

MARCH 2016



GGMG | GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine



Funny Business

House Call Veterinarians

The Best Care Happens at Home



- More convenient for you and less stress for your pet
- Evening and weekend appointments
- Prices comparable to a clinic
- Exams, vaccines, prescriptions, diagnostics and minor procedures



vetpronto

Call 415-980-4733 or visit www.vetpronto.com



www.ggm.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair	Laurel Kellam
Vice Chair	Cathy Tran
Secretary	Laura Kabler Oswell
Treasurer	Kristen McGuire
Community Support	Tiffany Bindoo
External Communications	Addie Bjornsen
Internal Communications	Sallie Hess
Kids Events	Justine Mojica Simpson
Member Engagement	Sasha Fahimi
Operations	Laura Kim
Parent Education	Katrina Dirksen
Technology	Sarah Soto

COMMITTEES

Community Support	Parent Education
Entrepreneurship	Partnerships
Just for Moms	Playgroups
Kids Activities	PR/Marketing
Magazine	Recruiting
Membership	Social Events
Operations	Web Team

MAGAZINE

Editor-in-Chief	Kirsten Pflieger
Managing Editor	Sonya Abrams
Senior Editor	Kate Kirschner/Virginia Green
Art Director	JoJo Rhee Chevalier
Writers	Stephanie AuWerter, Shaheen Bilgrami, Shannon Brennen, Tara Hardesty, Laure Latham, Bobby Shukla, Catherine Symon
Copy Editors	Amy Ashcroft, Sarah Brandstetter, Megan Bushnell, Emily deGrassi, Anna Gracia, Sandy Woo
Advertising	Sherri Howe
Designers	Jessica Franklin, Jesse Recor, Lani Schreiberstein, Lora Tomova
Photographers	Whitney Cooley, Carmen Dunham, Albenia Ilieva, Lindsay Lovier, Carolyn Soling

For information regarding how to advertise in this magazine, contact advertising@ggm.org.

For questions or comments regarding magazine content, contact editor@ggm.org.

For questions or comments regarding all other aspects of GGMG, including how to get an event listed in this magazine under "GGMG Events," please contact feedback@ggm.org.

Table of Contents

4

**Letter from the Editor:
Laugh with Me**
Parenting is its own punchline
Kirsten Pflieger

5

**Letter from the Board:
Finding the Laughs in
Parenting**
It's easier with friends
Cathy Tran

6

Out and About
Spring Into Fun
Jessica Williams

Li'l Kid, Big City: Inner Sunset
Shaheen Bilgrami
Improvise a Good Time
Kirsten Pflieger

8

**Ask the Expert:
Humor and the Happy Child**
Humor's role in psychological development
Kimberley Tompkins, PsyD & Laura Cayan, PsyD

10

**Dadlands:
Bill Murray Is Right**
The comedy of parenting
Jon Wolanske

12

Books for Kids: Bedtime
Embrace bedtime with a good story
Laure Latham

14

**From Womb to World:
Every Single Thing About
Pregnancy Is Amazing!**
A satirical look at the side effects of pregnancy
Anna Gracia

16

**How Humor Develops in
Children**
From peek-a-boo to potty jokes
Catherine Symon

20

Sidebar: Funny TV Parents
Small screen comic relief for parents
Anna Gracia

22

**Comedic Relief: A Parenting
Survival Skill**
Ease the extremes of parenting
Tara Hardesty

26

**Deconstructing Funny: A Look
at Humor's Serious Side**
More than just fun and games
Bobby Shukla

39

**I ♥ Mom: Laughing My Way
Through Motherhood**
Inhale humor, exhale stress
Juli Fraga

GGMG at Work

4

Housekeeping

5

Volunteer of the Month

9

Drives & Contest

15

New Arrivals

32

GGMG Events

34

Committee Updates

Cover Photo by Carmen Dunham Photography;
Cover model: Casey Rose Clemens (5 years), Benjamin Clemens (3 years)

Letter from the Editor: Laugh With Me

By Kirsten Pfleger



Kirsten and her husband Karl continue to attempt to laugh through all of the ups and downs of parenting preschool-aged children in San Francisco, including navigating the kindergarten process and explaining why it is all right for a grown man to walk through the Castro naked.

That same 2-year-old often reminds me that a grown-up sense of humor can alleviate some of my more frustrating parenting moments. Recently, after a fun-filled morning in Golden Gate Park, she started throwing a fit because she didn’t want to get on the cargo bike and go home. After using my patient voice, my firm voice, and my bribing voice, I finally firmly placed her in her seat and starting biking, hoping that she would not go into full

It is really fun watching my children’s understanding and appreciation of humor evolve. In my opinion, 2-year-olds are some of the funniest people there are. Their burgeoning sense of self combined with a growing understanding of language and falsehoods is fertile ground for humor. The other day at breakfast, my 2-year-old emphatically announced: “I am not funny.” Based on the sly look on her face and the fact that we were already laughing at something else she said, I am pretty sure she understood the irony.

tantrum mode and tip us over. Although she sat relatively still, she chanted, at the top of her lungs “I want to ride MY bike” over, and over, and over.

I felt the frustration rising inside of me; I just wanted to get home already. Then I noticed the supportive smiles of other parents biking around us, and thought about how ridiculous we must look. I started laughing and tried to enjoy the ride. I don’t know if she just got tired of chanting or if my relaxed attitude

[A] grown-up sense of humor can alleviate some of my more frustrating parenting moments.

rubbed off, but Sierra stopped her theatrics soon after and was quite pleasant the rest of the way home.

Laughter is good for us. On page 26, Bobby Shukla discusses the evolution of humor and how it affects us, both socially and physically. Catherine Symon looks into the details of how humor develops in our children and how to encourage that development on page 16. Need a laugh yourself? Tara Hardesty and Anna Gracia recommend blogs (page 22) and television shows (page 20). Anna is back on page 14 with a satirical look at the joys of pregnancy. Juli Fraga and Jon Wolanske share how laughter helps them deal with the ups and downs of parenthood on pages 39 and 10.

KPfleger

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.

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Freak illnesses right before vacation, reconnecting with old friends, summer camp bookings, Christopher Elbow Chocolates, a missed international flight, a sprained ankle, in-laws visiting and staying in my house, baby Tylenol, purple cauliflower failure, adult onset acne, watching Ben the Bachelor, tiny ants all over the house.

COMING NEXT: April—20 Years of GGMG; May—Identity

CONTEST: There was an error when we reported our contest winner in our February magazine. Congratulations to **Emilie Lynch** who won our November contest—an Ultimate Mom’s night out, and to **Lauren Cappelloni** who won our December/January Party at Peek-a-boo Factory contest.

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

Letter from the Board: Finding the Laughs in Parenting

By Cathy Tran

My two boys and I had some free time the other day, so I figured it would be a good opportunity to check something off my to-do list by taking them for haircuts. My 4-year-old is pretty good with haircuts, mostly because he knows he’ll get a toy afterward. (Darn you, haircut place, for selling toys!) My younger son had been an absolute angel for his first haircut, so I thought this would be an easy, fun activity for all. I would be an all-around super mom by efficiently getting something done while still getting home in time to make dinner.

I could not have been more wrong. My younger boy shrieked and squirmed throughout his entire haircut, causing both of us to get covered in hair, while my older one threw a tantrum, refusing to go home and get cleaned up. I finally managed to wrangle them home and threw everyone in the tub. Amid more shrieking and screaming, I eventually got the boys clean and dressed, settling down to a state of relative peace.

That’s when I realized it was really quiet. Too quiet. I looked up in time to see my 1-year-old, having somehow shoved the child

gate aside, crawling into our (unused) fireplace to transform into a little soot-covered gremlin. After surviving another scream-filled bath, I texted a friend to laugh about my ridiculous afternoon. And suddenly, as hard as the afternoon had been, I knew it would probably become a cherished memory to laugh about for years.

It’s so important to find the humor in parenting, whether it’s the funny things your kids say, the seemingly endless laughs kids find in fart jokes or, like me, a day gone so badly you just have to laugh. It’s easier to find the humor when I have a fellow parent to laugh with—one of the best parts of being a mom has been connecting with other moms. A great way to meet some other moms for some

laughs is to volunteer with GGMG!

I have been fortunate to make many wonderful friends through volunteering; our times together are always marked with peals of laughter about our kids and life in general. The friendships and the laughs are, without a doubt, the best parts of volunteering for me. If you are interested in volunteering and having a laugh with some amazing moms, please email recruiting@ggmg.org. Below are some of our currently open volunteer positions:

And suddenly, as hard as the afternoon had been, I knew it would probably become a cherished memory to laugh about for years.

- **Community Support:** Co-Chair for Events, an Events Volunteer, two Member Support Volunteers, and a Member Support Special Project Volunteer
- **Kids Activities:** Two Co-Chairs
- **Magazine:** Photographer, Writer
- **Neighborhood Meetups:** Committee Co-Chair, Directors for Haight, Nob Hill/North Beach, NOPA/Alamo, and Ambassadors for Haight/Cole Valley, Mission, and Richmond
- **Recruiting:** Co-Chair
- **Social Events:** Two Co-Chairs, Planning Committee Member



Cathy Tran is mom to Charlie and James. She has been volunteering with GGMG since 2012 and enjoys helping and supporting the wonderful GGMG community. She lives in the Parkside with her husband Pete and her two little troublemakers.

Cathy

Volunteer of the Month



Congratulations to Tracy Andreassen, our March volunteer of the month! Tracy began volunteering with GGMG in June 2015, serving as chair for the Neighborhood Meetups Committee, as well as the neighborhood ambassador for North Beach/Nob Hill. She moved to San Francisco in 2014 and is a NICU nurse at California Pacific Medical Center. Tracy and her husband Luke are parents to Jude (4) and Claire (2).

First choice for new career or venture: My dream is to start my own business with my sister. **Best feature in your neighborhood:** I love being by the water and the newly renovated Joe DiMaggio Park! **Piece of baby/kid gear could you not live without:** There’s no way I could do these hills without my BOB stroller. Two kids in one stroller!

Tracy will enjoy a 60-minute massage at International Orange Spa (2044 Fillmore St.). Book yourself a massage today at www.internationalorange.com.

Spring Into Fun

Whether you fancy an Irish jig or a bunny hop, there are plenty of Bay Area activities to keep the whole family busy in March!

By Jessica Williams

Children's Hour of Dance & Music at the Library

SAN FRANCISCO MAIN LIBRARY'S FISHER CHILDREN'S CENTER, 100 LARKIN ST.

Saturday, March 5, 11 a.m. to noon

Free

Revel in the sounds of the Irish fiddle and see traditional Irish step dancing featuring the Brosnan School of Irish Dance.

www.irishamericancrossroads.org

Story Time at the Botanical Gardens

HELEN CROCKER RUSSELL LIBRARY
1199 9TH AVE.

Sunday, March 6 and Sunday, March 20 at 10:30 a.m.

Free

Learn all about nature during story time and a docent-led children's tour of the Botanical Gardens (the tour begins at 11 a.m.). Suitable for ages 4 to 8.

www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/library/child-bib/2016-mar.html

165th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade and Festival

CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

Saturday, March 12, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Free

Marvel at more than 5,000 participants in a special parade commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising in Ireland and enjoy all-day entertainment at the festival! The parade begins at 11:30 a.m. at 2nd and Market Streets and ends at Civic Center Plaza. www.sresproductions.com/events/st-patricks-day-festival



Jessica Williams lives in Noe Valley with her 18-month-old daughter, husband, and dog, who dreams of being the center of attention once again. Her writing has appeared on Lucie's List, A Survival Guide for New Moms.

Family Matinee at SF Jazz Center

201 FRANKLIN ST.

Saturday, March 12 at 11 a.m.

\$15 for adults; \$5 for children

Clap along to the music of flamenco ensemble Caminos Flamencos and try out percussion instruments after the performance. Tickets available online.

www.sfjazz.org/events/2015-16/0312/family-matinee

History for Half Pints at the California Historical Society

678 MISSION ST.

Saturday, March 12, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Free with RSVP

Explore concepts behind building and design your own Sea Ranch. Then, dance away with The Anata Project during a 30-minute workshop at noon. Suitable for ages 3 to 9.

www.eventbrite.com/e/history-for-half-pints-sea-ranch-your-city-and-dance-workshop-tickets-19980464106

Purim Puppet Show at The Contemporary Jewish Museum

736 MISSION ST.

Saturday, March 20, 11:30 a.m. to noon

Free with Museum admission, youth 18 and under free

Join musician, artist, and puppeteer Jen Miriam Altman for magical puppet shows to celebrate Jewish folktales and holidays. tinyurl.com/CJMpurim

Eggstravaganza at Golden Gate Park

SHARON MEADOW, 320 BOWLING GREEN DR.

Saturday, March 26, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

\$8 per person; free for children under 2

Kick off spring with egg hunts, carnival rides, and live entertainment, including a barbecue cook-off, at this annual event.

www.sfrecrepark.org

Union Street Easter Parade and Spring Celebration

UNION STREET BETWEEN GOUGH AND FILLMORE STREETS

Sunday, March 27, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

(Parade at 2 p.m., Easter Bonnet Contest from 11:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.)

Free

Don your best bonnet, meet the Easter Bunny, and enjoy a variety of kid-friendly activities including pony rides and a petting zoo!

www.sresproductions.com/events/union-street-easter-parade-spring-celebration

Crown Room Easter Brunch at the Fairmont Hotel

950 MASON ST.

Sunday, March 27, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

\$139 per person; \$79 for children under 12

Come hungry for omelets, brioche French toast, and much more. Then, visit the petting zoo on the rooftop garden. Reservations required: 415.772.5144.

www.fairmont.com/san-francisco/promotions/easter-program

Easter Egg Hunt at Lemos Farm

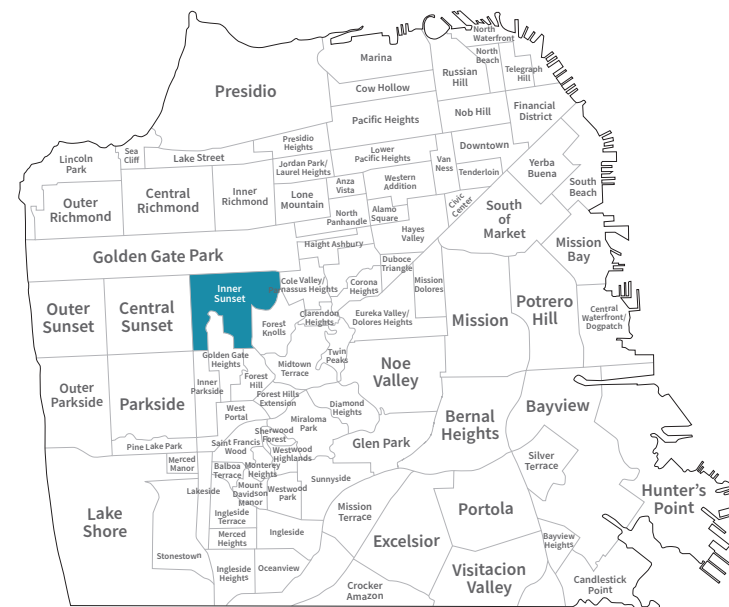
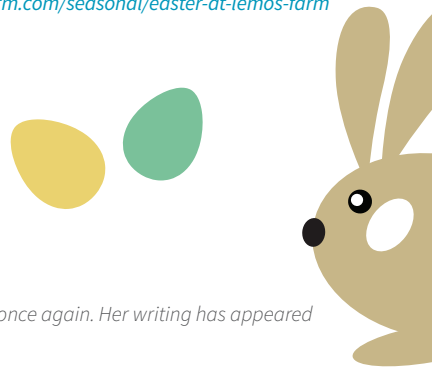
12320 SAN MATEO RD., HALF MOON BAY

Sunday, March 27 at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and noon

Free

Grab your Easter basket, jacket, and mud boots and head to Lemos Farm for its annual egg hunt! Suitable for ages 2 to 7.

www.lemosfarm.com/seasonal/easter-at-lemos-farm



Li'l Kid, Big City: Inner Sunset

By Shaheen Bilgrami

Nestled on the edge of Golden Gate Park, the sometimes foggy and chilly Inner Sunset is a lively, family-friendly neighborhood.

Start the day with breakfast buns or pastries from **Shen Kee** (816 Irving St.), then browse for books at **Green Apple Books on the Park** (1231 9th Ave.) and snag some bargains at the children's consignment store **Chloe's Closet** (616 Irving St.). Afterward, let the kids blow off steam at **J.P. Murphy Playground** (1960 9th Ave.).

For lunch, head to **Arizmendi Bakery** (1331 9th Ave.) for a slice of their famous pizza. It's just one of the many great dining spots in this area. Want dessert? Grab an ice cream from **Hometown Creamery** (1290 9th Ave.) or **Holy Gelato!** (1392 9th Ave.).

If you're feeling creative, stroll over to **Earthfire Arts** (438 Judah St.), a new ceramics studio where you and your kids can make clay creations or paint ready-made ceramics.

Next drive over to 16th Avenue and Kirkham Street and spot the salamander image on the beautiful mosaic **Hidden Garden Steps**. Feeling inspired? Head to 16th Avenue and Moraga Street to marvel at the gorgeous sea-to-sky themed **16th Avenue tiled steps**.

End your day with a kid-friendly dinner at **Park Chow** (1240 9th Ave.) or **Pacific Catch** (1200 9th Ave.). ❖

Shaheen Bilgrami is freelance writer and editor and is a contributor to www.littlelane.com. She is also the mom of an energetic preschooler. Contact her through her website, www.shaheenbilgrami.com.

Improvise a Good Time

If you are planning a date night, mom's night out, or co-worker bonding, consider an evening of improv.

By Kirsten Pflieger

SPEECHLESS AT PUBLIC WORKS

If you have ever lain awake at night before a big presentation, worried that you will forget all of your salient points, this is the show for you.

Actors are given a PowerPoint presentation they have never seen before, and a goal of leaving the audience speechless.

DATE: The third Thursday of every month

TIME: 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

PLACE: 161 Erie St.

COST: \$12 in advance; \$20 at the door

www.speechlesslive.com

TORNADO ESPINOZA AT PIANO FIGHT

A full-service restaurant and bar with a cabaret stage and two intimate theaters, PianoFight is one-stop shopping for a great evening out. With anywhere from one to five acts to choose from, it can be hard to decide which show to attend. The comedic team of Tornado Espinoza promises to "leave a trail of busted guts, blown minds, and general devastation in its wake."

DATE: The third Friday of every month

TIME: 10 to 11:30 p.m.

PLACE: 144 Taylor St.

COST: \$15 in advance (\$10 for groups of 6 or more); \$20 at the door

BATS IMPROV

Attend on Friday for short form Theatresports—an exciting, highly interactive night of improvised theatre played as a sport. On Saturday, watch as the actors turn your suggestions into a full-length musical. Both shows are sure to delight.

DATE: Fridays and Saturdays

TIME: 8 p.m.

PLACE: 2 Marina Blvd., Bldg B

COST: \$17 in advance; \$20 at the door

www.improv.org

SECRET IMPROV SOCIETY AT SHELTON THEATER

A blend of improvised sketches and songs, this fast-paced show is inspired by audience suggestions and is completely original. A new show each night.

DATE: Fridays and Saturdays

TIME: 10 to 11:30 p.m.

PLACE: 533 Sutter St.

COST: \$17 in advance; \$20 at the door

www.secretimprov.com

Kirsten Pflieger lives in the Castro with her husband, Karl, and their two daughters, Serenity and Sierra.

Ask the Expert

Humor and the Happy Child

By Kimberley Tompkins, PsyD & Laura Cayan, PsyD



What role does humor play in a child's psychological development?

Kids' use and appreciation of humor parallels their emotional, cognitive, and social development: from our baby's first giggle at peek-a-boo, to our 4-year-old's glee at "all things potty," to the knock-knock jokes and wordplay of our school-aged kids. Humor is dependent on an understanding of social rules and how to bend them, which is actually a complex skill that involves and develops problem-solving, perspective-taking, and empathy.

Sometimes it is hard not to laugh at something kids do or say, even though they aren't trying to be funny. How can we make sure they know we are laughing with them (shared humor) and not at them (hurtful humor)?

Oftentimes (many times a day, in fact!), our kids will say or do things that we can't help but laugh out loud over, even when they weren't trying to be funny. Although amusing to us, sometimes

Set aside some family silly time, have a crazy dance party, or have an upside-down and backwards day.

this laughter is not perceived in the same way to kids, even though we do not intend to hurt their feelings. A good rule of thumb is to think about how you would feel about others laughing at you, and pay attention to clues that the laughter may be hurtful rather than enjoyable to all involved. Explaining laughter ("I love when you do ____!"), making light of the situation, or expressing understanding, and apologizing if feelings do become hurt, can be helpful ways to diffuse these moments.

What can a child's sense of humor say about his or her emotional health?

Besides being a great skill to diffuse stressful situations, a sense of humor also plays a role in building self-esteem, learning to solve problems, and developing social skills. In fact, kids with a good sense of humor tend to have an easier time making friends and navigating social situations—these kids also tend to have higher self-esteem.

Kids who can laugh at themselves when they make a mistake have an easier time accepting "bumps along the road" and are willing to take risks more often. As parents, we can model this skill—don't take yourself too seriously! Poke fun at yourself when you spill the milk or lose your keys. This sends the message that it's okay to make mistakes. Set aside some family silly time, have a crazy dance party, or have an upside-down and backwards day.

How can parents use humor to manage stress?

We are the best models for our children—they learn so much from everything we do as parents. Using humor to manage difficult and stressful situations is a wonderful tool. For example, imagine you're driving in the car and someone cuts you off (grr, city driving). We can use this as a teachable moment:

"Oh, Henry! That car just cut me off. That makes me so frustrated. I can feel the tension in my shoulders and my jaw is really tight. Can you tell me a joke? That always makes me feel better. Your jokes are so funny!"

This is a great way to model humor as a coping method, as well as a way to talk about what our feelings are, how they feel in our bodies, and how to manage them.

Not only does the family who laughs together stay together, but they also stay healthier together. Smiling boosts our immune system, reduces stress, and lowers blood pressure.

Laughter, especially when shared with loved ones, changes our body chemistry by turning off our fight or flight response (which also helps us think clearly while navigating city driving). This is amazingly powerful stuff! Our brains love laughter too—neuroscientists believe that hearing someone laugh, especially family members, triggers our mirror neurons. This makes us want to laugh too. Kids are funny, and humor makes life fun! . ❖

Kimberley Tompkins and Laura Cayan are psychologists (and moms) with 15+ years of experience working with children, teens, and families. They founded San Francisco Family Practice, which specializes in family-focused evidence-based psychotherapy. Additionally, they both work with families at UCSF's Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, and Laura Cayan works at Kaiser Union City's Child and Family Psychiatry and Pediatric clinics.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Community Support

Drives

Donate today to the [Children's Book Project](#) and the Felton Institute's [Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Program](#).

Please join us in supporting the Children's Book Project and the Felton Institute's Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Program (TAPP) by donating new or gently used books and baby items this spring from March 1 to April 15.

The Children's Book Project accepts new and gently used children's books for children of all ages—infants to teenagers—as well as other resources that aid literacy, including curriculum materials, magazines, dictionaries, posters, CDs, and DVDs. TAPP accepts a wide variety of new and gently used baby items, such as:

- Clothes and shoes for children of all ages
- Maternity clothes
- Receiving blankets and baby towels
- Car seats, strollers, highchairs, and baby carriers
- Toys and books in good condition
- Diapers, wipes, and training potties
- Pregnancy and parenting books
- Unopened toiletries, including baby shampoo and soap, toothbrushes, and sunscreen

For drop-off locations, please visit the GGMG website at www.ggm.org or email drives@ggm.org to drop off items with a Community Support volunteer. Thank you so much for your support of this drive!

For more information on the Children's Book Project and TAPP, please visit their websites at www.childrensbookproject.org and www.tinyurl.com/feltonTAPP.

We've revised the total for the Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP) annual drive to include company matches and all donations given in December from GGMG members.

The total went from \$15,000 to over \$23,000. Thank you to all who donated!

Contest

Yoga Flow SF

Enhance the health of your body, mind, spirit, and family at Yoga Flow SF.

One lucky winner will enjoy an entire month of free yoga and childcare at the best dynamic vinyasa flow yoga studio in San Francisco. While you enjoy state-of-the-art heating, lighting, and sound systems in our 2,100 square foot yoga studio, your child will enjoy music, crafts, theater play, and more in our 650 square foot kids' space.

The owners of Yoga Flow SF are parents of two young children themselves. Besides looking and feeling better in their early 40s than they did in their 20s, the main benefit of their yoga practice is developing the capacity for patience in every moment. Even, and especially, the toddler temper-tantrum ones!

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH "YOGA FLOW SF" IN THE SUBJECT LINE TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG BY MARCH 31, 2016.

For more information about Yoga Flow SF, go to yogaflowsf.com.

** Certificate is one-time only, non-refundable, and may not be combined with other offers.*



DADLANDS

Bill Murray Is Right

By Jon Wolanske

I'm a first-time parent to a curious and sweet 8-month-old boy. My wife is an incredible mom who finds new ways to save my butt and my son's considerably smaller butt on a daily basis. But, even though I'd call myself #blessed, being a parent has been the hardest thing that ever happened to me. And, the media agrees.

Last August, *The Washington Post* published a study reporting how becoming a first-time parent can be more devastating than losing a spouse or battling severe depression. Studies like these are why I don't read *The Washington Post*, but I understand their point. To be a new parent is to live in a state of extremes. And despite the near constant loving advice from family and friends, there's no clear road map telling you how to navigate it all. So, literally, anything could be the most stressful thing and you always jump to the most unnatural conclusion.

He didn't take his second nap today. HE'LL NEVER SLEEP AGAIN! He doesn't want his applesauce. IT'S A TUMOR! He cries when I sing him the song that made him laugh yesterday. I'M THE HUMAN EQUIVALENT OF A BAG OF GARBAGE!

My all-time low point arrived when my kid was about 6 weeks old. It was late at night and he was having the kind of screaming fit that whole baby books are written about. He just would not stop. I bounced him. I sang to him. I told him the two jokes I can remember a few times, and laughed at the punch lines to try to help him along. But he just kept screaming. Eventually, I brought him to my wife in bed, handed him over and said the following

Allowing for the silly things makes it possible to handle the bigger, not so silly things. And I know there will be lots of those to come.

regrettable words: "He hates me. He hates me, and I know he hates me, and you're the only one he loves."

I woke up the next morning feeling pretty awful. This little boy who could barely see me clearly had somehow formed an opinion of my character? That's why he was crying? It was more likely just gas. He gets it from me.

Not long after that episode, I stumbled across an interview with Bill Murray. It was a lucky coincidence, because he said something in the interview that had a direct application to my life. He was talking about his approach to his work:

"You have to remind yourself that you can do the very best you



can when you're very, very relaxed, no matter what it is, whatever your job is. The more relaxed you are, the better you are. That's sort of why I got into acting. I realized the more fun I had, the better I did."

"No matter what it is." The thought was a revelation. I think about that quote nearly every day. Just because you're relaxed doesn't mean you aren't paying attention. Being worried is not the same as being prepared. My attitude about whatever is making things go haywire will probably be the most useful tool I have in fixing things. These are big lessons to

learn, and I'm just beginning to understand their meaning.

They say if you're about to experience a collision, you shouldn't let your body tense. If you can roll off the impact, you'll walk away with minimal damage. So on those days when my son resembles a defensive lineman barreling toward me trying to enforce his will, I try to stay as loose as I can. When he won't eat his food, I don't get worried—I wait with him. When he gets super squirmy on his changing table, I sing crazy songs to him. I share embarrassing stories on *Facebook* and *Twitter* to let people know how much of a work in progress I am at this. I'm really just trying to keep myself honest.

About three months after that bad nighttime incident, I was walking through the neighborhood with the boy. It was around 5 a.m. and still dark outside. He couldn't sleep. I was sort of half-awake myself and before I knew it, I walked into a bush. The kid was strapped to my front and I walked into a bush. It was stupid. I could have reacted by getting angry at myself or overly

concerned for my son's safety, but for some reason, I laughed. And my son's face flashed from confusion to

lightness. He laughed too. At me. We were both laughing. At each other. Both figuring out how to parent, how to kid, how to deal with one another.

Allowing for the silly things makes it possible to handle the bigger, not so silly things. And I know there will be lots of those to come. It's not like I think raising kids will always be fun. But it helps to be reminded of how ridiculous it all can be. There's no other comedy quite like it. ♦

Jon Wolanske is a writer and creative director at Goodby Silverstein & Partners. Follow his adventures as a newish dad on Twitter, where his handle is @jonnywo.

Even Better Together

GGMG & JCCSF are pleased to continue another year of partnership.



Our partnership with the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco (JCCSF) boosts the benefits of your regular Golden Gate Mothers Group (GGMG) membership. Beginning March 1, 2016, your \$75 membership fee opens the door to even more activities for you and your child. GGMG members receive discounts on select JCCSF programs, like Kinder Fun Klub and kids' swim lessons. But that's not all.

The Perks of Childhood

- 50% off the first three months of JCCSF Swim School lessons*
- One three-pass card for any JCCSF Kinder Fun Klub drop-in music, art, cooking, dance or gym class
- The opportunity to register for GGMG-exclusive KinderGym classes (two per year)
- One GGMG-exclusive tour at each of our preschool locations
- 50% off JCCSF preschool and afterschool program application fees
- 10% off any JCCSF camp

The Rewards of Parenthood

- Two single-day passes to the JCCSF Fitness Center**
- \$100 off the registration fee for a new Fitness Center Membership
- Free registration when upgrading from an Individual to a JCCSF Family Fitness Center Membership
- Six hours of free JCCSF childcare for new Fitness Center Members
- Seasonal invitations to register for select JCCSF classes at a 40% discount

How to Redeem

- First redemption must be done in person. Bring the cover of the current GGMG newsletter or your GGMG membership card to the JCCSF Front Desk. Newsletter must bear the name and address of the GGMG member.
- After the first redemption, GGMG members can register in person or by phone.
- GGMG members are eligible for the above discounts through February 28, 2017.

Restrictions

*Swim School discounts are valid only for new participants.

**Complimentary JCCSF Fitness Center passes expire six months from date of activation and GGMG members must pick up passes from the JCCSF Membership Office.

Cannot be combined with other offers. All discounts are one-time offers; cannot redeem offers used in previous years.



Jewish Community Center of San Francisco
3200 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94118
415.292.1200 • jccsf.org



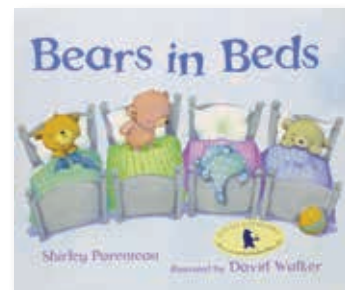
Bedtime is a special time for children, separating the world of day and the visible from the world of night and the unseen. It can be magical or scary, depending on how kids perceive the night, but it's a time when parents and children get together for a cuddle, a hug, and a great story to finish the day.



Global Baby Bedtimes

Written by Maya Ajmera, illustrated by The Global Fund for Children

This cute book is a fantastic illustration for the phrase “sleeping like a baby.” Each slumbering baby’s photograph depicts a different country and culture, while the universal text tells us how babies everywhere go to bed (in the case of the Guatemala picture, bed is a colorful blanket surrounded by hands of bananas). *Ages: 0 to 2 years*



Bears in Bed

Written by Shirley Parenteau, illustrated by David Walker

When Big Brown Bear tucks four little bears in bed one by one, all seems to go according to plan for the smoothest bedtime possible. However, noises in the night scare the young bears out of their beds. How can they go back? Parents and young ones will love the cuddly feeling of the bears going to bed and their night scare. *Ages: 3 to 7 years*



Touch the Brightest Star

Written and illustrated by Christie Matheson

This interactive bedtime book follows the night sky and nocturnal animals as they each appear after sundown. With instructions such as “tap,” “swipe,” or “whisper,” the book invites children to touch the pages and hear the text to make magical things appear on each following page. With soft words and quiet rhymes, this gentle, interactive story will conclude many a full day with a nod to all things that we see at night. *Ages: 4 to 8 years*

Orion and the Dark

Written and illustrated by Emma Yarlett

Orion is a little boy who is afraid of many things, but his biggest fear is of the dark. And who wouldn't be afraid of terrible nooks and crannies and things that go bump in the night? One night, the Dark comes down to Orion's bedroom and takes him on a tour of all scary things. Reading like a long poem, this book features beautiful illustrations and Orion's hand-drawn sketches to explain everything that makes the dark so scary. Or, maybe not. *Ages: 4 to 8 years*



The Islands of Chaldea

Written by Diana Wynne Jones, completed by Ursula Jones

By the grand-master of fantasy for young readers, this book will take older kids into a world of adventure, where a 12-year-old girl named Aileen discovers her secret gifts while exploring the four magical islands of Chaldea. With a power girl as protagonist, this book will delight fans of “Howl's Moving Castle” and “Castle in the Air,” making bedtime a cherished time to let the magic of fantasy worlds unfold. *Ages: 8 to 12 years*

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

PREPARE for PRESCHOOL

Now Enrolling for Summer Prep

Art + Music + Outdoor Play + Circle Time



22 Months + Older | No Potty Training Required | Low Student : Teacher Ratio

SPACE IS LIMITED! APPLY ONLINE AT PEEKADOODLE.COM/PREP-GGMG

For more information on becoming a member of the Peekadoodle Community, please visit Peekadoodle.com/Club-GGMG

Wondersitter

Wonderful Sitters, Wonderful Service



First Hour + Free Booking Fee
for All New GGMG Families!

www.wondersitter.com
(415) 912-8300



From Womb to World

Every Single Thing About Pregnancy Is Amazing!

By Anna Gracia

In a recent survey of GGMG members, moms were divided over which aspects of pregnancy they most enjoyed. Though enduring frequent reminders at the doctor’s office to gain no more than 35 pounds was a popular choice, it was outstripped by more glamorous options such as abstaining from alcohol, leaking pee while sneezing, and being asked if their pregnancy was “planned.”

As one mom puts it, “I love how majestic I felt with my larger body. My husband and I went to the beach when I was 8 months pregnant and he told me I reminded him of a manatee. Manatees were once believed to be mermaids! I felt like a goddess when he told me that.” She pauses. “I might have been slightly offended if he had called me a whale, but a svelte sea cow? I couldn’t wait to get back into that swimsuit.” Another mom notes the unintended benefit of lingering varicose veins: “My toddler just adores using the lines snaking down the back of my legs as a racetrack for his toy cars. It’s a great activity for him while I prop up my swollen ankles!”

For Maria Gonzales, all the physical side effects have been the key to bringing her and her husband closer together. “Before, we

I love how majestic I felt with my larger body. My husband and I went to the beach when I was eight months pregnant and he told me I reminded him of a manatee.

would sometimes run out of things to talk about from our day. But now, I’ve got hemorrhoids, constipation, bloating, acid reflux, morning sickness, cramps—you name it. Even though I’m on bed rest and my days might seem boring, I always have something to talk about over dinner.”

Ling Xiang has a different take. “I really appreciate the sense of community my pregnancy brings. Not only do strangers at the supermarket rub my belly and predict how many babies I’m carrying and when I might ‘pop,’ but I just love how fellow restaurant patrons look out for dangerous foods I might eat.” She explains that thanks to her local barista, she is no longer consuming coffee or even tea because he caringly explained all the possible side effects of caffeine on the developing fetus. “My next door neighbor also told me to beware of mangos.



She doesn’t actually have kids of her own, but I’m sure she’s done research on the matter, so I’m going to trust her judgment.”

Other GGMG moms highlighted the more nuanced side effects of pregnancy. “I am grateful my mother-in-law is so concerned with when I’m having my next baby,” Caroline Welseley coos. “It makes me feel like she’s really invested in being a grandmother.” At only 4 months pregnant, Welseley is carrying the first grandchild on her partner’s side of the family. “I can completely understand she’s anxious to have a baseball team’s worth of kids, as she has repeatedly told us.”

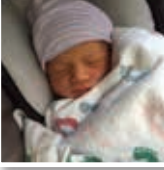
Though Welseley has mentioned to her in-laws their intention to have only one child, she welcomes their repeated questioning. “How could we possibly know what I want at this point? Their opinions and desires will obviously help my partner and I clarify our reproductive decisions in the future.”

Architect Jacqueline Spears appreciates how much her pregnancy has brought out her coworkers’ maternal and paternal instincts. “Hearing the other associates whisper about how they wish they were having babies so they could go on leave just reminds me how lucky I am to be having a child—everyone wants one!” Spears says she feels no apprehension about the effect her time off will have on her career and is certain the partners at the firm will admire her dedication to exclusive breastfeeding for the first year of her baby’s life. “I’m sure my clients will be more than understanding if I have reschedule a meeting or two so I can pump or pick up my daughter from daycare,” she states with confidence.

Preeta Singh sums it all up by saying, “I am just so happy to be pregnant, which is great since that’s all anyone seems to talk to me about. And every time someone says, ‘Don’t you just love being pregnant?’ I get to exclaim, ‘Yes!’ ” She continues, “Even if there were one or two things I didn’t love so much, like people criticizing the names we’ve already chosen or not being able to take any sort of medication because my baby’s comfort and health always comes before my own, I’m sure most people would find them trivial in comparison to the miracle of life I’m growing!” ❖

Anna Gracia was a CPA and a teacher in her former life. She is now a writer and stay-at-home-mom to two (soon to be three) kids who are with her all the time. Literally. All. The. Time. She runs the movie commentary and review site, www.TheSnarkyReviewer.com.

New Arrivals

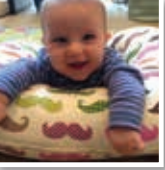


Alexandra J. **Baby Jeanne Madeline**
Amy S. **Baby Sophia Melina**
Anna P. **Baby Owen Ellis**
Annie P. **Baby Jack Edward**
Bri V. **Baby Rowan Charles**
Cecile Taylor **Baby Eleanor Jeanne**
Christina Magee **Baby Elise Hisano**
Colleen F. **Baby Nolan Timothy**
Courtney D. **Baby Tate Angelo**
Denise C. **Baby Ruthie**
Diana Phillips **Baby Sebastian Patrick**
Jen L. **Baby Ailann Elizabeth**

Jessica H. **Baby Luca Julian**
Julie J. **Baby Finley Alexis**
Lauren S. **Baby Eva Josephine**
Lex L. **Baby Julian Mars**
Lindsay C. **Baby Leo Philip**
Nancy W. **Baby Luke Kai**
Rachel P. **Baby Luca Gray**
Robin D. **Baby Annelise Cody**
Sara S. **Baby Mila**
Sarah Franklin **Baby Robert George**
Sheila W. **Baby Anaya**
Stella K. **Baby Anderson Taebin Ong**

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

To announce your new arrival in the magazine and for a chance to win a Babyganics gift set, fill out the form at www.ggm.org/community.html.



GYMBOREE PLAY & MUSIC



1503A Sloat Blvd, San Francisco | 415-242-5637 | gymbobuzz.gymboreeclasses.com

Golden Gate Mothers Group and Gymboree Play and Music have formed a partnership!

GGMG members get one free month of play, music, art, or school skills classes (birth to 5 yrs old) !

For details visit ggmg-gymboree.com

How Humor Develops in Children

Humor serves as a window into the state of our children’s cognitive skills and contributes to intellectual, social, and emotional growth.

By Catherine Symon Photographs by Carolyn Soling



Act 1: The preschool years

[Father and 3-year-old daughter sit together on a couch in their living room. Father is making up a fanciful story and asks daughter to fill in some important details.]

Father: What kind of story do you want?

Daughter: Hmmm, one with a mix-up.

Father: Do you want any surprises?

Daughter: Yes!

Father: There are two snowmen in the story. What should their names be?

Daughter [without hesitation and grinning wryly]: Poop and Pee!

Thus began my family’s journey into potty humor. Although I was a caught off guard in the moment, it’s actually no surprise that our good friends Poop and Pee have become prime time players in my daughter’s stories. No matter how different kids are from each other, children’s humor follows a fairly consistent path. From peek-a-boo to poop and from knock-knock jokes to sarcasm, children tend to gravitate to the same types of jokes as their age peers. Why the similarity among such a diverse set of personalities? Partly because many of these jokes are kept alive by parents, siblings, and friends, but

mostly because humor development tracks with cognitive development. As our brains mature, so does our ability to understand, appreciate, and create increasingly complex forms of humor. Each new milestone reveals itself in our evolving sense of humor. Discovering object permanence? Let’s play peek-a-boo. Learning how to walk? Watch me pretend to slip on a banana peel. Ditching diapers? Poop and pee it is.

From a research standpoint, humor serves as a window into the state of our children’s cognitive skills. And from a developmental standpoint, humor contributes to intellectual,

social, and emotional growth. Newer studies point to potential health benefits, including stimulation of the immune system and stress reduction. So how do the poop and knock-knock jokes benefit our children?

It all begins in infancy

Humor is such a widespread human competency that the inability to appreciate or understand humor is listed as a characteristic of several developmental and psychological disorders. That near universality, however, doesn’t mean humor is innate. Rather, humor is a learned skill that children start developing as early as infancy. During their first year, infants look to their parents (or other attachment figures) to help them interpret situations they don’t understand. By observing the reactions of their parent or caregiver, babies begin to correlate the situation with a particular reaction. This is what developmental scientists call social referencing.

Social referencing is important for identifying dangerous situations. For example, the concept of peek-a-boo could be alarming to an infant because her mother’s face keeps disappearing unexpectedly. However, seeing her mother smile and hearing her coo each time she appears communicates to the infant that the game is safe and fun. By 12 months, babies are already capable of identifying certain humorous situations without having to check the reaction of their parent or caregiver. Social referencing continues through much of childhood, but declines as a child gains life experience and establishes her own perceptions of what is funny.

Funny = smart

In recent years, much attention has been paid to the importance of play in a child’s development. For example, free play is thought to promote problem solving, independence, and resiliency, among other things. Paul McGhee, PhD, longtime humor researcher and author of *Understanding and Promoting the Development of Children’s Humor*, looks at humor as a form of mental play.

McGhee explains that humorous word play, for example, facilitates intellectual

development. It can expand a child’s vocabulary by exposing him to new words that he is motivated to learn because he enjoys making people laugh. This motivation

also improves his reading skills because he is compelled to read and re-read jokes to memorize them and he even derives pleasure by poring over them when alone. And while



your child might drive you crazy by telling the same two or three jokes over and over, that repetition helps to reinforce his memory of both the words and their meanings.

Take these jokes from www.kidspot.com.au:

“What is a cow without a map?

Udderly lost!”

“Why can’t fishermen be generous?

Because their business makes them sell fish.”

“I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. *Then it hit me.*”

Even young children will chuckle at the incongruity of a cow using a map in the first example. This joke also requires understanding of the words “udder” and “utterly” in order to be funny. In the second

example, the punchline relies on understanding not just the words “generous” and “selfish,” but the use of homophones. The third joke (a nice example of how riddles

don’t have to follow the typical question-and-answer format) incorporates the concept of puns.

Jennifer Cunningham, MA, a researcher in educational best practices, agrees with McGhee’s appraisal of humor as a form of play. In *Children’s Play* she writes: “First, humor is enjoyable—in the ways that most play is enjoyable. Second, humor constructs an unreal world—much as make-believe play does. Third, the enjoyable, unreal world of humor often performs the same cognitive, social, and emotional functions as play in general.” Cunningham also cites research that shows elementary school-aged children seem to find jokes funnier if they have to work to understand it. They enjoy the intellectual challenge of deciphering the joke and appreciate complicated jokes more than overly simplistic or repeated ones. Incidentally, people who are exceptionally talented at creating humor are generally also highly intelligent. Anthropologist Gil Greengross and his University of New Mexico colleague Geoffrey Miller published a research paper in 2011 confirming results of an earlier study showing that “intelligence predicts humor ability.”

Act 2: Early elementary school

[Impromptu Skype session between aunt and niece]

Aunt: Do you know any good jokes?
6-year-old niece [grinning and talking in rapid succession]:

What’s the loudest pet?

A trum-pet!

What did the zero say to the eight?

Nice belt!

What’s the vampire’s favorite dog?

A bloodhound!

What did the toilet say to the other

toilet? *You look a bit flushed!*
Why didn't the teddy bear finish
his dinner? *Because he was stuffed!*
What did the tornado say to the
other tornado? *See you around!*
Knock knock...
Aunt: Okay, gotta go. Nice talking to you!

**Laugh...in good times
and in bad**
Humor also facilitates social development,
particularly when forging relationships.
McGhee writes that children who initiate
humor are seen as more likable and sociable
by their peers. This peer evaluation starts
as early as preschool and continues through
adulthood. The fact that social bonds are

reinforced by humor is especially evident in
late elementary school and middle school,
when groups of friends use inside jokes to
maximize their feeling of belonging.
Making classmates laugh can also help a
child to overcome social stigmas (e.g., lack
of athleticism, speech or learning delays,
poor social skills) that may otherwise isolate
them from their peers. The ability to make
other people laugh is an incredibly powerful
thing: it provides positive reinforcement,
which builds self-esteem, boosts confidence,
and promotes social ties.
In terms of emotional development, humor
and laughter help us to manage our strongest
emotions. Children and adults alike can

control anger and minimize stress if they
can find humor in even the most irritating
situations. In this case, McGhee reminds us
that laughter isn't just an expression of joy;
humor and laughter can diffuse tense
situations. So the next time your child is
having a rough day, see if a bout of laughter
can get her out of her funk. You should also
try it yourself.
**Humor offers a window
into development**
Graduating from one humor stage to another
coincides with certain leaps in development.
Using Jean Piaget's classic stages of cognitive
development as a model, McGhee created
the "Stages of Humor Development." These

stages describe typical humor abilities from
infancy through early elementary school.
One basic requirement in understanding
humor is the ability to differentiate between
intentional ("Ha ha, Mommy pretended to fall
asleep and snore!") and unintentional ("Oops,
Mommy fell asleep while she was reading to
me") acts. Research led by Malinda Carpenter
of the University of Liverpool shows that this
differentiation happens as early as 14
months. Humor can therefore be an effective
gauge for what cognitive milestones children
have achieved starting at a very young age.
A child's sense of humor also gives us a
window into what concepts they are trying
to master. So in spite of the fact that my
3-year-old has pooped about 2,000 times
in her life, her recent experience of saying
goodbye to diapers (hooray!) has elevated
poop and pee to the top spot in her joke
repertoire. She also enjoys silly word games
and rhymes now that her command of
language is blossoming. A young toddler,
on the other hand, would be more interested
in physical humor (peek-a-boo, tickling,
making funny faces) because his language
skills are less developed and he explores his
world by moving and touching. As your child
approaches tweendom and adolescence,



explore humor. But if you want to help your
child's sense of humor blossom, there are
a number of things you can do:

- Tell jokes and teach them to your kids.
If you don't remember any or you need
more examples, there are countless
kid-friendly jokes online. Find a few

- Lastly, don't be afraid to draw
boundaries when humor becomes
offensive or mean-spirited. Children
often use humor as a testing ground
to learn what is appropriate. It may also
indicate that they are looking for help in
understanding the subject of the joke.

*Graduating from one humor stage to another
coincides with certain leaps in development.*

don't be surprised when you start to (over)
hear off-color jokes. It can be shocking, but
know that it is normal for children this age to
be grappling with novel topics like sex as they
navigate puberty.

**How to encourage your
child's humor**
Clearly humor plays an important role in child
development. We also now know that kids
start by learning from their parents and other
key attachment figures. How can you help
build your child's sense of humor? Don't be
concerned if you're not a natural comedian.
McGhee writes that humor will develop
without any special effort from parents.
Simple actions like engaging in silly play
and laughing at your child's jokes (whether
learned or made up) encourages them to

- that resonate with your child and tell
them often.
- Give your kids some joke and riddle
books so they can discover their own
favorites.
- Tickle frequently.
- When your child tells a joke, laugh at
the punch line even if you've heard it
a thousand times before.
- Be silly: wear your Halloween costume
to breakfast, watch funny movies
together, declare Opposite Day (even
if it's only for an hour).
- Most importantly, join in the fun. Don't
just send them off to play. Participate
in freeze dancing, Duck Duck Goose,
funny face contests and whatever else
they're into.

**Act 3: The gap between
tweendom and adulthood**
*[Weeknight family Skype session. Seattle sister-
in-law recounts to San Francisco sister-in-law
a joke she was told earlier that day. Nine-year-
old Seattle niece sits nearby.]*

Seattle SIL: "How long does it take
to make Chinese tea?"
San Francisco SIL: "Hmmm, I have
no idea."
Seattle SIL [laughing uncontrollably and
barely able to get the punchline
out]: " Oolong!"
Seattle niece: "I don't get it. Why is
that funny???" ❖

Catherine is a medical writer. In spite of what
the experts say, she is pretty sure that potty
humor never gets old.

Stages of Humor Development		
Source: Paul E. McGhee, PhD		
Stage	Example	Age range
0: Pre-humor smiling and laughing	Pre-humor smiling and laughing	Early infancy
1: Laughter at the attachment figure	Laughing during peek-a-boo with parent	6 months to 12 or 15 months
2: Treating an object as a different object	Using a banana as a "phone"	12 or 15 months to 3, 4 or 5 years
3a: Misnaming objects or actions	When asked to point to her nose, grins and points to her ear	2 years to 3 or 4 years
3b: Opposites—a special case of misnaming	"This ice cube is so hot!"	
4a: Playing with word sounds	"Funny bunny hunny dunny wunny!"	3 years to 5 years
4b: Nonsense real-word combinations	"Can I have some moon juice?"	
4c: Distortion of features of objects, people or animals	"The giraffes at the zoo can fly."	
4d: Gender reversal	"Raggedy Ann is my pretend brother."	
Pre-riddle stage	Doesn't have firm command of riddles or jokes, but attempts to make them up	5 years to 6 or 7 years
5: Jokes and riddles	Jokes contain words with clever double meanings	6 or 7 years +

Funny TV Parents

By Anna Gracia

Black-ish

Married father Dre worries his four kids are losing their African-American cultural identity by living in a predominantly white, upper-middle-class neighborhood. Full of quick-witted jokes and hilarious interactions between Dre and his wife, Rainbow, this is not a comedy intended for background noise while working on a computer.

Starring: Anthony Anderson (*Law & Order*) and Tracee Ellis Ross (*Girlfriends*)

What you'll love: The completely uncoddling way Dre interacts with his kids.

Airs: Wednesdays on ABC

Odd Mom Out

In slightly repetitive fashion, successful attorney and mother of three Jill Weber feels out of place in her yuppie-mommy social circle in Manhattan's Upper East Side by being constantly reminded that she is "poor" in comparison.

Starring: Jill Kargman and Andy Buckley (*The Office*)

What you'll love: Laughing at the first-world hand-wringing of the uber-rich.

Airs: Bravo renewed the show for a second season, but a premiere date has not yet been announced. The first season is available on Amazon Prime.

Fresh Off the Boat

Though too often playing on stereotypes and thoroughly tamed for mainstream audiences, this all-Asian comedy set in the '90s is based on the real-life experiences of celebrity chef and author Eddie Huang and his family's migration from Taiwan to Orlando, Florida. This family sitcom offers mild laughs without the risk of offending small ears.

Starring: Randall Park (*Veep*) and Constance Wu (*One Life to Live*)

What You'll Love: The cultural gap between first-generation immigrant parents and their American-assimilated kids.

Airs: Tuesdays on ABC

Girlfriends' Guide to Divorce

This more-drama-than-comedy centers on the life of fictional author Abby McCarthy and her divorced friends as they navigate dating, divorce, work, and raising kids. Viewers can cringe along with the decision-making of the four main women while relating to their most humiliating moments. It's like *Sex and the City* for those past the casual dating stage.

Starring: Lisa Edelstein (*House, M.D.*), Nectar Zadeagan (*24*), Beau Garrett (*Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior*), and Alanna Ubach (*Legally Blonde*)

What you'll love: The mindless relationship drama of *Real Housewives* without the pretense of "reality."

Airs: Tuesdays on Bravo

Jane the Virgin

Jane Villanueva, a 23-year-old devout Catholic and virgin, is mistakenly artificially inseminated by her doctor and becomes pregnant. Her mother, who was pregnant at a young age, worries relentlessly about Jane's future, and Jane's policeman boyfriend just happens to be investigating the biological father of the sperm. A hilarious twist on overly dramatic telenovelas, this show is charming and doesn't take itself too seriously.

Starring: Gina Rodriguez (*The Bold & the Beautiful*) and Andrea Navedo (*Guiding Light, One Life to Live*)

What you'll love: The guilty pleasure vibe of a soap opera with a wink at its own absurdity.

Airs: Mondays on the CW

Anna is a writer in San Francisco who staunchly refuses to recommend any comedy on CBS. She runs the movie commentary and review site, www.TheSnarkyReviewer.com.

Younger

After being mistaken for being in her 20s, recently divorced 40-year-old Liza decides to impersonate a 26-year-old in order to get her career in publishing back on track after years as a SAHM. Created by Darren Star (*Sex and the City*), this 30-minute show features strong female characters, younger male eye candy, and everything else that makes it an easy watch at the end of a long day.

Starring: Sutton Foster (*Bunheads*), Hilary Duff (*Lizzy McGuire*), Debbie Mazar (*Entourage*), and Miriam Shor (*The Good Wife*)

What you'll love: Watching Liza adapt to the 20-something single, childfree lifestyle and continually be reminded that millennials know nothing.

Airs: Wednesdays on TV Land

Modern Family

Now in its seventh season, this Golden Globe- and Emmy Award-winning comedy features the three branches of the Pritchett family as they raise kids, work, and try to maintain their relationships with each other.

Starring: Ed O'Neill (*Married...With Children*), Sofía Vergara (*Amas des Casa Desperadas*), and Julie Bowen (*Boston Legal*)

What You'll Love: The everyday ridiculousness of life.

Airs: Wednesdays on FOX

Veep

Featuring the office of the vice president, Selina Meyer, this dry, political satire has a similar feel to the absurdity of *The Office*, without the depressing feeling that you are living that life.

Starring: Julia Louis-Dreyfus (*Seinfeld*), Anna Chlumsky (*My Girl*), Tony Hale (*Arrested Development*), and Hugh Laurie (*House, M.D.*)

What you'll love: The utterly cynical take on personal relationships in a dysfunctional work environment, especially when it comes to Selina and her daughter.

Airs: Fifth season premieres on Sunday, April 24 on HBO

Join over 1,400 GGMG moms who use UrbanSitter.

GGMG membership perk from  **urbansitter**

Hire your next
babysitter or nanny
on urbansitter.com

\$45 CREDIT
for new customers

and

35% OFF
all UrbanSitter
fees

for

GGMG members only



» To redeem your exclusive GGMG discount, visit urbansitter.com/promo/GGMG

*Subject to UrbanSitter, Inc.'s Terms of Service. New customers receive 35% off UrbanSitter membership fees and \$45 credit to be used toward babysitter payments. Returning customers receive 35% off UrbanSitter fees (not valid for babysitter payments). Recipient must become a registered user of UrbanSitter with valid credit card on file to redeem offer. Restrictions include sitter availability and service to requested location (not all areas served). For GGMG Members only. Please note that your name and email will be shared with GGMG to confirm eligibility. UrbanSitter reserves the right to modify these terms. Valid through June 30, 2016.

Comedic Relief: A Parenting Survival Skill

When you can't find the funny in your own life, the blogosphere is there for you.

By Tara Hardesty

Photographs by Whitney Cooley Photography



Since becoming a parent a little over two years ago, I have experienced emotions in the extreme. In the beginning there was awe and panic. Then there was bewilderment and a “WTF were we thinking” feeling. Lately we are swaying between thinking we’ve got a handle on things and realizing that we’ll never have a handle on any of it.

We use the phrase “Big Feelings” in our household. Originally this was implemented to describe the amazing ability my son has to swing from happily playing in the garage to full emotional meltdown, complete with giant tears and the

limp-noodle effect.

We have realized that we need one thing to survive all of the Big Feelings: humor. Levity, any reason to laugh, helps release some pressure and ease the extremes of parenting.

Some of us are funny, or have husbands or close friends who make us laugh. Luckily I find myself pretty hilarious most of the time.

But on those days that I just can’t muster a laugh, or when I am sure parenting is going to swallow me whole, I turn to humorous parent bloggers.

There are a wide variety of parenting blogs out there. Whatever your type, there is an author out there who you will find relatable. The following excerpts are reprinted with permission of the authors.

“The Ugly Volvo” (theuglyvolvo.com)

Just recently I was lamenting the epic struggle that is getting a 2-year-old dressed. Each item of clothing requires a negotiation (especially pants, for some reason). After feeling frustrated, wondering why my child hates pants and if he will ever get dressed like a normal person, I stumbled upon an *Ugly Volvo* post that reminded me that pants protests are part of the very fabric of being 2. A writer and standup comic living in New Jersey, Raquel D’Apice is witty and has a knack for capturing the perspective of a toddler. Raquel nails the everyday parenting struggles that can be so unnerving. I look forward to reading her book, *Welcome to the Club*, coming out this fall.

I first discovered *The Ugly Volvo* with the post, “Toddler Course Catalogue: Spring 2015.” Speaking directly to the toddler, the catalogue breaks down popular topics like “Introduction to Not Sharing” and “Intro to Food Refusal.” Or two of my favorites....

Pants and How Not to Wear Them

This beginner-level class takes you through the steps of why your parents insist on your wearing pants (something about social norms and/or cold weather) and gives you helpful tips on how to fight back. Bicycle kicks not working? Mediocre results with your tried and true method of shrieking, “NO PANTS! NO PANTS! STOP, STOP, STOP IT!”? Let our team of experts (i.e., 4-year-olds) take you through the steps of “adamant refusal.” (Wednesdays and Fridays, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.)

Walking Slowly

Class begins at 4 p.m. and is held in a building 200 feet from campus down a road littered with interestingly shaped sticks and little pieces of paper. Anyone arriving on time receives a failing grade. (Wednesdays and Fridays, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.)

“Fatherly” (fatherly.com)

Hip website *Fatherly* offers a mix of parenting advice, product recommendations, and dad-centric news. It also has an entire section titled “Humor” to help you laugh your way through parenting. The site was created this year by Simon Isaacs and Mike Rothman, who aim to give dads the information and tools they need to maintain their “coolness quotient.”

Though it’s focused on dads, I find much of Fatherly’s content highly amusing and am

all this snot come from?” sits this humdinger: “Why is it so f–king painful to step on a Lego?” When it comes to your kid’s sleep habits and bodily fluids, you’re on your own. When it comes to that last one, though, the geniuses at *Today I Found Out* have you covered:

- A single Lego can bear up to **4,240 Newtons of force**, or weights in excess of 953 pounds, before it starts to deform. They are made of unforgiving material and care not for your foot.
- Speaking of your foot, it’s one of the most

We have realized that we need one thing to survive all of the Big Feelings: humor. Levity, any reason to laugh, helps release some pressure and ease the extremes of parenting.

certain many other moms will too. The perspective is unique and often gives me a quick glimpse into how my other half may feel when he steps on a Lego. Here’s an excerpt from a favorite post, tackling a question we’ve all asked ourselves at some point.

Why Does It Hurt So Much to Step on a Lego?

On the Mount Rushmore of parenting questions, alongside things like, “Is that sleeping baby breathing?” and “Where does

sensitive areas of the human body and contains **100–200,000 exteroceptors**. Those are nerve endings that gather feedback from the outside world—things like the lush softness of freshly cut grass or the excruciating pain of a sharp-edged, 2.25 square-centimeter plastic brick—and ports it straight to your brain.

- Said soles are subject to significant impact forces. Just walking slowly can produce impact forces twice your body weight.
- A 165-pound person standing on a single



Lego will put those 100–200,000 exteroceptors under **3,262,222 pascals** of pressure, or 32 times what they’re under when you’re relaxing on the couch (where you’re undoubtedly sitting on a Lego).

That last stat is before you factor in the force of impact while walking. Unless you’re weighing in at 476.5 pounds and could maybe snap the brick in half, stepping on a Lego is guaranteed to stimulate your nervous system in an extremely concentrated, uncomfortable manner. So, now you know, and knowing is half the battle. The other half is hopping around on one foot and loudly cursing all things Danish.

Additionally, make sure to check out these other *Fatherly* posts: “Everything You Need to Know about Parenting in 11 Chris Rock Quotes” and “A Navy SEAL’s Tips on How to Dominate Hide-and-Seek.”

“The Honest Toddler”

(thehonesttoddler.com)

Bunmi Laditan, the author of *The Honest Toddler*, has a sharp sense of humor and dry style that make *The Honest Toddler* stand out in the funny parenting blogosphere. Many posts are accompanied by images that drive home the differences in how moms and toddlers see the world. Bunmi is also the author of two books, *The Honest Toddler, A Child’s Guide to Parenting* and *Toddlers Are A**holes, It’s Not Your Fault*.

You’ll laugh your way through “10 Thoughts Your Child Has About Potty Training,” “Saturday Nights Before Kids And After,” and the following post:

8 Things Your Toddler Needs Right Now

- 1. **Your undivided attention.** Turn off your phone. Don’t just make the screen black, turn it off. Hold the power button for 10 seconds. I have a story to share with you. It has no beginning, end, nouns, or plot, but don’t you dare interrupt or I’ll have to start over.
- 2. **A snack.** Toddlers generally need to refuel every 45–60 seconds. It would be better if you just didn’t sit down. I’ll have whatever we ran out of yesterday. A lot of it.
- 3. **A snuggle.** Toddlers love affection. You don’t mind if I sit in your lap, do you? What

are you reading? Let’s go ahead and close that laptop. Whoever you’re talking to on Skype surely isn’t as important as your child, now are they? I sat on your bladder for nine months, why should today be any different? Let’s stay like this forever.

- 4. **Your food.** What’s that you have now? What is it? It looks like you’re enjoying yourself. When you die everything you own will be mine so technically whatever’s in that plate belongs to me. I’ll take that bite now. Delicious. Six more should do the trick. Three more. Two more. Obviously I’m still growing so the last bite should be mine. Thank you.
- 5. **Whatever is on the counter.** What do you keep up there anyway? Secret candy? Gold coins? I don’t trust you. I’m gonna need to push up a chair and see for myself. Spoiler alert: you’re going to need a replacement driver’s license soon.
- 6. **Get off the phone.** Who you chatting with there, mate? Got yourself a friend there, do you? What did I say about trying to contact the outside? You can hang up immediately or I can motivate you, the choice is yours. I’ve already left you a surprise somewhere in our home as punishment for this infraction. You’ll have to sniff it out. Don’t do this again.
- 7. **Milk.** No, juice. No, milk. Maybe juice. Can you make me a smoothie? Actually water

sounds good. I mean juice. I said chocolate milk. Why did you give me juice? Why do you hate me? You don’t listen. Do you speak English? I wanted milk. Open your ears. I hate you right now. I hate everything. Juice. Time out? What for? Hitting you? That was my hand, not me. Ok, but first can I have some water? Smoothie.

- 8. **To be held.** Toddlers’ legs are mostly for decoration. That said, I’ll be needing you to pick me up and take me on a stroll through our lovely home. When we’re out and about, bring the stroller if you must, but know that you’ll be pushing it with one hand while toting your most precious cargo (me) in the other. Better yet, carry me facing out at chest level so I can push the stroller. That burning sensation in your arms? That’s what unconditional love feels like. Enjoy.

A day doesn’t go by that I don’t think about something my son has done, or how I handled it, and wonder about this alternate universe that is parenting. Big Feelings. They are constant in our home and I’m thankful that there are people out there who not only experience them, but also share them with the rest of us who need a laugh. ❖

Tara is a freelance writer and marketing professional who specializes in commercial real estate ventures. She blogs at TheDailyWrites.com about the things she is passionate about, the hairy underbelly of life, motherhood, and entrepreneurship.





Natasha Maresca
photography



hello@natashamaresca.com415.692.1145www.natashamaresca.com

Considering a move to the East Bay?

Let us help bring your family home!





stephany jenkins
REALTOR
925.989.3318
stephany_jenkins@sbcglobal.net
www.stephanyjenkins.com

Buying? Selling?
Call me for Excellent Service!



sally kraft lang
MORTGAGE PROFESSIONAL
925.227.8514 sally@sallykraft.com
www.sallykraft.com

RATES AT HISTORIC LOWS.
CALL TODAY!

Your 2015-2016 Pleasanton Mother’s Club Membership Committee

Stephany’s CA BRE Lic #01311486. Sally’s NMLS # 237293 CA BRE Lic # 01381239

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM FOR NEW MOMS

Get rid of mommy-tummy
Restore pelvic floor function
Improve posture
Eliminate pain
Get back to exercise



Pilates-based rehabilitation
Individualized programs

•

Most insurances accepted
Ample free parking available

IMPACT PHYSICAL THERAPY & PILATES
3150 California Street, Suite #3, San Francisco
415-775-2319
impactptsf.com



Deconstructing Funny: A Parenting Survival Skill

All joking aside, humor is a social construct used to process conflict and diffuse tense situations.

By Bobby Shukla

Photographs by Albena Ilieva Photography

In 2012, a week before she turned 41, comedian Tig Notaro was hospitalized with a bacteria that was essentially eating her digestive tract alive. A week later her mother died suddenly and unexpectedly. She then suffered a serious break-up. Two months later, still reeling from her mother's death, Notaro was diagnosed with breast cancer. Upon getting the news, as described in the documentary *Tig*, everything came to her as funny. The world was hurling one major tragedy after another at her, and her reaction was to laugh at the absurdity of it all. The day after the cancer diagnosis, Notaro kept a prior commitment to perform stand-up, believing it to be her last performance. Her set that night focused on the comedy interspersed within the series of tragic events in her life, like how the hospital where her mother died later sent a questionnaire addressed to her mother asking how she enjoyed her stay. Notaro got big laughs, along with some tears, and the show immediately went viral.

Death and cancer are not obvious topics for comedy, but this example, along with many others, demonstrates that it is possible to find humor in virtually anything, even the darkest of subjects. The quest to understand and explain humor is certainly not new; recently, however, the study of humor, its science and psychology, has emerged as a serious academic discipline. While it remains a developing field, contemporary humor scientists agree that humor has a greater function than to merely provide short flashes

of joy. Humor's role in the evolution of the human race is far more compelling and, in fact, very serious.

Evolutionary origins

In order to gain insight into humor's utility, many humor scientists begin by asking, "Why do we laugh?" An obvious way to answer this question might be to deconstruct a good joke. However, Robert R. Provine, neuroscientist and professor of psychology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and author of *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*, found that most laughter has nothing to do with jokes. Based on his research, which involved observing people in their daily lives, only 10

Humor has the power to diffuse, even infinitesimally, the sheer weight of horrifying situations.

to 20 percent of laughs were in response to jokes. Most laughter occurs in response to benign comments like, "I'll see you later," or "I see your point." Provine has theorized that laughter is ultimately a form of communication and a social act which evolved into speech. This would explain why laughter so often punctuates speech and is not necessarily humor-related. According to Provine, human laughter evolved from the labored breathing of physical play ("pant-pant" evolved into "ha-ha").

While communication may explain the evolutionary origins of laughter, in his recent book, *Ha!: The Science of When We Laugh and Why*, cognitive neuroscientist Scott Weems argues that the evolutionary role of humor, as distinct from laughter, is to process conflict. He cites studies showing that humor is processed in the part of the brain also responsible for managing conflict. When the brain experiences humor, however, the brain's pleasure centers are also active. This explains why things are often funny when they defy expectation, which might more precisely be described as the moment we recognize the conflict in a concept, idea, or joke. For Weems, the experience of humor is critical mental exercise for the human brain. Weems did, in fact, deconstruct jokes, finding that they have three basic components: constructing—sorting through knowledge, experience, and expectations; reckoning—releasing our mistaken expectations; resolving—reaching a satisfying, often

surprising conclusion. Weems argues that these same components are present during problem-solving. The conflict we recognize in jokes makes us better problem-solvers, decision-makers, and learners, and can even help us get along with others. In short, for Weems, "Detecting errors is how our brains turn conflict to reward."

The great diffuser

Of course, not all conflict our brains encounter produces humor. In fact, most conflict produces stress, anxiety, and more conflict. Peter McGraw, Associate Professor of Marketing and Psychology at the University of Colorado at Boulder, along with researcher

Caleb Warren at Texas A&M University, developed a theory to account for the type of conflict which results in humor called "benign violation theory." Building on work by linguist Tom Veatch and existing humor theories, the benign violation theory proposes that humor occurs under the following conditions: (1) a situation is a violation, (2) the situation is benign, and (3) both perceptions occur simultaneously. In other more simple terms, McGraw explains: "People laugh at things that are wrong but okay."

The benign violation theory does not explain the success of Notaro's comedy act, however. Nothing at the time was okay. Her confrontation with death, both her mother's and her own, was real and contemporaneous, yet she reacted with laughter and so did the audience when she shared her story. Another example of such a situation involves the mid-September 2001 issue of the satirical newspaper, *The Onion*. Then editor Carol Kolb and her team made a bold and risky choice to devote the entire issue to jokes surrounding the tragedy immediately following a clearly not-humorous act of international terrorism. In an interview printed in *Poking a Dead Frog: Conversations with Today's Top Comedy Writers* by Mike Sacks, Kolb explained that the paper chose to tackle 9/11 because other topics seemed inconsequential at the time. *The Onion* did not intend to be disrespectful or make light of the situation. Kolb hoped to

make things "an infinitesimal degree better by giving people a break from all the horror." The writers avoided faux headlines like "We Told You So, America!" or ones that were simply devoted to flag-waving. Instead, they sought to capture, in a funny way, the sadness and confusion people felt at the time with headlines like, "Not Knowing What Else to Do, Woman Bakes American-Flag Cake." The risk paid off. As in Notaro's case, readers reported laughing and crying at the stories and many were appreciative of the paper's choice to address the tragedy that was on everyone's minds.

In examining the presence of humor in unresolved, difficult situations like these, it is apparent that humor has the power to diffuse, even infinitesimally, the sheer weight of horrifying situations. Humor can also provide catharsis for the brain's reactions to daily stress or anxiety. According to Weems, this is also why people laugh a little, apparently for no reason, during new greetings; it diffuses the awkwardness or anxiety of the meeting.

A social pursuit

Notably, the power of humor to relieve anxiety increases when we laugh with others, highlighting another crucial element of humor: it is a social construct, and most useful when it solidifies established or fosters new relationships.

Neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp and researcher Jeff Burgdorf, in their studies at Bowling Green State University, reached the conclusion that human laughter evolved from social interactions by studying tickling. More specifically, Panksepp and Burgdorf tickled rats, sometimes into hysterics. In short, the tickle response generates social bonding. When rats are tickled or engaged in other playful activities, they experience social joy that they vocalize through chirping, which, according to Panksepp, is a primordial form of laughter. Significantly, their research found that rats who were kept away from other rats sought out tickling by humans more than rats housed with other rats. The study also found a correlation between more frequent "laughter" (chirping) and optimism. (This was determined by tests involving tonal sounds which signaled to the rats to push a lever for

food. When an ambiguous tonal sound was given, the more-tickled rats pushed the lever—believing it might deliver food—more often than the less-tickled rats.)

Tickling as a social exercise is also part of Provine’s theory that laughter’s origins lie in primitive forms of communication. Provine believes the fact that individuals cannot tickle themselves demonstrates that tickling is, above all else, a social scenario. In fact, Provine’s studies have repeatedly shown that people laugh much harder in a group than while alone, even if they experienced the same sources of humor in each setting. Based on Provine’s research, we are 30 times more likely to laugh around other people than when we are alone, which explains the proliferation of sitcom laugh-tracks.

The social quality of humor might explain a fascinating account of a laughter epidemic which occurred in 1962 in the Tanganyika area of what is now Tanzania. It began with three girls (12 to 18 years old) at an all-girls’ school who started laughing in class and could not stop. The laughter soon spread, and it is reported that 95 of the school’s 159 students were affected, forcing the school to shut down for several months. Once home, the schoolchildren were still unable to stop laughing, and the laughter spread to their families and the community at large, affecting thousands, leaving several towns consumed with laughter for months. Reports of the duration of the epidemic ranged from six to 18 months. While the Tanganyika Laughter Epidemic of 1962 is well known among humor scientists, few have been able to adequately explain it, an endeavor made more difficult by the lack of good written records on the subject. Christian F. Hempelmann, Assistant Professor of Computational Linguistics at Texas A&M University, theorized that the laughing, which was also accompanied by crying, was akin to mass hysteria and was an anxiety-related symptom that resulted from societal pressures at the time, as Tanganyika had just won its independence. In any case, the example underscores the strength of the communal aspects of laughter and its suggestive and captivating social power.



Health benefits

While laughter may be contagious, studies showing its numerous health benefits make it more likely to ameliorate a health epidemic than to become one. Studies have shown that laughter can lead to increases in heart rate, respiratory rate, respiratory depth, and oxygen consumption. These effects on the

body encourage muscle relaxation which is accompanied by a decrease in heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure (Official Publication of The College of Family Physicians of Canada, October 2009).

Professor Lee Berk at Loma Linda University in California has studied the health benefits of laughter for close to 30 years. Berk



maintains that laughter literally de-stresses the body by causing the reciprocal, or opposite, effects of stress: shutting down the release of stress hormones, like cortisol, and triggering the production of dopamine, a neurochemical that calms us and makes us feel good.

[L]aughter...proved to me that, even as my body was devastated and my spirit challenged, I was still a vital human.

The de-stressing effect of laughter may also explain studies which show that it strengthens the immune system. Western Kentucky University researchers found that laughing generates a greater number of cells which the body uses to attack disease. Positive, happy thoughts release neuropeptides to actively fight chemicals released by a body experiencing stress.

Studies also show that laughing may even improve memory. Berk says laughter seems to induce “gamma” frequencies, the type of brain waves observed among experienced meditators. These waves synchronize neuronal activity, which strengthens mental

recall. Berk studied healthy adults in their 60s and 70s by measuring their cortisol levels (a stress hormone) and short-term memory. The control group was asked to sit in silence without stimulus (including talking, reading, or viewing their phones), while the “humor” group watched funny videos. After 20

minutes, Berk tested saliva samples (for cortisol) and gave all subjects a short memory test. The humor group performed the memorization test significantly better, displaying double the recall ability of the control group. The humor group also showed a marked decrease in cortisol levels after watching the funny videos, while the cortisol levels of the non-humor group decreased just slightly after their 20 minutes of silence.

Laughter and humor have also proven to be important therapeutic allies in a variety of medical fields and settings, from geriatrics and oncology to general patient care. Studies have shown that 50 percent of cancer patients

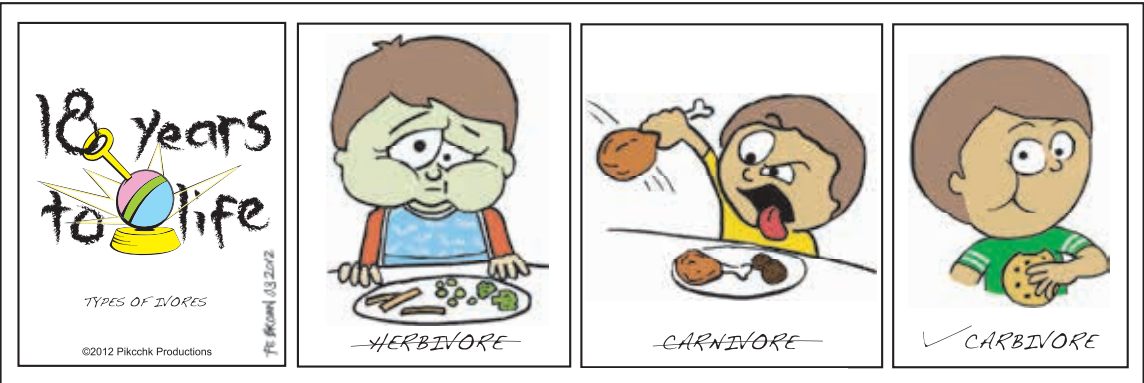
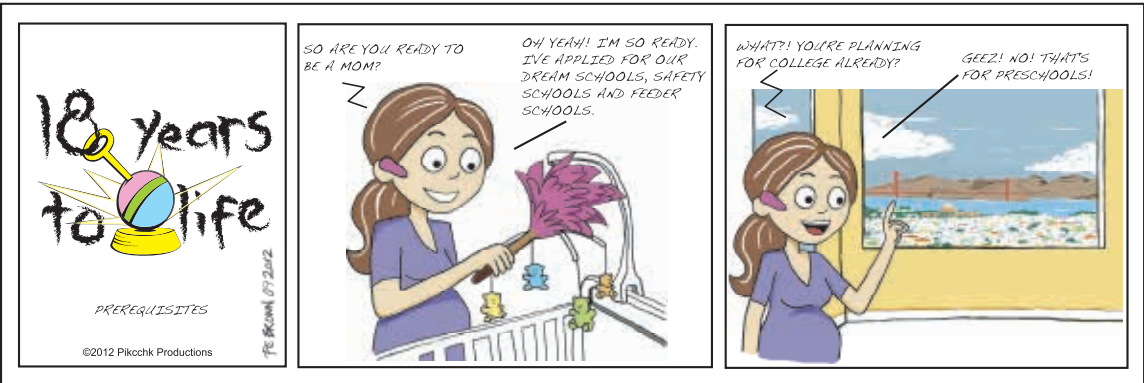
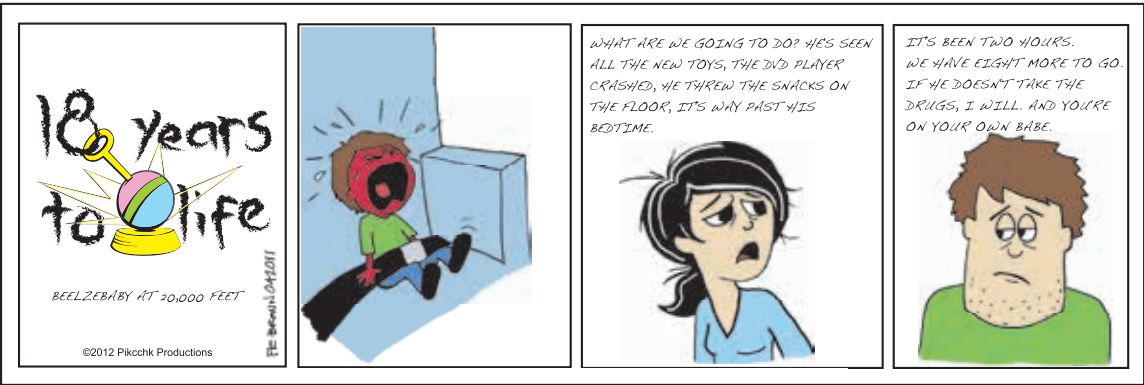
used humor as part of their therapy (Official Publication of The College of Family Physicians of Canada, October 2009). A powerful testimony by comedian and cancer survivor Scott Burton demonstrates its therapeutic effects: “The other reactions; anger, depression, suppression, denial, took a little piece of me with them. Each made me feel just a little less human. Yet laughter made me more open to ideas, more inviting to others, and even a little stronger inside. It proved to me that, even as my body was devastated and my spirit challenged, I was still a vital human.”

Science, psychology and giggling rats aside, the simple reason for laughter is self-evident: it feels good. And, depending on the circumstances, it makes life more pleasurable and more bearable, leaving each of us with little choice but to pursue it with abandon. ❖

Bobby is a lawyer who represents employees in a variety of employment law areas, including discrimination, harassment, disability accommodation, retaliation, whistle-blowing, and severance negotiations. Thinking about and enjoying humor—the funny parts, not its science—is one of her favorite pastimes.

18 Years to Life

From March 2011 to December 2012, GGMG member Fe Brown created an original comic strip for the GGMG magazine. Her often self-deprecating humor highlights timeless parenting moments.



we're here to help

Speech & language assessments, therapy and social skills groups



tuLIPS
SPEECH THERAPY, LLC

tuLIPS Speech Therapy is located in the heart of Cow Hollow on Union Street. We specialize in speech, language, and social therapies. Each patient is treated as an individual through customized treatment plans that are play based, highly motivating and fun!

tuLIPS also offers Little Bloomers academic readiness program, for children ages 2-5, and Michelle Winner Garcia social skills programs. Call to learn more about our services and how tuLIPS can help your child achieve the best communication possible!

1640 Union Street • San Francisco • California • 94123
www.tulipstherapy.com • 415.567.8133

WE EDUCATE, NURTURE AND
CARE FOR PARENTS AFTER THE
BIRTH OF THEIR BABY.

- POSTPARTUM CARE
- BREASTFEEDING AND BOTTLE SUPPORT
- SLEEP EDUCATION
- INFANT MASSAGE
- FAMILY ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE
- LOCAL RESOURCES



BAY AREA
NIGHT DOULAS

TEL: (415) 317-6334

WWW.BAYAREANIGHTDOULAS.COM



make BEAUTIFUL
music TOGETHER.

Come spend time with your kids
in our exciting family classes—
a rich musical environment
that encourages your child to
explore the joy of music.
Find out what beautiful music
you and your family can
make together.

MUSIC
TOGETHER®
BRINGING HARMONY HOME®

SFMUSICTOGETHER.COM
INFO@SFMUSICTOGETHER.COM

SCHEDULE A FREE DEMO
ON OUR WEBSITE.

\$15.00 OFF FOR
NEW GGMG FAMILIES.
EMAIL FOR A COUPON CODE.

SAN FRANCISCO:
HAIGHT • INNER SUNSET • MARINA

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

The **Bernal Heights/Glen Park** Neighborhood Meetup subgroup is so much more than our name implies: our moms hail from all over southeast San Francisco and we welcome GGMG members from anywhere! Our members live in Bayview, Bernal Heights, Candlestick Park, Crocker-Amazon, Glen Park, Excelsior, Ingleside, Mission Terrace, Oceanview, Outer Mission, Portola, Sunnyside, Visitacion Valley, and even Daly City.

The Bernal/Glen group hosts many activities for moms and kids of all ages. You'll find us at Sunnyside Playground every Tuesday, and we have a rotating Friday morning play date to utilize the wonderful parks and play spaces in this part of the city. Once a month, we host a weekend play date for the whole family as well as a Moms Night Out at a local restaurant.

Megan Bushnell (mom to Maslan and Eleanor) has served as the Bernal/Glen director for over two years. Our fabulous ambassadors, who are responsible for hosting and organizing our multitude of play dates, include Olivia Adams (Wes and Isadora), Deepa Gandhi (Nisha and Raahi), Amy Parke (Raymond and Louise), Christine Tantoco (Olivia and Alexander), and Miho Yamaoka (Rachael).

Some of our 2015 events included a Wear Your Halloween Costume Again party, a Moms Night In dinner at a member's house, and an Ornament Decorating Party. Join our subgroup on BigTent to keep apprised of our awesome calendar of events, including these in March:

Bernal/Glen March Moms Night Out at Champa Garden

Relax, meet other moms in the neighborhood, and enjoy delicious Thai food! GGMG will pay for a few appetizers. RSVP on BigTent so we know how many moms to expect.

- DATE:** Friday, March 4
- TIME:** 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 613 Faxon Ave.
- COST:** TBD

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96002197



Spring Egg Hunt

Join us for an early spring egg hunt and light snacks at a neighborhood mom's house. This is a great way to meet moms and families with children nearby.

- DATE:** Saturday, March 12
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** RSVP for the address
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/95995706

Friday Fun at Bernal Heights Park

Meet at the rock maze at 10 a.m. (near the end of Bernal Heights Boulevard), then we'll head to the giant slide at Esmeralda and Winfield Streets. RSVP so we can make sure to find you at either location.

- DATE:** Friday, March 18
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** Bernal Heights Park
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/95997830

Get connected

Connect with other moms in your neighborhood by joining your Neighborhood Meetup subgroup on BigTent. From wine nights to playgroups, there are 11 neighborhoods hosting events every week! Contact Tracy at andreassen.tracy@gmail.com for more information on what's happening in your neighborhood.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Develop Your Personal Brand

Whether you are an entrepreneur, working and ready for a promotion, or considering work re-entry, you need a personal brand to share your story concisely and in a way that sparks interest and furthers conversation. This workshop will help you identify what differentiates you. We will brainstorm and give feedback, and you will leave with a personal brand you can start testing immediately. Join Courtney Young-Law, Ed.D., the founder of Fundamentum, as she transforms people into protagonists in their career.

- DATE:** Thursday, March 3
- TIME:** Noon to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** TBD
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: *RSVP on BigTent.*

Style Strategy Session with Le Tote

Motherhood is a time of change and it can be a challenge to re-define your style both in and out of the office. We are partnering with Le Tote for this fun fashion event. Topics will include dressing to flatter your physique, accessories and other ways to polish your look, interview looks for different industries, and spring 2016 trends. Wine and snacks will be served.

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 22
- TIME:** 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** Le Tote Headquarters
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: *RSVP on BigTent.*

JUST FOR MOMS

After Dark at the Exploratorium: Pairings

Join us at the Exploratorium for robust presentations and refreshing conversations designed to inspire your scientific palate alongside delectable tasting menus by Chef Loretta Keller.

- DATE:** Thursday, March 10
- TIME:** 6 to 10 p.m.
- PLACE:** Exploratorium, Pier 15
- COST:** With GGMG discount: \$5.80

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/96029238

Monthly Downtown Working Moms Lunch at Specialty's Cafe

Whether you're a working mom or just want to connect with other GGMG moms, join us downtown for a meet-up over lunch. This is a great opportunity to meet others and discuss balancing work and home life. Bring or buy your own lunch and we'll provide the coffee. A GGMG volunteer will be in attendance to greet everyone. All are welcome!

- DATE:** Friday, March 25
- TIME:** Noon to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** 369 Pine St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: *RSVP on BigTent.*

MEMBERSHIP

Playgroup Formation Event at Recess

Make it a New Year's resolution to join a playgroup for you and baby. Forge new connections, find an outlet to share and grow, explore kid-friendly spots, and build a support network. We'll make the night fun with wine and drinks, finger food, mini cupcakes, and a raffle. Come meet moms with similarly aged children and learn how to launch your own playgroup!

- DATE:** Monday, March 21
- TIME:** 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- PLACE:** 470 Carolina St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/95936607

PARENT EDUCATION

GGMG Presents: Connecting with Your Child, with Karen Wolfe, at Sports Basement

This talk on Hand in Hand Parenting will introduce you to a few paradigm-shifting tools to set limits effectively, understand and address your child's behavior, and feel closer to your child. We will address the fundamentals of discipline, how to curb "bad" behavior, and ways you can connect to yourself and your child again. Karen Wolfe is a marriage and child therapist based out of San Francisco and Lafayette. Co-hosted by Parent Education and Community Support.

- DATE:** Wednesday, March 16
- TIME:** 7 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1590 Bryant St., in the Grotto room
- COST:** \$10

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96025529

Helping Toddlers (and Parents!) Sleep at RECESS

If your child isn't sleeping through the night, it's likely you aren't either. The toddler years bring all sorts of challenges, including changes in sleep issues. Join sleep expert Angelique Millette as we discuss some of the common trouble spots for 12- to 36-month-olds.

- DATE:** Tuesday March 22
- TIME:** 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 470 Carolina St.
- COST:** \$38 individual / \$58 couple (save \$5 with promo code GGMG15)

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Parent Education Presents: Parenting Without Fear at Sports Basement

Join us for an evening with Darcy Campbell, director of Cow Hollow School, and learn more about how to parent for the world you want to exist.

- DATE:** Wednesday, March 23
- TIME:** 7 to 8:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 610 Old Mason St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: *RSVP on BigTent.*

Committee Spotlight: *Social Media*

With Board Liaison for External Communications Addie Bjornsen

What types of activities or projects do you undertake?

In addition to posting content to our Facebook page that we think will be relevant to our members and their interests, we work with other GGMG committees to help promote their events. When holding contests and giveaways, we try to partner with local businesses that provide things that moms really want (e.g., childcare credits, gift certificates to book stores).

What has been an unexpected benefit of being involved with the Social Media Committee?

You have an excuse to look at Facebook all day!

How do you know when you are making a difference?

Facebook Insights provide us with detailed information about our postings beyond just “likes.” We can learn how engaging posts are and how many times they have been shared in order to better customize our content.

Who are your current volunteers?

Our Chair is Angie Kemp and our volunteers are Anna Gracia, Rutuja Khanzode, and Yocelin Mendivil.

What’s next for the Social Media team?

Expanding to Pinterest and Twitter.

How can interested GGMG members get involved in the Social Media Committee?

Committees who need their events promoted can email socialmedia@gmg.org with the content of what they want posted on Facebook (keep it brief!). If anyone is interested in volunteering with us, contact recruiting@gmg.org.

Partnerships

GGMG Partnerships manages GGMG’s relationships with the organizations that provide our membership perks. For business owners who would like to work with GGMG, information about our partnership programs—including how to enroll—is now available at gmg.org/partnerprograms.html.

Partners of GGMG offer year-round, exclusive perks to every GGMG member. Remember to claim free fitness passes at the JCCSF and free access to play spaces at Peekadoodle Kidsclub, Recess, and more. For details, visit gmg.org/partnerships.html.

Friends of GGMG is our new, revamped discount program. It currently features a variety of both traditional and innovative businesses, from spas and kids’ clothing stores to subscription services for toys and books. For a public listing of businesses currently in the program, see gmg.org/friends.html. GGMG members can see details of the discounts, and instructions on how to claim the discounts, in the Members-Only area within BigTent. Look for the “Friends of GGMG Benefits” tag in the files section.

Lastly, remember to keep an eye out for promotions from Neighbors of GGMG in the monthly Board Bulletin email, delivered to your inboxes around the 15th of every month.

We are very excited about bringing these membership perks to you! Send us feedback at partnerships@gmg.org.

Recruiting

Volunteer With GGMG Today!

Volunteering with GGMG is a great way to give back to a community that does so many things for moms in the Bay Area. Have you thought about volunteering with GGMG? There are many benefits to being a volunteer—from extra discounts to making lifelong friendships—and we hope you get as much as you give! Reach out to us today at volunteer@gmg.org to find out more information.

CURRENT OPENINGS:

- **Community Support:** Co-Chair for Events, an Events Volunteer, two Member Support Volunteers, and a Member Support Special Project Volunteer
- **Kids Activities:** Two Co-Chairs
- **Magazine:** Photographer, Writer
- **Neighborhood Meetups:** Committee Co-Chair, Directors for Haight, Nob Hill/North Beach, NOPA/Alamo, and Ambassadors for Haight/Cole Valley, Mission, and Richmond
- **Recruiting:** Co-Chair
- **Social Events:** Two Co-Chairs, Planning Committee Member

Member Support

There may be no more devastating moment in your life than when your partner tells you they are moving out. Or perhaps it gets worse when they demand custody of your precious children. Even if you initiated the separation, the initial phase of single motherhood can be fraught with tears, arguments, and insecurity. Other single moms started out single and learned to cope with the ups and downs of parenthood without a partner from the get-go. Whether it’s a physical issue (installing a carseat that just won’t fit without an extra hand) or making a difficult decision about your child’s future (choosing a school), parenting alone is lonely.

But you are not alone. GGMG Member Support created a single moms support group with these issues in mind. We meet monthly, currently the third Saturday of each month, from 3 to 5 p.m. at a local library. Meetings are facilitated, and babysitting is provided free of charge. You can also join our dedicated BigTent forum at: tinyurl.com/z3tgaoh.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TalkLine offers 24/7 phone advice, as well as in-person, sliding-scale therapy with onsite babysitting. You can reach them at talklineforparents.org or 415.441.5437.

Homeless Prenatal Program offers support for moms and pregnant women dealing with poverty. You do not need to be homeless to receive advice. You can best get help by arriving for intake as described on their webpage homelessprenatal.org/get-help or by calling 415.546.6756.

Casa de las Madres offers comprehensive help to families dealing with domestic violence. You can reach them at lacasa.org or 877.503.1850.

Single Moms by Choice has both a Yahoo! and a Facebook group.

Bay Area Single Parents is a vibrant community on both Meetup and Facebook and has a single moms’ subgroup.

You can find other GGMG member-recommended resources, including legal and therapy, at gmg.org/member_support_resources/resources.html.





Andrea Weeks

SPECIAL GMB DISCOUNTS

TUTU School®

tutuschool.com • 415-734-8840

CLASSES PARTIES CAMPS.

SUPPORT FOR MOMS & the people who love them



Finding a therapist who is a good match for you is important. Call for a free 20 minute phone consultation.

NOE VALLEY THERAPY
Dr. Karly Kaplan, PsyD
CA Lic. # PSY24804

3841 24th Street, San Francisco
415.390.5720 www.noevalleytherapy.com
motheringsupport@noevalleytherapy.com

I Help My Clients Make Excellent Investment Decisions

Advising my clients in finding the best value in a competitive market! Recent transactions include:

- 1215 Dolores Street- ACQUIRED FOR \$135K BELOW PREVIOUS PURCHASE PRICE
- 690 Market Street- ACQUIRED FOR \$150K BELOW PREVIOUS PURCHASE PRICE
- 2940 Clement Street- SOLD OFF MARKET, SAVING BUYERS \$\$\$


*“Let me assist you
with all your real
estate needs!”*



Ying He
REALTOR®, MBA
415.941.1581
yinghe@zephyrsf.com
CalBRE# 01964556



ZEPHYR
REAL ESTATE



KATHLEEN KAROL
night doula

"I started my career as a Registered Nurse, working extensively in labor and delivery, where I attended hundreds of births and provided early infant care and breastfeeding support to new moms.

As a postpartum night Doula, I provide quality care and supportive assistance for newborns and mothers."

(925) 899-1234
kathleenjrkarol@gmail.com
www.kathleenjrkarol.com

BEAUTY — AND THE — CUTIE PHOTOGRAPHY

OUTDOOR / IN-STUDIO

CHILDREN | MATERNITY | FAMILY | PET






EMAIL : [INFO@BEAUTYANDTHECUTIE.COM](mailto:info@beautyandthecutie.com)
851 CALIFORNIA DRIVE, BURLINGAME, CA 94010
(510) 265-4223
WWW.BEAUTYANDTHECUTIE.COM

Jennifer Katz, Inc. provides individualized speech and language services to children of all ages. Realizing that one therapy approach doesn't fit all, our team provides customized therapy plans to support each family's unique needs.

- Contracted with all major insurance companies
- Clinic, home and school visits
- English, Spanish & Cantonese speaking therapists
- Individual and group therapy
- Two convenient locations

Jennifer Katz, inc.
speech-language therapy

Contact Us Today
415-550-8255 (TALK)
jennifer@katzspeech.com
katzspeech.com

Speech & Language Therapy Programs

- Receptive & expressive language delays and disorders
- Articulation & phonological disorders
- Motor speech disorders (apraxia & dysarthria)
- Social pragmatic deficits
- Nonverbal communication using AAC (alternative & augmentative communication)
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Auditory processing disorders
- Oral motor and feeding disorders
- Stuttering disorders
- Reading disorders

DOMAIN

MARIN

Marin is our domain. Let us make it yours.

Z

ZEPHYR

REAL ESTATE

Andrew Roth

415.786.6548

LIC# 01373928

Jenn Pfeiffer

415.302.3198

LIC# 01339863

DomainMarin.com



I ❤️ Mom

Laughing My Way Through Motherhood

By Juli Fraga

I used to be a funny person. Even as an introvert, during high school, college, and graduate school, I regularly made people laugh. While I didn't tell your standard knock-knock jokes, my off-the-cuff and quirky sense of humor allowed me to see the funniness in random, everyday life situations.

For example, during my 20s, a swarm of bats made their way into my old Victorian apartment. As I darted from them in the middle of the night, placing a call to animal control, I felt amused by the worker who arrived at my doorstep to take stock of my situation. The man wore a brown polyester uniform and a sunshine-yellow hat. He reminded me of a combination of my UPS delivery person and Mr. Furley from the television show, *Three's Company*. Before I knew it, he interrogated me about the bats.

"Where were the bats when you first saw them?" he asked.

Sadly, one bat had died. Before I knew it, he wrote down, "Bat, DOA," on his little orange pocket notepad.

After this interaction, I wrote a small essay about this quirky fellow and shared it with my friends. In the midst of studying for our comprehensive psychology exams, they rolled over with laughter and thanked me for telling such a funny story.

Once my daughter was born, now seven years ago, I lost the sense of humor I once had. Muddled in the day-to-day activities of parenting, I've jumped onto the motherhood carousel. As soon as my alarm goes off in the morning, I am packing her lunch, backpack, and making sure our household is awake and ready to depart for the day. I'm convinced that the consuming nature of these activities obscures my funny bone and I don't recognize the humor in situations like I did before.

Now my daughter is the household comedian, often without even trying. One afternoon she wrote a book called *How to Lose All of Your Friends*. In this crayon-illustrated construction paperback, she tells the reader "If you want to know how to lose your friends, just follow along with the numbered steps." Next, she says we can misplace our pals by "not sharing, bullying, being a bad sport, being gloomy, whining, lying, pushing, hitting, and simply by never having fun."

As I read her homemade creation, I had to stop myself from giggling uncontrollably. Not only had she written an advice manual for children, but there are also plenty of adults who could use these words of wisdom too.

My daughter's unfiltered life perspective repeatedly gives us the gift of laughter, a gift that many children bestow upon their parents. Who doesn't remember the '90s television show, *America's Funniest Home Videos*? These shows are a collage of our kid's funniest phrases. They provide an emotional exhale after a long day of mothering.

As a psychologist, I also recognize how humor helps our children process unforeseen stressful situations. For example, I overheard my daughter talking to her friend as I drove them home from school.

My daughter: "We used to have a cat named Shadow. He died, and his coal is in our basement."

Friend: "I have one of those, too. Our cat got caught in the tires. We have her coal, too."

Our cat passed away when my daughter was very young, but her friend's cat had died recently. While I found it funny that she said the cat's "coal" resides in our basement, I realized she was helping her friend cope with her cat's death by sharing a similar story. This interaction reminds me how laughter provides a universal cord—a thread that binds relationships—even in early friendships. While I might not crack the same jokes I once did before motherhood, I appreciate the way my daughter makes me laugh daily.

On a recent morning, she looked at me and asked, "When will the rain stop dancing?" Before I could answer, she replied, "Maybe this is the start of 'Al Minio.'" Once again, I chuckled under my

My daughter's unfiltered life perspective repeatedly gives us the gift of laughter, a gift that many children bestow upon their parents.

breath. Now, every time we have a rainy day, I think of the "Al Minio." I was so amused that she believed "El Niño" was pronounced "Al Minio" that I didn't bother to correct her.

As we slog through this wet winter, I ask her what she thinks about the rain. She tells me that the drought is ending and that the "Al Minio" is responsible for this change. I always chuckle when she shares these words. They reiterate that childhood is the one time in your life when people find joy in your mistakes, and this is advice I now take to heart, too. ❖

Juli Fraga is a psychologist, mother and writer. Her essays have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Brain Child Magazine, and The Guardian.



Golden Gate Mothers Group
P.O. Box 475866
San Francisco, CA 94147

Are you a San Francisco mom?
Want to receive this magazine?
Join GGGM today at www.ggm.org.

Presorted
First Class Mail
US Postage
PAID
Oakland, CA
Permit #2319

statement of purpose:

*nurture ourselves, our children,
our partners, and our community;
create an environment of support,
information sharing, and connection;
learn, teach, create, have fun, and
provide balance in our lives and in
the lives of our growing families.*



Are You Ready to let Organization Simplify Your Life?

We provide organizational solutions that relieve you of the heavy burdens at home and in the office. This collaborative process will enhance functionality by reducing excess, integrating systems of ease and fully utilizing essential items in new and original ways.



Dana is a member of GGGM. Dana is the founder and lead organizer of Dao Living, LLC. She lives in the Miraloma Park neighborhood of San Francisco with her husband, two boys and their dog Mazie. Dana has been organizing and re-configuring interior spaces since childhood. This evolved into meaningful work with others as she established strong connections between physical order and mental calm within her own space. Dana feels honored to support clients as they make similar discoveries along the path to simplicity and ease.

Dana A. Olsborg
Founder and Professional Organizer



415.341.5280



info@daoliving.com



www.daoliving.com