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magazine



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LETTER FROM
THE EDITOR:

The Craze Phase

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is a Cole Valley mom to three and not immune to being swept up by the occasional fad herself (ask about her unused Peloton).

My son came home from middle school recently and uttered the words every parent dreads: “I want a Stanley cup.” I groaned. My kid is quirky and offbeat. He’s not into sports, fashion, or music. His hobbies are unique: public transit systems, vintage Muni uniforms, and airplane livery. I didn’t expect him to get caught up in the conspicuous-hydration craze. Yet I found myself fending off endless pleas until I finally

caved two weeks later, forking over \$40 for a dark green piece of plastic that he immediately started parading around in front of his unimpressed siblings. Less than a week later, he requested a second one, informing me that some of his peers had as many as 20. Meanwhile, I’d noticed that his first cup was spending more and more time in his locker.

I wrestled with my response. Had I done the right thing by giving in? On the one hand, I remembered being swept up in numerous fads at his age. To the dismay of my mother, I carried around those massive sugary jawbreakers in the early ’90s for many months, placing them conspicuously on my middle school desks until the school administration (rightfully) banned them. I remember crying to my mom for slap bracelets, even as rumors swirled of severed wrists and decapitations. I felt such strong relief when she’d occasionally grant me a superfluous purchase, my social insecurity quelled for a few moments, overwritten by a sense of belonging. But were these purchases crutches, masking my difficulty in building

self-confidence and self-esteem, harming my ability to create my unique sense of self? As my finger hovered over the “purchase now” button for the next Stanley my son had requested (using a birthday gift card), I wondered if I might be doing him more harm than good, fostering entitlement and conformity rather than instilling financial responsibility and individuality. Or was I overthinking this? Is getting swept up in fads simply a right of passage for tweens?

Our authors in this issue get caught up in what we’re getting caught up in these days, and take a level-headed approach in their discussions. Sasha Fahimi addresses preventative medicine trends, from weight-loss drugs to

“Is getting swept up in fads simply a right of passage for tweens?”

body-fat scans, and draws on scientific research to show how to best harness good health. H.B. Terrell addresses aging on the surface, exploring how the skincare industry is increasingly drawing in teens and tweens with its antiaging-urgency messages, with sometimes harmful consequences. And Yuliya Patsay explores the long history of parenting trends and explains why one of the newest ones, gentle parenting, may have some benefits worth considering.

I’m still not sure if I’m doing my son a disservice in feeding his Stanley fanaticism. But I feel better knowing that I can continue to foster his deep passions for aviation and urban transit, which are so fundamentally important to his growing sense of self, and hopefully these demands to be on-trend are fleeting. I must remember that he’s in the driver’s seat of his life, and though I may not love some of his pit stops along the way, I need to trust that the destination will be worth it.

LETTER FROM
THE BOARD:

Creating Connections

By Connie Lin



Connie is a mom to two kids and lives in Forest Hill Extension with her family.

My 10-year-old is at the perfect age where she’s both aware of the world and just starting to express her own opinions on what’s hot in pop culture trends. It’s been incredibly fun taking her to her first big concert, seeing the awe and excitement on her face as Ed Sheeran came out, and singing and dancing together to his songs. Just as I thought I couldn’t hear Ed sing another lyric, we’ve moved on to Taylor Swift and

her extensive and thankfully wide variety of songs. My daughter has enjoyed picking out just the right set of friendship bracelets to wear to reflect her feelings each day.

To me, this is even better than the toddler years, when my kids’ choices of favorite shows changed frequently, spanning from *Daniel Tiger* to *PJ Masks* to *Oceanauts* to *Paw Patrol* to *Gabby’s Dollhouse* to *My Little Pony*. It was sometimes disappointing to find out that their once favorite show was no longer top of the heap, after I had already invested in getting them a Paw Patrol playset for the next big holiday.

On the plus side, I’ve found that getting to watch, act out, and talk about their favorite shows and characters with their friends helps my kids build connections with classmates. My son and his friends love playing and talking about *Roblox* game strategies and the latest shiny Pokemon they’ve captured on *Pokemon Go*. I appreciate that the kids and I occasionally get to sit down together to chuckle over episodes of *Bluey*, too.

One of the best ways to feel connected to other moms is our GGGM forums. Parenting can be fun yet frustrating, and finding your village can be hard. Our online forums exist to make our San Francisco mom community a little smaller and cozier, whether you’re taking a quick peek in the afternoon or browsing through threads late at night during yet another feeding session. The stories you share in your posts and comments mean a lot to me and many other GGGM members; thanks for your engagement and thoughtful, supportive words. And if you’d like to meet more moms in person, come to our Monthly Moms Happy Hours; you can find the latest date on our online monthly calendar.

“Parenting can be fun yet frustrating, and finding your village can be hard.”

If you’d like to help to organize events or volunteer with GGGM, we would love to have you. We are looking for a wide variety of help—from board directors and committee chairs to volunteers across communications, marketing, magazine, and recruiting and beyond. Please email recruiting@ggmg.org to learn more.

See you online on our GGGM forums and at our upcoming events!

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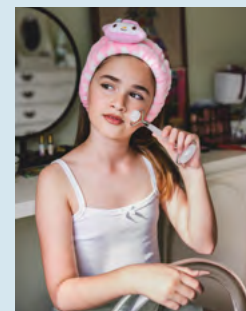
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This issue made possible by: Birthday parties and houseguests; Rattling the cup and harvesting change from the couch cushions to fund our school PTA; Stress urinary incontinence; Getting a new car after driving 263k miles with my old car.

COVER OUTTAKES



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

Cover photo by Mini Anna Photography
Model: Sophia (9)

Mother's Day

By Sonya Abrams

Mother's Day doesn't have to mean burnt toast served by your kindergartener in bed or a disappointed flick of the eyes toward your spouse for failing to plan anything again. This year, take charge of your own happiness and celebrate yourself on Sunday, May 12 (really, we should celebrate ourselves every day, but let's start small). Here are some ideas of special Bay Area Mother's Day events to get you started.

Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast West Point Inn, Mill Valley

The West Point Inn is perched on the side of Mt. Tamalpais and features rustic accommodations and stunning views of the entire Bay Area. It hosts several pancake fundraisers throughout the year, the most popular of which falls on Mother's Day, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the cost of \$13 per adult and \$8 per child. Note that the Inn is only accessible by foot or on mountain/hybrid bikes, with hikes departing from a variety of locations, the shortest and easiest being a 2-mile gentle path leaving from Pantoll Station. It's appropriate for most children.

Golden Gate Park Band's Free Symphony in the Park

Bring a picnic and enjoy a free concert starting at 1 p.m. and lasting 70 to 90 minutes at the Music Concourse in Golden Gate Park. The park hosts 25 free Sunday concerts throughout the year, and on Mother's Day, Craig McKenzie will lead a program in honor of mothers everywhere.

Mother's Day Run and Family Fun Day Alameda

Want to combine family time with fitness and fun? Sign up for the Mother's Day Run from 9 a.m. to noon, which is free for children ages 12 and under but \$65 for adults. Enjoy face painting, food and drink for purchase, yoga, and a locally curated swag bag. Moms who participate in the 5k will be rewarded with mimosas, snacks, and a flower.

Mother's Day Activities at the Ferry Building San Francisco

Home to some of the most fabulous fare and fantastic food in the city, the Ferry Building makes an excellent Mother's Day destination. Gott's Roadside is a perennial favorite for burgers and fries, or treat yourself to oysters at Hog Island (don't worry, there's fish and chips for fussier palates). Then wander over to the central Marketplace for the Ferry Family Day, where from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. there will be free gift-making for mothers and mother figures. Create pop-up cards, jewelry, and flower crafts to add some celebratory art to your special day.



Sonya is a Cole Valley-based mom to three small humans, two small cats, and one very large dog.

The Probiotic Craze: Not As Crazy As You May Think

By Brian Feeley, MD, and Nirav Pandya, MD

What started as a way to improve gut health has become a nearly \$88 billion industry that makes broad claims about the power of probiotics. Are they valid? It depends on the claim—and on your read of the science behind it all.

The basics

The microbiome is defined as all the various cells including bacteria and viruses that inhabit the human body. In the gut alone, the microbiome is crowded (10 trillion cells) and diverse (at least 5,000 species named so far). The science is extremely new.

Several studies have shown that alterations in the gut microbiome lead not only to short-term problems, such as diarrhea, but also more long-term clinical consequences. For example, some studies suggest that taking antibiotics can alter the patterns of gut microbiota and, when given in infancy and childhood, may shift the bacterial profile towards one that promotes obesity, metabolic abnormalities, and/or autoimmune diseases when children are older. However, many of these studies are extrapolations from animals having received high doses of antibiotics from a young age.

Our diet seems to be the most important regulator of bacteria in the gut. Fiber is key for promoting fermentation and ensuring a diverse microbiome. That's why keeping a healthy diet seems to be vital for maintaining a healthy biome. A more traditional Western diet can lead to intestinal wall

damage and a loss of microbiome diversity, which is thought to lead to an overall increase in circulatory inflammation, in turn resulting in increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, and some neurologic conditions. Karen Kim, MD, a gastroenterologist at Stanford, says, "What we do know, however, is that a diet rich in fiber (fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains) is what fosters a more diverse and healthier gut microbiome. We also see that people who are very physically active have a more diverse microbiome."

Probiotics and gut health

Probiotics are found in several forms of food, including yogurt, kimchi, and kombucha. The idea behind probiotics is that we can replace the "bad" or "depleted" bacteria with

"good" bacteria. This line of thinking has several challenges. First, we haven't determined what the "good" and "bad" bacteria are. Bacteria such as *E. coli* and *enterococcus* live in small numbers in the gut in healthy humans, so it may be that you need the diversity of the microbiome more than the

numbers themselves. Second, the probiotics on the market are sold as supplements, which are not regulated by the FDA. In general, it is thought that probiotics may have some limited effect in rebuilding the microbiome following treatments such as prolonged antibiotic therapies, but likely aren't necessary for maintaining a healthy gut. Even when there's a need to rebuild a diverse gut biome community, a regular healthy diet may work equally as well, and possibly even better.

The craze

Each organ system in our body has a strong influence on what and how the other systems are doing. That is why the concept that the microbiome can influence

all health outcomes has gained popularity with the general public and within the scientific community. Probiotics have been suggested to help far beyond the gut, with studies suggesting improvements in ADHD symptoms, depression, food allergies, and even Alzheimer's disease. While many studies show a link between your gut microbiome and your mental health, the role of taking additional probiotics has not been proven.

There is some early evidence that probiotics along with an ADHD medication works better

than medication alone, at least in short-term studies. Researchers think that having the right mix of gut bacteria keeps your overall level of circulating inflammation low, leading to proper brain development and maintenance of healthy levels of chemicals within the brain. And probiotics may help medications achieve better efficacy in treatments for ADHD.

Brian Feeley, M.D., is the Chief of the Sports Medicine Service at UCSF. He has five children, four in San Francisco schools and one at UCLA. Nirav Pandya, M.D., is the Chief of the Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery Service at UCSF and is a father to two children in Oakland. You can find them on Twitter or listen to their podcast, 6-8 Weeks: Perspectives on Sports Medicine.



"Is a healthy diet (high fiber, vegetables) just as good as probiotic supplements? We don't know."

Fitness Fads

With Cristian Luecke, Certified Personal Trainer



Cristian has worked as a personal trainer for 14 years, specializing in strength, physique, and pain-free movement. A San Francisco native educated at the National Academy of Sports Medicine, he served as a wildland firefighter before earning his certification as a personal trainer. Cristian pushes his clients and himself to thrive in their bodies, not just survive. Learn more at cristianlueckefitness.com.

Lots of powders and potions claim to improve fitness. Which ones have been proven to work?

Navigating supplements can be daunting. Protein and creatine have been well studied and help with recovery. When we work out, we stress our bodies, making tiny micro tears in the muscle fibers. We need protein to build strength and muscle in the recovery process. Most people are not getting enough protein. My rule of thumb is to consume 1 gram per 1 pound of skeletal muscle mass for maintaining muscle mass and 1.5 to 2 grams if you're trying to gain muscle mass. There are scans and tools to figure out your skeletal muscle mass, which is a bit lower than your weight.

Some products are marketed as fat burners. These tend to be caffeine pills, and though caffeine can provide a slight raise in metabolism, it's not enough to get you fit. Learning proper nutrition and raising your BMR (Base Metabolic Rate) by putting on lean muscle mass is the best way to create lasting body fat change.

There are many trendy class and studio chains that have popped up—Bar Method, Barry's Boot Camp, CrossFit, etc. Which should you choose for which kind of result?

Finding a class, a gym, or movement hobby that you enjoy is essential to our health and well-being. Instead of listing the pros and cons of each (ultimately, most classes focus on cardio-style workouts), have an open mind and try different ones until you find one that motivates you. Since a teacher oversees so many students, it is prudent to learn how to do the movements on your own or with a trainer to make sure your form is perfect. CrossFit is one of the more dangerous

workouts and needs to be done with perfect form in order to avoid injury. If you're considering it, hire a trainer who is focused on form.

What is the most effective way to lose weight and keep it off?

A comprehensive nutrition, exercise, and rest plan and tracking your macros (carbs, fat, and protein intake) is always the best plan. Shoot for a six-month goal. You should feel the workouts never get "easy." Your goal is to raise the resting BMR in order to burn the most calories at rest by building lean muscle so that even on your rest days your body is blasting through calories. Keep your protein up, stay hydrated, and feel strong.

Is there any truth to the idea that cold plunges are good for mental and physical health?

A cold plunge is a fully immersive plunge into extremely cold water. The cold shocks the body into decreased metabolic activity and constricts blood vessels, which may help reduce short-term inflammation, leading to less muscle soreness and

quicker performance recovery. However, recent studies have also shown that cold plunges can actually inhibit muscle gain, as the cold water keeps nutrient-loaded blood from getting to the muscle fibers.

The shock to the system in unhealthy people can cause cardiac arrest as well. There are many better recovery tools, the main one being sleep, when your body truly focuses on recovery and not survival.

For mental health, people may find cold plunges release adrenaline and challenge them in a new way. If it makes you feel good, then go for it. Just don't do it right after a workout. And remember that cold showers do not count as a cold plunge. If you gain the same mental fulfillment from this, then a cold shower is your best option.

What's the biggest mistake you see people make when they're starting a fitness routine?

Most people start too hard and too fast without a plan for longevity and burn out. Fitness is a lifestyle. It's a marathon, and in order to be as healthy as we can be for as long as we can be, we have to be intentional. Make a plan realistic to you—for example, most people can't work out six days a week, so plan for two. Make your nutrition program around this, get sleep, and do things that you enjoy. Working out should be inspiring, fun, and a privilege. If it feels like a chore, you are doing it wrong.

“Working out should be inspiring, fun, and a privilege.”

Community Engagement and Motherhood

With Luke's Local Executive Chef Nicolette Manescalchi



Nicolette was born in San Diego. After graduating college, she attended The Art Institutes International Minnesota, where she earned her culinary degree as well as her Level 2 Sommelier Certificate from the International Sommelier Guild. After 5 years with A16 in San Francisco, Nicolette opened Le Marais Bistro. Missing the cuisine of Southern Italy, she returned to A16 a year later and became the Executive Chef of both A16 restaurants and the catering department. Nicolette started at Luke's Local in January 2022 as Executive Chef and resides in San Francisco with her husband, Nick, and their two sons.

What is a good way to get kids involved with the cooking process while not totally derailing dinner?

It can be challenging to get "help" from your kids in the kitchen. When they are small they can do tasks like picking herbs and shelling beans. I also like to teach knife skills at a young age. I'll hold the knife with my 3-year-old and he loves helping chop. My 8-year-old has his own kid-sized knife and can cut simple things all on his own like fruit and veggies when he wants them. It's also a good opportunity to teach the danger and respect of the tool and it's important to know how to use it. I find they listen pretty well when they know it can be dangerous.

What are some of the best ways to save time and money in meal preparation?

I love to prep ahead and freeze when I have time. The freezer is your friend! Both my kids love beans so I'll cook a whole pound that's seasoned and ready to go and then freeze it in one-cup containers that I can thaw whenever and make quick dinners like soup, burritos, quesadillas, rice and beans. This is also helpful with the picky eaters as you can make one item many different ways. I've also experienced pickiness with meat-eating in both kids, so having plant-based proteins is helpful. My older son will eat an egg at every meal if he could. I also like to buy meat and seafood ahead of time and freeze it in family portion sizes. As long as it doesn't sit in the freezer for too long, the quality is just like fresh. Just pull it the night before you want to use it and let it thaw in the fridge until you're ready to cook it the next day.

Another thing I love to do to avoid waste is save uneaten cut fruit and veggies and freeze them in a quart ziplock bag. When the bag is full, I pull it out and add almond milk or yogurt or juice and make a smoothie!

Share one go-to recipe that your whole family loves.

Pasta! My favorite brands are Granoro (this is also what we use for our prepared foods at Luke's Local) and Rustichella d'Abruzzo. They retain their al dente bite well when cooked and the texture is more rustic. Pasta is easy to modify for picky eaters. If I'm in a rush, I just sweat tomato paste in olive oil and then toss in the cooked pasta and a scoop of the pasta water to make a super easy sauce for the kids. Top it with some parm and serve a simple salad with greens, lemon juice, and EVOO on the side and you're set. For the adults, you can do the same but add in fun things like tinned fish or olives. In the summer it's super easy because you can throw in fresh tomatoes and veggies, too.

When we're shopping for fresh fish and butchery items, what should we look for to ensure we're getting safe, high-quality products?

Everything should smell and look fresh. Fish should smell clean and be bright in color. Same goes for meat. It is always important to know where your fish and meat are coming from. The staff should be able to tell you which farm every meat product is from and what location every fish item is from and what purveyor it's coming from. If they can answer all these questions, you know it is a product that has been raised and treated with respect. Same goes for cured meats and prepared items like sausage. I only eat meat and seafood if I know the source. It's better for the environment, better for the animals, better for the farmers, and better for our families!



Does the Institution of Marriage Need a Recall?

By Gail Cornwall

This American Ex-Wife: How I Ended My Marriage and Started My Life

I don't know Lyz Lenz, and I promise I'm not reviewing her book because it quotes me! I found out about that fact only after I'd pre-ordered this engaging read about a woman who realized, "I could be successful or I could be married."

Lenz reminds me of Lara Bazelon when she writes, "I don't have to win a Nobel Prize or be a heart surgeon for my life, my ambition, and my happiness to be worth fighting for." She describes how those things were all dulled inside a union marked by the "commonplace horror" and "everyday indignities" of an unequal division of domestic labor and childcare. Lenz tried to save her marriage anyway: "I was holding on so tightly to what I had been told was good and right, I could barely breathe." But when she stopped trying, clarity descended. Lenz concluded: "the better thing I wanted did exist, and it was me."

On the other side of divorce, Lenz writes, "I waited to be destroyed by the lusts of the flesh, like my Evangelical childhood promised, but instead my sins rebuilt me."

She joined a "whisper network of women who'd broken their lives apart and found freedom and happiness." That explains why Lenz crafted a book that is "not gentle divorce apologetics but a full-throated argument in favor of it."

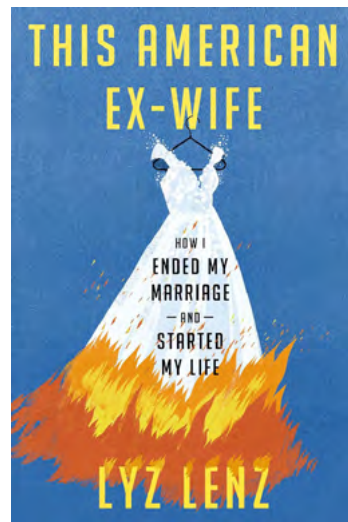
"[E]ven if we go with the low 40 percent number for the likelihood that a marriage will fail, if 40 percent of Honda CR-Vs had engine failures, Honda would issue a recall," Lenz writes with her characteristic combo of wit and sass. And yet, culture and government continue to "[f]orce people into marriage in the name of cutting the social safety net...We need women wedded to their romantic partnerships so much that they'll quit their jobs and abandon their dreams so that men can pursue theirs." Once they're wed, "entire industries... show women how to ask their husbands to do more cooking

and cleaning...training a grown man like a horse." But women shouldn't have to beg, and a lot of the time it doesn't help when they do. For Lenz, help "only came when things were dire," and, she writes, "I didn't need help; I needed to not carry it all." Lenz acknowledges that individual women can thrive within marriage, but says, "[T]he system itself will always subsume the female partner." So "who does telling couples that divorce is the easy way out benefit? It benefits the people who don't do the work."

With similar verve, Lenz takes on surname changes, the post-divorce revenge body, and the heart-rending possibility that maybe we're the problem: "Perhaps spending time with me was like being scrubbed with a Brillo pad...Maybe if I was calmer, smiled more, contradicted less?" I felt that line in my bones. And I felt like I walked alongside Lenz as she, in her words, "ended up very drunk on a Tuesday night, with my mom friend Kristie at Taste of Cedar Rapids."

"[W]e can have it all. So many women have. We just have to find another pathway to get there," Lenz writes. And though she didn't set out to do so, her book illuminates that pathway in the negative, like a shadow puppet show, for folks who want to save their marriag-

es. Don't do what her husband did; don't tolerate what she tolerated. For those who conclude, like Lenz, that staying would be impossible without sacrificing themselves on the nuptial altar, she offers a hopeful note, even as she sounds the death knell for marriage: "Love and relationships, those are worth keeping. Home and family are worth cherishing. But those things can be accomplished successfully outside of the nuclear unit of husband and wife."



“[E]ven if we go with the low 40 percent number for the likelihood that a marriage will fail, if 40 percent of Honda CR-Vs had engine failures, Honda would issue a recall.”

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 or by finding her on Facebook and Twitter.

Craze

By Laure Latham

The good thing about crazy books is that they are inherently happy. Touching a spiky porcupine without pain? Done. Flying to the moon at bedtime? Done. Dreaming about crazy numbers of sibling playmates? Done. Your little ones will no doubt love the fun themes in these books, but beware—you might end up with ice cream for breakfast.



Never Touch a Porcupine

Written by Rosie Greening, illustrated by Stuart Lynch

In real life, it would be crazy to ask a child to touch a porcupine. However, in this adorable board book, small hands are invited to touch the porcupine on every page. If your little ones love textures and patterns, this book will delight them. Parents, on the other hand, will have fun with the silly rhyming text. **Ages: 1 to 3 years**



Little Sisters

Written and illustrated by Tomo Miura

What would life be like with a younger sibling? A young girl daydreams about having a little sister to share life with—playing together, jumping together, and eating together. Magically, more little sisters start appearing along the pages and then fade away gradually until the little girl is alone again. This time, however, she finds joy in her family as it is. **Ages: 2 to 5 years**



Go-Go Guys

Written and illustrated by Rowboat Watkins

You thought that bedtime was challenging? Try the Go-Go Guys for real bedtime craziness. The Go-Go Guys never sleep and their Go-Go brains are always going "Beep! Beep! Beep!"

Counting sheep won't do the trick either, as the sheep free the kids from their room at bedtime. Not only that, but in a Transformers-level maneuver, the house becomes a rocket ship, heading for the moon. Parents, behold the crazy bedtime book. Children, you'll love this!

Ages: 3 to 7 years

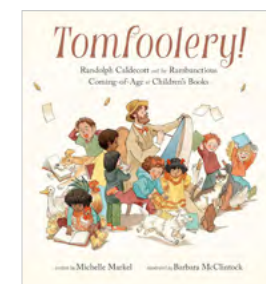


Ice Cream Everywhere: Sweet Stories from Around the World

Written by Judy Campbell-Smith, illustrated by Lucy Semple

This book is a celebration of frozen treats around the world, an icy cultural tour of different cultures. No flavors are off the map—quite literally, that is, as *Ice Cream Everywhere* includes a good deal of culinary

geography. Before you consider offering ice cream for breakfast to your little ones (a valid option in the book), you can discover where and why someone might have hazelnut gelato served in a warm brioche, or mango-flavored kulfi. If it all sounds very appetizing, there's always a fun ice cream shop in your neighborhood—and this book—to expand your ice cream horizons. **Ages: 4 to 7 years**



Tomfoolery! Randolph Caldecott and the Rambunctious Coming-of-Age of Children's Books

Written by Michelle Markel, illustrated by Barbara McClintock

Randolph Caldecott was a 19th-century illustrator and the reason he's so relevant today is that he redefined the idea of fun in illustrated books. If you have ever read a Caldecott Winner book, you will know that this prestigious prize honors "distinguished illustrations in a picture book and for excellence of pictorial presentation for children." This may seem sedate at best, but the life of Randolph Caldecott was a celebration of fun, joy, and energy in children's books. Learn how a former banker turned boring, bland books into fun reads. **Ages: 6 to 10 years**

Laure writes on marathon swimming, healthy living, and adventure travel at Frog Mom (frogmom.com), and is the author of Best Hikes with Kids: San Francisco Bay Area. She is the founder of a tech startup and lives with her teenage girls in London. She swam the English Channel in 2023. You can find her on social media @frogmomblog.

The Art of Aging Well...for Tweens

Are we complicit in fostering a culture where our kids seek “preventative” antiaging potions before they even become adults? How might we turn back the clock on ageism and beat the cosmetics industry at their own game?

By H.B. Terrell



My first foray into cosmetics was accidentally destroying my mom’s lipstick as a second grader. Today, 10-year olds are asking for antiaging products, thanks to the beauty industrial complex, helped along by “skinfluencers,” the Sephora Kids of TikTok, contemporary celebrity media gossip, and our internalized beliefs about aging.

Beauty is the beast

Considering the stressors of modern life—whether it’s overscheduled down time, school security lockdowns, digital and IRL peer pressure, body insecurities, grades, texts from parents, texts from friends (and frenemies), juggling multiple social media accounts, and so much more, it’s no wonder that kids look for ways to control their environment. “This is what it’s like to be 13 today, in a world that can’t stop talking about the dire state of your future,” writes Jessica Bennett for *The New York Times*.

Meanwhile, the beauty industry is poised to earn \$483 billion in 2024. Capitalism dictates that the industry can’t simply maintain profit margins—they must increase their customer base in perpetuity. First, they brought women into the fold. Then, they entangled men. Now they’re coming for our children. If it sounds like the plot of a horror film, that’s not far off.

The state of skin

Skin is the immune system’s first line of defense via its microbiome, which consists of one trillion microorganisms living in and on the skin. Skincare products can damage the skin barrier at any age, making users prone to dryness, oiliness, dermatitis, and inflammatory conditions like acne and eczema. But, adult products that tout

antiaging, tightening, wrinkle-reducing, brightening, and firming results pose a special danger for young adults, whose skin is yet to form the protective barrier necessary to handle harsh chemicals. When using antiaging products, kids can develop allergies, worsen hormonal acne, and suffer solar dermatitis, which significantly increases the risk of melanoma later in life for those who experience even one teenage sunburn.

Board-certified dermatologist Jayden Galamgam, M.D., has seen a recent uptick

in teens coming to his practice with red, scaly, itchy rashes after exposure to skincare ingredients they develop allergies to. “Teens and tweens may not necessarily need anything for their skin,” says dermatologist Marisa Garschick, adding that for most, “healthy skin can be achieved by simply using a gentle cleanser, moisturizer, and sunscreen.”

Sephora kids

The New York Times reports that seeing a bottled-up beauty product—just the packaging—is enough “to remind consumers of their own shortcomings” and “make them view themselves more negatively.” The antiaging craze is not limited to girls, though it primarily affects them. Parents report that their boys are using moisturizers, exfoliating creams, and essential oils marketed to prevent hair loss. “So much of our identity is tied up in the products that we use, and the ways that we use them,” explains Jessica Delfino, beauty journalist and writer of *The Unpublishable* newsletter. “The rituals we develop, using these products—it becomes an almost religious experience, like an experience of self-discovery.”

But when self-discovery and experimentation morph into an obsession with fixing perceived flaws, caregivers are right to worry. Constant comparison can set kids on a path to becoming consumed with appearance and can lead to anxiety about their looks.

Michelle Wong, a science educator who debunks skincare myths and misinformation spread on social media, says skinfluencers aren’t necessarily targeting

children, but kids are consuming their content anyway. The medical community is concerned about young people relying on unqualified influencers whose economic impetus for promoting a product in sponsored advertorials or step-by-step #GRWM (Get Ready With Me) videos is often obscured.

“Preventative” antiaging is a perfect

“Give children a safe space to express thoughts, feelings, and concerns. Affirm that it’s normal to have concerns about appearance at their age, but it’s important to make informed decisions.”

vehicle for companies to prey on kids’ insecurities. “There’s no way of knowing what you’d have looked like if you hadn’t used the products,” says journalist Holly Thomas, “but you can certainly assume you’d look worse if you stopped.”

Age of innocence, age of experience

Parents should also examine how they might be complicit in this indoctrination to ageism. A dad lamenting that his high school crush has “gotten old” or a mom judging a celebrity for “getting work done” can reinforce the messages kids get from influencers and the broader culture about the shame of growing older. As one teen skincare brand declares, “Getting old is getting old.” Adults can be victims and perpetrators of a culture that says women need to work at their appearance to make it acceptable. But if a parent’s running commentary and self-loathing can fuel their child’s, how much more might acceptance of and reverence for the aging body insulate a child from the effects of a toxic beauty culture?

“When we speak about beauty, value, and worth, it should match our actions,” says Suzanne Alderson, founder of Parenting Mental Health. She suggests avoiding self-critical comments like, “Ugh, look at these crow’s feet.” Instead, she says, try to name and claim signs of aging: “These wrinkles around my mouth are from all the laughing we do together!” When children see that their caregivers celebrate themselves as perfect in their so-called imperfection, children are more likely to adopt this worldview as well.

Responsive parenting: awareness

Therapists say that conversations about how beauty doesn’t equate to value should start well before a child brings it up. Using toys or popular characters to explore visual differences opens communication and can help younger kids begin to think about why they like what they like. When talking about people or characters, we can avoid discussing their appearance and focus on actions.

Tish Taylor, licensed school psychologist, suggests reminding tweens

that although influencers and celebrities may want to help others, they also want views, so their strongest motivation might be selling products. At the same time, algorithms work by pushing certain kinds of content at them on social media, all with the intent of selling products without vetting what might be actively bad for them.

Board-certified pediatric dermatologist Carol Cheng tells her teen patients, “Most online pictures are curated with the heavy aid of technology, and it would be impossible for most of us to replicate this look in real life.” Tech-fluent parents might explore this with teens by letting them watch what happens while editing a basic image with reshaping, filters, and brightness.

“One of the most important things to emphasize,” says Garschick, “is that there is no such thing as perfect skin. When committing to a skincare routine, the goal should be healthy skin, not ‘perfect’ skin.”

Reflection: Narcissus at rest

“The main caregiver is incredibly influential up to the tween years,” says Jenna Vyas-Lee, a clinical psychologist and co-founder of mental health clinic Kove. Interrogating our own assumptions helps us have clear, meaningful discussions with our children, supporting a positive first exposure to skincare, rather than a continuation of what can be a parent’s personal, complicated relationship with our own skin. To assess our beliefs about aging, we first need to become aware of them. Psychologists who specialize in aging suggest the following:

- Start a practice of ageism journaling,



Photo by Mini Anna Photography

Old enough

If we're shocked that our children are buying into ageist beauty standards, we shouldn't be. After all, they are steeped in a culture in which looking your age while being female can tank your career, where the elderly are considered obsolete and are stigmatized for their physical limitations rather than lauded for the experience gained throughout their long lives, where young is the only valid way to present oneself to the camera.

Memoirist Anne Lamott writes, "Age has given me what I was looking for my entire life—it has given me me. It has provided time and experience and failures and triumphs and time-tested friends who have helped me step into the shape that was waiting for me."

If we want this contentment for our children, let's take it as a call to action, to claim the glories of aging for ourselves as well. "I think beauty is inherently radical," says Jessica Delfino. "In order to restore [beauty] to its radical roots, we have to deconstruct how it has been commodified and sold to us and framed as something that you can buy in a bottle when it's really this spiritual, radical force that we crave as human beings."

As we age, we earn our stretch marks, crow's feet, and laugh lines—think of aging as patina rather than rust. As with many lessons, our children will learn through experience what it means to embody their own lives. We can guide them with ideas we have developed over many years, but we cannot force them to understand the benefits of aging, such as the beauty of self-confidence that often grows as we age. Our lives become etched in our faces, as if our skin tells its own tale. Let's be mindful and take as some of our role models older people whose adherence to beauty standards has faded while their essential beauty has blossomed. Let us hope our children will learn not only from what we tell them, but how we live our lives.

H.B. went gray in 2020 and is learning to respect her wrinkles.

noticing portrayals of older people in film, on social media, news, or in conversation. Question whether the assumptions were negative or positive, and how the person might have been presented differently.

- Find elder role models. Create a list of at least five older people who have accomplished something in their old age that you admire. Think about how you would talk about these people to others. In what ways do they embody beauty?
- Extend grace to yourself and others. Does evidence of age written on their faces and bodies outweigh a person's worth to you as family, a friend, or acquaintance? If the answer is no, let your words reflect that. Speak kindly about yourself and others.

Our actions and words deeply influence how our children see themselves and the world they inhabit. To sustain them through the myriad challenges they face in young adulthood, we can surround them with a worldview that values people because of their difference from the standard and not in spite of it. Understanding our own relationship with aging is the foundation on which this is built.

Talking: listen up

Galamgam says, "I've had parents bring kids in and say, 'Tell them they don't need all of this stuff.' That's not the best

approach." Give children a safe space to express thoughts, feelings, and concerns.

Affirm that it's normal to have concerns about appearance at their age, but it's important to make informed decisions. This should be a discussion rather than a lecture. Talk through the pros and cons, ask young adults for their thoughts, point to appropriate role models, and let them lead the conversation. "If you impose your own ideas too strongly," says Vyas-Lee, "you may end up with a more difficult situation."

When a tween or teen requests antiaging skincare products, Cheng suggests approaching with curiosity, asking what they hope to achieve with the products. Use open-ended questions like, "Can you tell me more about why...?" and reflect what they share to make sure you understand, using statements like, "It sounds like you're feeling ..." and be prepared to help young adults consider the aftermath of a treatment by asking questions like, "How do you think this will change your life?"

This may become a jumping-off point for discussing unrealistic images and expectations portrayed on social media, contrasting what they find online with what is normal and healthy for their skin. We can point kids to science-backed skinfluencers like Michelle Wong at Lab Muffin Beauty Science. For some, it may be helpful to visit a dermatologist or find resources for healthy skin in their age group, for their skin type, and their concerns.

To Breastfeed or Not to Breastfeed? That Is The Question.

By Jessica Perry

"You're doing it wrong!" yelled the delivery nurse mere hours after I birthed my first daughter. I was attempting to breastfeed for the very first time and it was not going well. I had been a mother for less than 24 hours and I was already being shamed for my inability to feed my child. I felt like an imposter with this squirming infant now attached to my breast. I desperately wanted to feed my daughter, to join the sisterhood of breastfeeding women before me, but I didn't anticipate it being this hard.

My daughter was extra tiny (and hence extra hungry) and she also had trouble latching. Carpal tunnel crippled me during my last month of pregnancy and extended well into my first postpartum month, so using my fingers to get her to latch was excruciating. When my daughter wasn't exhausted from trying to latch properly, she was drifting off to sleep at my breast and not eating.

As a lifelong sleep enthusiast, this infinite and only semi-effective feeding cycle took a devastating toll on my well-being.

"Every breastfeeding experience is unique to the mother and her specific baby at that specific point in time. Do what's necessary to keep you both afloat."

Three weeks post-birth, my panic attacks began. Five entire days of insomnia culminated in a terrifying sleep-deprivation-induced hallucination. I knew something needed to change when I watched my daughter morph into our cat and then back again one night. My body was completely numb and I felt nothing beyond intense fear and a disorienting emptiness. I truly believed that I would never sleep again. Sleep deprivation is powerful and the sense of isolation it creates is hard to describe. My husband went above and beyond to support me day and night during this time and give me the breaks I needed, despite being exhausted himself, but my stress was all-consuming. We had to rally the troops. When coupled with what turned out to be intense postpartum depression, the lack of sleep coalesced into the perfect storm that ultimately resulted in my very truncated breastfeeding journey.

As soon as I got the help I needed, from both medical professionals and from additional friends and family, things turned around quickly. I made the decision to immediately wean my daughter and switch her to bottle feeding so that my husband and I could share the intense workload. This changed EVERYTHING. I got the sleep (and medication) I needed to function and felt like myself again. My husband got to share in those precious hours of middle of the night baby snuggles—memories that we both treasure.

Despite the vast life improvement, I couldn't shake the



feeling of having let womankind down somehow by abandoning the sacred shared practice of breastfeeding. When my daughter was born in San Francisco a decade ago, there was a very strong push in medical and mom communities to emphasize that "Breast is Best," leaving the rest of us bottle feeders feeling "less than."

A few weeks into bottle feeding, I met my now-treasured community of mom friends, many of whom were also what I affectionately

refer to as "Breastfeeding Ne'er-Do-Wells." Some of us had to stop breastfeeding for mental health reasons. Some of us didn't have enough milk supply. Some just didn't want to breastfeed. What was clear as we watched our children grow up together was that they were thriving and loved. None of them had suffered any ill effects from the decision we made to not breastfeed.

Exactly two years later, when my second daughter was born, I made the conscious decision to try breastfeeding again despite being terrified that it would launch me into another mental health crisis. I went into it with a solid support system of family, friends, and doctors who all promised to be there no matter what my decision was.

This second time round, having two years as a mom under my belt and no carpal tunnel during my pregnancy, I approached breastfeeding with a completely different mindset. To my delight, my second daughter was a natural breastfeeder (and an amazing sleeper!). I set my goal to try to breastfeed for the first two weeks and would take it from there. After those first two weeks, we worked bottles back into the rotation to take some of the load off, but to my surprise I kept up my night feedings well into the fourth month before my daughter decided she was done. Being much more grounded this time, I felt the endorphin rush that so many moms love about breastfeeding that I had completely missed the first time round.

Breastfeeding is a time-honored tradition that should be respected, but not pushed to the mother's detriment. I respectively experienced its most negative consequences and its most beneficial aspects on my wildly varying journeys with my two very different babies. I urge every woman to be gentle with herself and know that every breastfeeding experience is unique to the mother and her specific baby at that specific point in time. Do what's necessary to keep you both afloat. The most important thing is that you and your baby are both healthy, nourished, and happy.

Jessica is a writer, editor, and mom who lives in Marin County. She is happy to have those sleepless nights behind her, but does miss the baby snuggles. You can find her online at jessicaperry.org.



The Ozempic Era: Fact vs. Fiction in Preventative Medicine

An enormous number of new tools claim to help you live not only longer, but better.

By Sasha Fahimi

Up until my 44th birthday this year, I kept track of my age in the same way I had done since I was old enough to understand what a birthday was. Each year on a certain date, I was one year older than the last. But this year, as January approached, I found myself inundated with articles, social media posts, and podcasts on how to calculate my biological age. “What is THAT?” I thought. Digging deeper, I learned that though most of us have always measured our age in a way known as our “chronological age,” our “biological age” is not quite as linear, and changing certain behaviors is something we may be able to do for a lasting impact.

“Chronological age isn’t how old we really are. It’s a superficial number,” says professor David Sinclair, co-director of the Paul F. Glenn Center for the Biology of Aging at Harvard Medical School. “We all age biologically at different rates according to our genes, what we eat, how much we exercise, and what environmental toxins we are exposed to. [B]iological age is the number of candles we really should be blowing out. In the future, with advances in our ability to control biological age, we may have even fewer candles on our cake than the previous one.”

The science is far from settled, nor is it without its naysayers and controversy.

Google the name “Bryan Johnson” and you will find the fascinating—and slightly disturbing—story of a California CEO who adheres to a strict diet, a sleep wind-down ritual, an exercise regimen, a round of daily supplements, and a dedication to countless medical tests as he strives for the biological age of 18, although his chronological age is 45. This effort includes regular blood transfusions from his 17-year-old son, which evokes a hilarious caricature reminiscent of the tech-industry parody show *Silicon Valley*. (See also on [bloomberg.com](https://www.bloomberg.com), more on antiaging techniques taken to the extreme.)

Preventive medicine trends: science or snake oil?

One way to attempt to achieve this lofty goal of antiaging is through the use of supplements and medications. Unfortunately, the field—and likely your social media feed—is packed with pseudoscience and snake oil salesmen touting miracle cures. Some sound safe and promising, like resveratrol, a compound found in the skin of grapes and berries (and in red wine) with purported antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Unfortunately, the evidence is mixed, at best, for resveratrol; what works in theory (or in mice) does not usually translate to actual health benefits in humans. But doctors and scientists continue to study potential antiaging, also known as *geroprotective*, drugs. While there is limited human data, many on the cutting edge of this space take weekly doses of rapamycin, a medication used in transplant recipients and believed to slow aging at the molecular level by blocking a protein called mTOR inside cells. But history would tell us we should approach these drugs with both humility and skepticism until we have more data.

Short of miracle drugs that stop or reverse aging *en bloc*, there are many off-label uses of drugs that are known to target and prevent specific conditions—thereby making us healthier, and, by extension, helping us live longer.

First is Ozempic, the most popular of the diabetes (and weight loss) injectables that came screaming onto the scene about a year ago. Ozempic (and its cousins Wegovy and Mounjaro) has been called a diabetes “miracle drug,” which works by mimicking a naturally occurring hormone, GLP-1, to manage hunger and slow stomach emptying. While the science behind the drugs is not new, it turns out that this class of drug, originally created to help diabetics, has had the unexpected side effect of dramatic weight loss, as well as—for some patients—curbing alcohol and drug use, compulsive shopping, and other addictions. Moreover, users report one of the biggest benefits is the quieting of what they refer to as “food noise,” the ongoing subconscious voice in our heads that constantly has us thinking about food or food as a reward. The emergence of these

drugs and rapid adoption has completely transformed the weight loss industry.

When these drugs came to market, celebrities who were already thin by normal standards started dropping weight dramatically, and suddenly it seemed that body positivity was out and skinny was back in. In discussion with other moms, it seemed to me there was a rapid paradigm shift, leaving people confused. Was using Ozempic the “easy way out?” Or was the decision *not* to go on Ozempic, for those who might benefit, a shameful “choice” to remain overweight? Even Oprah described her use of the drug, saying that a drug like

“The real swing in the field of health and wellness is the emerging field of precision preventative medicine.”

Ozempic “feels like relief, like redemption, like a gift, and not something to hide behind and once again be ridiculed for.” But of course, even for those who are interested in GLP-1 agonists, or those already using them, there’s the unknown quantity of side effects, ranging from mild fatigue and stomach upset to severe vomiting, diarrhea, and dehydration, as well as unknowns about long-term health consequences.

Wherever you land on this issue, these drugs are not going away; multiple pill versions that are said to be even more effective are in trials. But Ozempic and its cousins are just one tool used by patients to improve metabolic health. Indeed, supplements and medications will only get us so far; the spectrum of interventions, including exercise, diet, sleep, stress reduction, injury prevention, and the like, are probably much more impactful than a supplement-driven approach to longevity.

Precision medicine

If we step back, we see that the real swing in the field of health and wellness is the emerging field of precision preventative medicine, which can be defined as an approach to disease prevention, health and wellness that targets our own unique history, genetics, biology, and preferences.

All this carries an ultimate goal of helping people not only live longer (improved lifespan), but live free of physical and cognitive disease (improved healthspan).

The leading voice in this field is Dr. Peter Attia, who coined the phrase “Medicine 3.0” (as opposed to the reactive medicine most of our doctors practice, or “Medicine 2.0”). Put another way, traditional medicine tries to provide the best care to patients on average, while precision medicine provides the best care tailored to you, the individual. In his book *Outlive*, Attia further defines Medicine 3.0 as a shift in the model of care from a focus on disease treatment to

prevention—through a longevity lens. Medicine 3.0 gets people to an optimal state using testing, technology, and a focus on root causes of disease, specifically avoiding the leading causes of morbidity and mortality: cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome

and diabetes, cancer, and Alzheimer’s disease. Dr. Attia goes into detail about how we can not only maximize our lifespan by preventing these conditions, but make sure that our “marginal decade” of life (or, the last 10 years or so of our lives, whether that is ages 60-70 or ages 90-100) is spent functional, independent, and happy. The catch is that to get there, the work needs to start years beforehand.

One morning last year, as my husband Jahan, a physician, was leaving the house, I asked him where he was going. “To get my DEXA (dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry) scan done,” he replied. Weeks later, he asked me if I wanted to try wearing a continuous glucose monitor with him. (When I learned it involves a needle, no matter how small, I declined.) He spent the next two weeks experimenting—eating first rice, then pasta, then eating a cookie before going on a run—to see how his blood sugar would respond. I thought this was silly; obviously a cookie spikes your blood sugar the most, right? But watching how Jahan incorporated the results of this monitoring was quite fascinating. As an emergency physician, he’s spent his career dealing with heart attacks, strokes, cancer complications, and the like. His take on Medicine 3.0 is that “we have the ability to screen for, predict, and prevent so many of



the chronic diseases of aging, but traditional healthcare models aren't aggressive enough today to prevent illness, injury, and frailty over a very long-term horizon." At 44, he has no health problems, exercises regularly, and his lab tests look normal for his age. Yet he now sees a preventative cardiologist, takes a low-dose statin (cholesterol-lowering medication), and meets with a nutritionist to understand how to optimize his diet. He's very careful about any intervention, be it a supplement or a type of exercise, making sure that it's backed by high-quality evidence before he incorporates it.

I became curious and sought out resources in San Francisco. When I met Evan Mather, founder of Custom Fit, a local gym that offers personal training and individualized nutrition coaching, I realized Jahan was not alone in his quest to improve his health by using data. Evan is a believer in DEXA and VO₂ max testing, describing them as "two highly researched body composition and cardiorespiratory

analysis tools that allow us to assess a client's baseline, guide recommendations, and build the most personalized plan one can ask for." DEXA is an incredibly precise measure of body composition, helping measure bone density, lean muscle mass, and body fat, including the proportion of visceral fat—the fat on the inside that you can't see—which is especially harmful to internal organs and is associated with development of diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. While users of Ozempic will see a reduction in their visceral fat (likely driving much of the health benefits), doctors warn that a significant amount of the overall weight loss can come at the cost of lean muscle mass, an unintended consequence that can be tracked by DEXA and reversed with appropriate training and diet interventions.

VO₂ max, on the other hand, measures your cardiac and respiratory fitness. Evan describes it as assessing "how much oxygen (V = volume) you're able to uptake under maximum effort, and as well as help

determine your different heart rate zones for training." While the idea of running full speed on an incline on a treadmill until I'm maxed out sounds terrible, it turns out your VO₂ max actually may predict how long you live. "VO₂ max declines gradually with age, and people with higher VO₂ max have better heart and lung health and, on average, live longer and more independently," my husband explained. At least once per week, he heads out to the Lands End trail to "run intervals" in an attempt to improve his VO₂ max. "Knowing that my VO₂ max will eventually drop off in coming decades," Jahan tells me, "I'm trying to have the best cardiovascular and respiratory fitness I can today, so I have enough reserve in 30, 40, or 50 years to carry our grandchildren, travel anywhere without limitations, and ski with the family."

When I went in for my own DEXA scan, I noticed that Custom Fit was much more than your average gym. Evan and his team offer nutrition consultation, bloodwork packages, cold plunge, infrared sauna, and the like. He tells me that the demand for longevity, health, and performance optimization is skyrocketing post-pandemic, and services like his (both brick-and-mortar and virtual) are helping individuals do personalized assessments and develop bespoke plans to reach their goals. My DEXA findings have given me new insights about my own training needs; I'm now working with a trainer twice per week.

For me, gone are the days of inconsistent workouts or fad diet changes. There is an intentionality around my health that comes with knowing my unique biomarkers and understanding how I can improve them over time. I have no interest in reversing my aging by decades or living to age 150—nor do I believe these things are truly possible—but I am motivated by the potential to live a few years longer than I would have, and more importantly, live those last years independent, strong, and cognitively healthy.

Sasha is a partner at Sucherman Insalaco LLP, where she practices family law. She is a former GGMG volunteer and board member, serving for just over three years. She lives in the Outer Richmond with her husband, two girls, and their dog, Norman.

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The State of Modern Parenting: Is Gentle the New Tough?

Exploring the evolution of parenting through the years and how it arrived in its current iteration.

By Yuliya Patsay



Since the dawn of time there have been parents and children, but there hasn't always been "parenting." The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the concept of "parenting" evolve from noun to verb; it became something that we do rather than something that we are.

With the shift from "being" to "doing" came myriad parenting trends and philosophies, all shaped by evolving societal norms and psychological insights. From Behaviorism and Authoritative Parenting as well as Permissive Parenting and Attachment Parenting, all laid the foundation for the rise of Gentle Parenting and similar philosophies taking over TikTok and Instagram today.

Gentle parenting represents a departure from traditional disciplinary methods and is "a form of positive parenting that emphasizes understanding a child's behavior through empathy and respect, giving choices versus commands, and responding in a way that considers a child's intellectual and developmental

levels," explains Dan Peters, Ph.D., a psychologist and host of the Parent Footprint podcast.

At its core, gentle parenting prioritizes building strong parent-child relationships, fostering autonomy, and guiding children with compassion rather than coercion. Rooted in principles of attachment and emotional intelligence, this approach encourages parents to empathize with their children's emotions, communicate openly, and set boundaries with respect. The goal is not just to manage behavior but to cultivate a deep sense of security and trust within the family unit.

Gentle parenting has transitioned from a niche parenting philosophy to a widespread fad through the help of social media influencers, popular parenting websites, and podcasts. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have seen a surge in content related to gentle parenting. Influencers such as Sarah Ockwell-Smith, Laura Markham, and Janet Lansbury regularly share content that

promotes gentle parenting techniques, garnering large followings and influencing parenting trends.

Arguably the leader of the gentle parenting movement is Sarah Ockwell-Smith, who has written 13 parenting books centered around the "gentle" philosophy including *How to Be A Calm Parent* and books dedicated to tackling specific situations like starting school or becoming a sibling. Her work has challenged conventional wisdom and inspired countless parents worldwide to adopt a more empathetic approach, but she won't give parenting advice in DMs—you'll have to buy her book!

Drawing from attachment theory and neuroscience, Ockwell-Smith and other advocates like Laura Markham, who goes

by the Instagram handle @peacefulparenthappykids, have provided a solid theoretical framework for gentle parenting practices. Markham focuses on providing trustworthy, effective, evidence-based guidance and a clear path towards a more connected, loving family life using proven techniques and science-rooted practical approaches that really work. Other influencers include Destini Ann, who is a certified parenting coach from the Jai Institute, shares cheerful and supportive posts on how to practically apply gentle or peaceful parenting and busts rumors that liken gentle parenting to permissive parenting.

You can also turn to blogs, online forums, and podcasts for the latest in gentle parenting. Sites like *Parenting.com*, The

Bump, and HuffPost Parents all have dedicated sections or articles specifically focused on gentle parenting and feature articles written by experts and contributors advocating for gentle parenting practices. Perhaps the most convenient resources for modern parents though are podcasts hosted by parenting experts, like Dan Peters' *Parent Footprint*, which often features episodes discussing gentle parenting principles and techniques, or the wildly popular *Unruffled* by Janet Lansbury. Janet Lansbury has built upon the work done by Magda Gerber who developed Resources for Infant Educators (RIE), a non-profit organization with the philosophy that we should respect infants, treating a baby as a person from the beginning. Her podcast tackles topics like aggression,

Timeline of parenting trends

Behaviorism (1920s–1960s): Focuses on shaping behavior through reinforcement and punishment, with an emphasis on consistency and rewards for desired behavior. Think: if you eat your peas you can have dessert, and if you bring home a bad grade, we will take away your phone. Experts include B.F. Skinner, a prominent psychologist known for his work in behaviorism, as well as Sigmund Freud and Ivan Pavlov.

Authoritative Parenting (1960s–present): Not to be confused with the authoritarian style of parenting, which focuses on strict rules, obedience, and discipline, the authoritative style combines warmth and responsiveness with clear expectations and boundaries, while fostering independence and self-regulation in children. Expert Diana Baumrind, a developmental psychologist, is often credited with defining the authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. Fun fact: the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the authoritative approach.

Permissive Parenting (1960s–1980s): Characterized by lenient, indulgent attitudes towards children, often avoiding strict rules and discipline in favor of allowing children freedom of expression. Experts: Dr. Benjamin Spock, author of *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, advocated for a more permissive approach to parenting.

Attachment Parenting (1980s–present): Emphasizes the importance of forming strong emotional bonds between parents and children, often through practices like co-sleeping, babywearing, and responsive feeding. Experts: Dr. William Sears and Martha Sears, authors of *The Attachment Parenting Book*.

Positive Parenting (1980s–present): Focuses on building strong parent-child relationships through positive communication, empathy, and encouragement, while also setting clear boundaries. Experts: Dr. Jane Nelsen, author of the *Positive Discipline* series, and Dr. Thomas Gordon, creator of the Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.) model.

Helicopter Parenting (1990s–present): Hallmarks of this approach include over-involvement in a child's life, often characterized by close supervision, high levels of support, and a tendency to intervene in every aspect of a child's life. This is not attributed to a specific expert, but the term gained popularity in the 1990s to describe this style of parenting.

Unconditional Parenting (2000s–present): Rejects the use of punishment and rewards in favor of fostering intrinsic motivation and unconditional love and acceptance. Alfie Kohn, author of *Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason*, is a prominent advocate for this approach.

Gentle Parenting (2000s–present): Focuses on responding to children with empathy and understanding, using gentle guidance and respectful communication to support their emotional and social development. Experts: Sarah Ockwell-Smith, author of *The Gentle Parenting Book*, is known for promoting this approach. Not to mention the plethora of social media influencers creating content promoting gentle parenting.

creativity, crying & tantrums, discipline, mealtimes, and more.

Last but not least, perhaps the most popular Instagram and TikTok parenting star is Dr. Becky Kennedy. She goes by Dr. Becky, and is a New York based clinical psychologist whose authentic style and practical advice have catapulted her to #1 on *The New York Times* Bestseller list with her book *Good Inside* and earned her over 2 million followers on social media and hit podcast *Good Inside with Dr. Becky*. Her basic philosophy is that we are all good inside and when the behavior doesn't

“At its core, gentle parenting prioritizes building strong parent-child relationships, fostering autonomy, and guiding children with compassion rather than coercion.”

match that goodness it means the child (or adult) is having a hard time and our job as parents is to get curious about that gap between innate inner goodness and outer behavior and teach our kids how to have emotional regulation.

Popular or not, gentle parenting is not without its critics. Skeptics argue that it promotes permissiveness and fails to adequately prepare children for the challenges of the real world. Cultural considerations also come into play, with the applicability of gentle parenting varying across different societies. Finally, Dr. Emily Edlynn shares in a recent *Psychology Today* article that her biggest frustration with the rise in popularity of gentle parenting is that it sets unrealistic expectations for parents, that the social media posts are “low on nuance and high on shame induction” and that they seem to “convey that we are embracing impossible standards for parents, en masse—and without good reason.” However, proponents of the approach assert that it fosters resilience, emotional intelligence, and healthy parent-child dynamics. Perhaps because it shares two key principles with the current recommended authoritarian parenting method to “establish a warm and connected relationship between parent and child” and to “use empathy to understand the child’s emotional experience.”

Research suggests that gentle parenting practices yield positive outcomes for

children’s emotional and behavioral development. By nurturing empathy, self-regulation, and secure attachment, gentle parenting sets the stage for lifelong well-being and resilience. Studies have also highlighted the long-term benefits of a nurturing, respectful parenting style in fostering healthy relationships and mental health.

For parents eager to embrace gentle parenting, practical strategies abound. From active listening and positive reinforcement to setting clear boundaries with empathy, incorporating gentle

practices into daily routines can yield profound results. Self-care for parents is also emphasized, underscoring the importance of prioritizing parental well-being in creating a nurturing family environment. Here are seven specific strategies for parents looking to shift their parenting tactics and incorporate techniques suggested by gentle parenting experts:

Practice Active Listening: Actively listen to your child without interruption or judgment. Reflect back what they say to show that you understand and empathize with their feelings. This helps strengthen the parent-child bond and fosters trust and open communication.

Positive Reinforcement: Instead of focusing on punishment, praise your child for positive behavior. This encourages them to continue those behaviors in the future. Offer specific praise, such as “I appreciate how you shared your toys with your sibling,” to reinforce desired actions.

Set Clear Boundaries with Empathy: Establish clear and consistent boundaries for your child’s behavior while acknowledging their feelings. Use empathetic language to explain the reasons behind the rules and enforce consequences calmly and respectfully. This helps children understand expectations and develop self-discipline.

Foster Autonomy: Encourage your child to make choices and solve problems

independently whenever possible. Offer guidance and support as needed, but allow them the freedom to explore and learn from their experiences. This builds confidence and self-reliance.

Prioritize Self-Care: Take care of your own physical, emotional, and mental well-being to be the best parent you can be. Set aside time for relaxation, hobbies, and activities that recharge you. Prioritizing self-care enables you to approach parenting with patience, empathy, and resilience.

Practice Mindful Parenting: Be present and attentive during interactions with your child. Notice and appreciate the small moments of joy and connection throughout the day. Mindful parenting helps reduce stress, improve parent-child relationships, and promote emotional regulation for both parents and children.

Model Emotional Regulation: Demonstrate healthy ways to manage emotions by expressing your feelings calmly and constructively. Use “I” statements to communicate your emotions and model problem-solving strategies for handling challenging situations. This teaches children valuable emotional skills they can apply in their own lives.

In conclusion, the rise of gentle parenting reflects a shift towards more empathetic and respectful approaches to child-rearing. But Dr. Edlynn warns that “empathy and addressing emotions underlying behaviors often do not eliminate the undesirable—because kids are kids” and if “we internalize our child’s limitations as our failure, since we are told that this empathy and focus on the relationship is the solution, we think that we must be doing it wrong.” So while gentle parenting may not be universally applicable or without criticism, its positive impact on parent-child relationships and children’s development do have merit, so see for yourself what works from this approach. After all, embracing gentle parenting techniques can empower parents to foster resilience, emotional intelligence, and healthy dynamics within their families.

Yuliya (it rhymes with Goo-lia) Patsay is Soviet-born and San Francisco-raised. She is a storyteller and voice actor. Her debut memoir, Until the Last Pickle, is available now!

Books that compare and contrast different parenting approaches

The Science of Parenting by Margot Sunderland: This book explores various parenting styles, including authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian, and discusses their impacts on child development based on scientific research.

The Whole-Brain Child by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson: While not specifically focused on comparing parenting approaches, this book provides insights into understanding children’s brains and behaviors, offering strategies that can be applied across different parenting styles.

Parenting with Love and Logic by Foster Cline and Jim Fay: This book advocates for a parenting approach that combines love and empathy with logical consequences, aiming to raise responsible and independent children. It contrasts with more permissive or authoritarian styles.

The Baby Book by Dr. William Sears and Martha Sears: While primarily focused on attachment parenting, this book also touches on contrasting approaches, discussing the benefits of responsive parenting compared to more traditional methods.

The Price of Privilege by Madeline Levine: This book discusses the phenomenon of helicopter parenting and its potential negative impacts on children’s development, contrasting it with a more balanced and supportive parenting approach.

Parenting for Character by Andrew Mullins: This book examines different parenting styles through the lens of character development, contrasting approaches that prioritize discipline and control with those that emphasize empathy and emotional connection.

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother by Amy Chua: This memoir contrasts Western and Eastern parenting styles, particularly highlighting the strict and demanding approach commonly associated with traditional Chinese parenting.

Good Inside by Dr. Becky Kennedy: In this how-to guide, Dr. Becky shares her parenting philosophy, complete with actionable strategies to move parents from uncertainty and self-blame to confidence and sturdy leadership. Also includes troubleshooting for specific scenarios—including sibling rivalry, separation anxiety, tantrums, and more.

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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

The DEI Committee Needs Volunteers!

The mission of GGMG’s Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Committee is to build a safe and supportive atmosphere for all GGMG members through education and community outreach. We organize events and share resources that enhance equity and inclusion within the organization. **We are currently seeking a new Co-chair as well as Committee Members.**

- Examples of Co-chair and Committee Member duties include:
- Write and/or edit articles for *GGMG Magazine* 6 times per year (every 2 months)
 - Plan and execute webinars, including speaker outreach, that enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization. Past examples of themes have included: talking to your kids about race, land acknowledgement, and a spotlight on diverse kids entertainment.
 - Coordinate and execute drives for non-profit organizations that bring awareness to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - Represent the DEI Committee at GGMG events, such as Spring Fling and Fall Fest
 - Additionally, for the Co-chair role only:
 - Serve as a liaison with the GGMG Board and Committees
 - Coordinate allocation of tasks among DEI Committee members
 - Recruit and onboard new DEI volunteers

Please contact us at diversity@gmg.org if you are interested in volunteering.

MEMBER SUPPORT

Member Support Is Seeking a New Co-chair!

The mission of the Member Support Committee is to change a member in need’s life for the better and create a sense of community amongst our members through support, drives, and special events. Member Support exists to provide assistance to our members experiencing challenging times or who are in crisis.

- Examples of committee duties include:
- Coordinate meal delivery for members in need
 - Coordinate and execute drives to benefit local nonprofits
 - Manage the Member Resource List to share valuable resources with members, including crisis, abuse, and child therapy resources
 - Proactively monitor the forums and manage requests for member support needs
 - Organize events that meet the needs expressed by members, including CPR and self-defense classes

Please contact us at member.support@gmg.org if you are interested in volunteering.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Friends branch of the Partnerships Committee collaborates with local organizations and businesses to provide substantial discounts and resources for our members. We aim to develop mutually beneficial relationships with businesses in the Bay Area that provide useful services to mothers. Our goal is to work preferentially with small local businesses run by women and/or people of color in an effort to promote their professional advancements in our society.

The Partners branch of the Partnerships Committee manages our relationships with our large Partners including the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco (JCCSF) and UrbanSitter.

- Committee duties in Friends:
- Input new offers by local businesses (Friends) looking to provide substantial (20 percent or more) discounts to GGMG members
 - Maintain our relationships with our current Friends
 - Seek out potential new Friends who provide services useful to our members
 - Negotiate new business discounts
 - Update members on new discounts

- Committee duties in Partners:
- Maintain relationships with current Partners and seek out new Partners
 - Negotiate new business discounts to expand the discount offerings for GGMG members
 - Outreach for new Partners of interest with preference to small local businesses run by women and/or people of color

- Open Roles:
- Committee Co-chair in Friends (1 hour per week)
 - Committee Co-chair in Partnerships (1 to 2 hours per week)

To volunteer, email partnerships@gmg.org.

VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

- Extra special extended benefits from our partners
- Professional development opportunities
- Membership fee reimbursement after one year of service

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

Monthly Queer Family Hike

Join queer families for a walk/hike, which includes casually mingling/chatting, discussions on agreed-upon topics, and just sharing unique experiences and issues we have encountered as queer families. All queer families are welcome!

- Date:** First Saturday or Sunday of each month
- Time:** Typically 10 a.m. to noon
- Place:** TBD
- Cost:** Free for members
- Contact:** Email Dy Nguyen for details (dy.nguyen@gmail.com)

Moms Supper Club

Explore new restaurants in the city, enjoy dinner and drinks, and meet new moms in your community! Details for each venue will be announced through gmg.org.

- Date:** Quarterly on Thursdays
- Time:** 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- Place:** TBD
- Cost:** \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members
- Contact:** Email Lydia Weiss for details (Weiss.lydiab@gmail.com)

Glen Park Coffee + Stroller Walk for Mommies (and Babies)

Would you like to meet neighborhood moms, grab a coffee and enjoy a stroller walk together? We’re organizing this Coffee + Stroller walk for you! We’ll meet at a coffee shop before we go for an hour of fresh air, light exercise, and great conversation!

- Date:** The first Wednesday of every month
- Time:** 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- Place:** Bosworth and Diamond Street side lot by Pono Skincare in Glen Park. We can figure out which coffee shop to stroll to.
- Cost:** Free for members

South of Glen Park and Bernal Monthly Moms Night Out

Each month we will visit a different venue in our neighborhood, moms only! After kiddo bedtime, enjoy a drink and some appetizers with other mothers.

- Date:** The second Thursday of every month
- Time:** 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Place:** TBD (different place each month)
- Cost:** Free for members

Little Oceanauts \$7 Playdate

Looking for an afternoon playdate for your kiddos? Little Oceanauts in Ingleside is open and is the perfect place for children to run off their energy before dinner time! Meet fellow GGMG moms and enjoy a fun afternoon together.

- Date:** The third Friday of every month
- Time:** 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- Place:** 1917 Ocean Ave.
- Cost:** GGMG members pay a special rate of \$7 per child. Infants 6 months and under are free. Parents/caretakers are free. Limited spots available. Must prepay at gmg.org.



Monthly Moms Happy Hour

Join us for drinks and appetizers at a local restaurant to meet and connect with other moms in San Francisco. There will be a different venue in neighborhoods all around the city each month. Info will be announced two weeks before the event.

- Date:** The third Thursday of every month
- Time:** 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- Place:** TBD
- Cost:** \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members
- Contact:** Text or email Jessie Lee for details (Leejessiesf@gmail.com) or 415.518.6402

Marina/Pac Heights/North Beach Monthly Moms Happy Hour

Drop in anytime for drinks and appetizers with other moms!

- Date:** First Thursday of every month
- Time:** 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Place:** Wildseed, 2000 Union St.
- Cost:** \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members

Register for events at gmg.org/calendar unless otherwise noted.

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*Camps offered vary by location. Preschool State License Numbers: 414004014, 414005047, 384004006, 384004165. Copyright © 2024 Stratford Schools, Inc.



Clutter and Conflict

By Vi Huynh-Dvorak

When I set out to write this, I was going to write about hoarding, clutter, and what it all means, maybe throw in some tips I have for getting rid of stuff. Then, on the day of my deadline, my husband and I got into a huge fight over... clutter. Our home is spacious for our needs, and yet with three kids, a dog, a guinea pig, and my ever-growing collection of houseplants, we—or more notably, my husband—are feeling the strain and losing patience.



another for over a day. He didn't like feeling like his want for a more serene living space, free from clutter—even if that clutter is transitional—was dismissed. I wanted the why of why there's clutter validated. At the end of the day, after playing all my roles as cook, cleaner, chauffeur, housekeeper, and personal assistant to the machine that is our family, I am spent. After that, we argued about help. I do hate this word in domestic arguments. It's not "help" if you need

my help to help you help me. I also felt that somehow, the kids' clutter was lumped into my clutter. It was as if he wrote himself out of the equation that is our family and the stuff that piles up with three kids. I eventually calmed down. By nature, I am someone who will firmly plant her feet on an issue, all else be damned. To function in my life, this is a terrible script. I pushed past my emotions and tried to consider the other side. My husband favors a serene, uncluttered home and I have strict rules for hygiene. My floors are in a constant state of cleanliness. My bathrooms are pristine. This is not a democratic process. I am authoritarian about hygiene. My husband is a designer. He lives in a visual world and my piles of stuff corrupt that world, and there is a literal sea between our islands of perspective on "stuff". I understand the need for a visually-pleasing space. I, too, am a visually oriented person, but I maintain that when one parent is the default, primary parent and caretaker of kids and home, responsible for invisible and visible work, we need grace; otherwise resentment grows in that space where we feel judged and shamed. It's a low priority for me to tackle clutter in the course of my day when there are a litany of things and events to plan, RSVP, schedule, and everything else the default-primary parent does. I eventually tackle it, but it can be slow—my timeline is weeks to months. My husband's is days at most.

There are two boxes in our hallway, filled to the brim and spilling out, with outgrown clothing, toys, and books. To that, I occasionally add my own things, like the fur scarves I think I'll wear. The box is a hodgepodge of things, and I prefer to pass along things as opposed to filling the landfill, so there it sits until I can find time to responsibly sort. There's a pile of school papers from my kids. I like to keep a sheet or two of their schoolwork every quarter. There's the pile of collapsed grocery bags that need to be put away, the empty boxes from our last Amazon delivery, and on it goes. The simple answer is we have too much stuff. The actual answer is that I manage everyone's lives and I am too exhausted to care about clutter.

"I like to think of myself as a top-tier get-rid-of-stuff type person, and I am, if the metric is letting go of things I no longer find utility in, even if that utility is sentiment."

I like to think of myself as a top-tier get-rid-of-stuff type person, and I am, if the metric is letting go of things I no longer find utility in, even if that utility is sentiment. To this end, I excel. The blanket my firstborn came home in? We have our memories. I cut out a square and tucked it in her book. My grandma's hand-sewn clothing? I kept a blouse and let my daughter take apart the rest for sewing practice.

The fight eventually took on a life of its own. Complaints about the piles in boxes turned into the stacks of Marie-Kondo'd folded laundry, the basket of socks (which is a necessary evil as a result of the ongoing fights between my girls on who has whose socks in their drawer). At this point I started to feel attacked, shamed for not properly performing my housewife duties according to a man who I, in my anger, felt just has to care for himself while I manage everything and everyone else.

The fight got so big, we ended up not speaking to one

The epilogue here is that I didn't do any deliberate budgeting. What did happen was my week slowed a bit and I was able to put things away that I've been meaning to put away. The pile of giveaways in the hall remains. All the little random bits of clutter have been mostly cleared and the rest—well, I'm not sure where we'll land on this. What I do know is that I won't feel good about working extra hard to make our home a place my husband feels good in unless I have some reciprocity and grace on the invisible labor I do.

Vi lives in SF with her family. As of this publishing, the box of giveaways is still in her hallway and is growing.



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