welcome emails and member perk emails to remind all members of their membership benefits, which are also listed in the membership perks section on ggmg.org. We have great partnerships with vendors and service providers who offer special pricing or discounts for GGGMG members.

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Neighborhood Groups

East of Divisadero (formerly N5)
Marina, Cole, Heald, Fisherman’s Wharf, Russian Hill, Nob Hill, North Beach, Christenst, Cathedral Hill, Filmore, Japantown, Western Addition and Hayes Valley, and surrounding neighborhoods.

West of Divisadero (formerly N2)
NoPa, Laurel Heights, Pacific Heights, Lower Pacific Heights, Presido, Richmond, Sea Cliff, and surrounding neighborhoods.

SOMA to Dogpatch (formerly N4)
Castro, South Beach, SoMa, Rincon Hill, Mission Bay, Potrero Hill, Dogpatch, and surrounding neighborhoods.

Cafe & Grill

Bernal Heights Stroller Walk
Visit the GGMG calendar to RSVP. Please select your designated meet-up locations so we can drive. Exact location will be provided to those who RSVP a couple days prior to the event.

Would you like to meet neighborhood moms, grab a coffee, and enjoy a stroller walk together?

GGMG Neighborhood Meetups Committee is organizing a stroller walk for you! There are multiple meetup locations throughout the city. Participants meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:30 a.m.*. Visit the GGMG calendar to RSVP. Please select your designated meetup locations so we can connect you with other moms in the neighborhood the day before the walk.

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

Bernal Stroller at Precita Park Cafe & Grill
Meeting Location: Precita Park Cafe & Grill, 500 Precita Ave.

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

Cote Valley/GGP Stroller Walk
Meeting Location: Flywheel, 672 Shafter St.

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

Lower Pac Heights Stroller Walk
Meeting Location: to Parkside, 2821 California St.

Marina Green Stroller Walk
Meeting Location: Peet’s Coffee, 2080 Chestnut St.

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

NOPA Stroller Walk
Meeting Location: The Mill, 736 Divisadero St.

*Noe Stroller Walk (second Monday of the month)
Meeting Location: Bernie’s Coffee, 3966 24th St.

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

Sunset/Golden Gate Park Stroller Walk
Meeting Location: Beany’s, 1307 9th Ave.

December Wine Night and Holiday Party
South of Golden Gate Park neighborhood is hosting our annual holiday party at the home of Dru Garcia, who is again graciously opening her home to us. Join us and meet some new moms in your neighborhood or catch up with old friends you haven’t seen in a while. GGMG will provide light refreshments, beverages, and of course, buddy! Feel free to bring a bottle to share if you like, but it’s not necessary. We will also be having our white elephant gift exchange; please bring a wrapped gift ($25 or under) if you want to participate. Participation is not required. In addition, GGMG members will be preparing tote bags to support the Project Night Night drive. Exact location will be provided to those who RSVP a couple days prior to the event.

Details provided to registrants.

Coffee + Stroller Walks

Cortland Heights, Parkside, Inner South of Glen Park & Bernal (formerly N7)

to us. Join us and meet some new moms in your neighborhood or catch up with old friends you haven’t seen in a while. GGMG will provide light refreshments, beverages, and of course, buddy! Feel free to bring a bottle to share if you like, but it’s not necessary. We will also be having our white elephant gift exchange; please bring a wrapped gift ($25 or under) if you want to participate. Participation is not required. In addition, GGMG members will be preparing tote bags to support the Project Night Night drive. Exact location will be provided to those who RSVP a couple days prior to the event.

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Cortland Heights, Parkside, Inner South of Glen Park & Bernal (formerly N7)
GGMG EVENTS

PARTNERSHIPS

Playdates at Recess: GGMG members get free access to Recess Collective’s play space with pre-registration, on Thursdays from 1:30-3:30 pm (limited to 6 members per day).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>COST</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Thursday</td>
<td>130 p.m. to 3:30 p.m</td>
<td>Recess Collective, 2226 Taraval St</td>
<td>FREE</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Saturday Playdate at Peekadoodle: Free Saturday playdate for GGMG members only at Peekadoodle’s new 2500 sq. foot outdoor play area, which includes a sandbox and other interactive play areas. For ages 0-5 years.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, December 7</td>
<td>9 a.m. to noon</td>
<td>Peekadoodle, 4228 Geary Blvd</td>
<td>FREE</td>
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KIDS ACTIVITIES

Holiday Cookie Decorating at Macy’s Union Square: Calling all mini chefs! The Kids Activities committee is hosting a holiday cookie decorating event at Macy’s in Union Square. We will provide pre-made cookies and all the decorating accessories. There will also be light refreshments and a photo booth. Please join us for this special holiday event and create your one-of-a-kind festive cookie creations with sprinkles, icing, and all the bells and trim! This event is limited, so please be sure to RSVP to reserve your spot.

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<tr>
<td>Sunday, December 8</td>
<td>10 a.m. to noon</td>
<td>Macy’s Union Square</td>
<td>FREE but please register at ggmg.org</td>
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</table>

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Diversity & Inclusion

LGBTQ+ Playgroups - Toddle with Me: Music & Movement Class: This music and movement class for LGBTQ+ parents/caregivers with toddlers promotes children’s overall development. Using creative physical expression, these classes promote gross and fine motor skill development, coordination and balance, as well as early literacy, pre-math, and social-emotional skills. Participating families will receive two free passes to the playspace, and can also take advantage of In-At-Chirp Child Care courtesy of OCF!

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<tr>
<td>Friday, December 6</td>
<td>9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Recess Collective, 2226 Taraval St</td>
<td>FREE</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Drop-In Support for LGBTQ+ Parents: Enjoy a meal with your kids and other LGBTQ+ families, then parents and caregivers break off for facilitated discussions about family and child-rearing issues with their peers. This monthly group is held the 4th Tuesday at Our Family Coalition. 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.

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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 28, 2020</td>
<td>6 p.m. to 8 p.m.</td>
<td>Our Family Coalition’s Main Office, 1385 Mission St, Suite 340</td>
<td>FREE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

GGMG Volunteer Project: Ages 4 and Up at the Food Bank: Join GGMG families and their kids 4 and up in a fun morning of giving back to the community. Please note that the food bank requires one parent per child 10 and under. We will be either sorting fruit (or vegetables) or packing food to give to various community organizations.

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<tr>
<td>Sunday, December 15</td>
<td>9 a.m. to 11 a.m.</td>
<td>SF-Marin Food Bank, 900 Pennsylvania Ave.</td>
<td>FREE but please register at ggmg.org</td>
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My dad passed away a few months ago, after suffering a bad fall and breaking his neck. He had been facing a long, painful recovery when he passed suddenly, sparing himself months in a rehab facility and the prolonged anguish of his family. Our family’s mourning was tinged with a bittersweet relief. We began losing him more than five years ago when Alzheimer’s began taking over his brain. He was the same person, and yet he was not. As I’ve mourned the passing of my dad, I’ve sometimes wondered, which dad do I miss? The dad in my memories, or the dad that could have been, had he lived out his life with his memory intact?

Before he descended into dementia, he granted me power of attorney. It was all I could do to manage his care during those long years. Everything seemed like an emergency, be it a nighttime call from his memory care facility or one of his doctors calling to discuss a change in his medication. I had little free time outside of work and raising my infant son, so that time spent on my dad got whittled down to business tasks only, like taking him to doctor appointments or having conferences with his care team. There weren’t many opportunities to simply hang out together.

My dad slowly lost his cognitive faculties, starting with short-term memory loss. By the end, he still recognized me, but his brain blurred the lines between our family—my mom and sisters—and his parents and siblings. Alzheimer’s had also stripped away my dad’s social filters, and his behavior became more childlike—he had difficulty understanding why he had to do routine chores like going to the doctor and tending to personal hygiene, and as a result, he would often get angry or pitch a temper tantrum. Luckily, I’d been reading up on dealing with toddler tantrums. Who knew that the same tactics prescribed for a 3-year-old can work just as well with an 80-year-old?

By the time he died, it had been several years since I’d known the dad I grew up with. He was a nerdy engineer who thought nothing of wearing socks with sandals and always sported a pocket protector. He drafted in his home office while listening to classical music, saved money by fixing our cars in the driveway, and was always ready with a supply of “dad jokes.” He was also a fervent lover of nature who took us on road trips to national parks and the California seaside whenever he could. He would shout to us with childlike excitement when he spotted a sea otter along the Monterey coast, or a crab hiding in a tidepool, or a small waterfall in Yosemite Valley. These are the memories that have come flooding back to me as I’ve gone through photos for the memorial service, as I’ve read over old emails I printed out 20 years ago, or as I’ve reminisced with my sisters.

With him gone, I’ve found the mental space to process the ordeal of the last several years. I’ve finally had a moment to remember the dad he was for so many years, which got obscured while I was consumed with the dad he became as he aged.

A couple months before he died, I took him to a doctor appointment. He walked slowly and with a walker. As we sat in the waiting room, he asked me the same questions a few times, which was normal by then. He didn’t remember that I was married or that I had two children. When the nurse called us in, he shuffled slowly, pausing every few seconds to look at his surroundings. I walked ahead of him and urged him on. It was not unlike walking with my 2-year-old daughter or 5-year-old son. Once in the room, he sat quietly and asked more questions, sometimes repeating them. I looked at him with worry, wondering if he’d allow the medical staff to examine him. A nurse came in and asked him to hold out his arm so she could take a blood sample. Without missing a beat, he looked her straight in the eye, held out his hand, and said, “That’ll be FIVE DOLLARS, please.” We all laughed. My old dad was in there after all.

“Who knew that the same tactics prescribed for a 3-year-old can work just as well with an 80-year-old?”

Jenny is a scientist, editor, and a reluctant member of the Sandwich Generation.
Golden Gate Mothers Group  
P.O. Box 475866  
San Francisco, CA 94147

statement of purpose:  
nurture ourselves, our children,  
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