

FEBRUARY 2015



GGMG | GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine



I ♥ Caregivers

Kinder FUN Klub

Enjoy the company of other parents and toddlers while your little one plays in a safe and stimulating environment. GGMG members receive three passes to any JCCSF Kinder Fun Klub drop-in class – music, art, Spanish, dance or gym.



HOW TO REDEEM: 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.

 Jewish Community Center of San Francisco

3200 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94118 • jccsf.org/kinderfunklub



GGMG members enjoy exclusive discounts at the JCCSF on programs and activities for families, including swim lessons, Kinder Fun Klub, birthday parties, Fitness Center Membership and more. Learn more at jccsf.org/ggmg.

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

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www.ggmg.org

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New Arrivals

Letter from the Editor: Help Wanted

By Kirsten Pflieger



When Serenity was first born, I strongly resisted the idea of hiring help. I had many reasons—two adults should be able to care for one baby; I didn't want to pay someone to watch her sleep and I never knew when she was going to sleep; and I felt like I had to do productive things while someone else was watching her, and I just didn't have the energy. I didn't fully understand the concept of a mother's helper, and although I embraced having my house cleaned by professionals years ago, for some reason hiring someone for other mundane, daily household tasks felt uncomfortable to me.

We finally hired a part-time nanny when my daughter was about 11 months old. Looking back now, I can't believe I resisted for so long. When our second daughter was born, I didn't hesitate

to hand her off so that I could take a much needed nap, go for a walk, or just sit uninterrupted. Of course, I had the benefit of already having a caregiver that I trusted, but equally important, I understood that spending a bit of time taking care of myself was worth it.

Caregivers aren't just for the child; they are for the parents as well, and whether you are looking for full-time care or a few hours here and there, you can find the right person for your family. Jessica explores this concept and provides interviewing tips to help you narrow the field on page 16. Learn how to improve communication and maintain a professional relationship with caregivers who often become like family on page 18. Confused about taxes and paying "over" or "under" the table? On page 8, Tom Breedlove of *myhomepay.com* brings clarity. And on page 14, Juli helps us work through the emotional side of turning our precious little ones over to another person.

GGMG offers great resources in the search for child care—from forum posts and member recommendations to discounts with UrbanSitter and Wondersitter. I hope that each of you is receiving the care that you need.

Kirsten Pflieger lives in the Castro with her husband, Karl, and their two daughters, Serenity and Sierra. She can often be found walking down 18th Street at the speed of a 3-year-old on a scooter.

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Housekeeping

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

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

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Caregivers, husbands, coffee and chocolate, new beginnings, international time zone differences, German Christmas cookies, jetlag, two rounds of stomach flu, a flooded basement, a burglary, and a birthday party.

COMING NEXT: March—Extracurricular; April—Civic Engagement

CONTEST: Congratulations to Dena Mendelsohn, winner of the Skin Medical Spa package.

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

Letter from the Board: Evolving in 2015

By Sarah Soto

We are pleased to announce several exciting changes happening within Golden Gate Mothers Group in 2015. As of this month, our membership requirements have been extended to include mothers with children up to age 11 and to welcome members that have moved out of San Francisco to renew their membership. Members meeting this new demographic will have access to the forums, receive this magazine, and be welcome at GGMG sponsored events, however, we will not be planning targeted events until we have heard what you are looking for.

We heard the message within the members survey about your willingness to allow dads to join GGMG. Most of you encouraged it, but half of those who did so requested a separate women's only forum. Unfortunately, our current forum provider does not offer this option. For now, we have put the idea of extending GGMG to dads on hold and will explore the option again within the website redesign project.

Our playgroups committee has some exciting changes in store for 2015. First, is a dedicated playgroups subgroup for expectant and new mothers. This is where moms with babies ages 0 to 12 months and expectant moms regularly meet whether on maternity leave, returning to work, or staying home. The first of these groups, Infants and Prenatals Meetups led by GGMG volunteer Diana Smiljanic, meets weekly in the Marina. Recent subgroup forum discussions hint that playgroups in the southern part of the city may be coming soon. Visit www.bigtent.com/group/subgroup/gmg_infants/join to join. In addition, this team will continue to host playgroup formation events and is

experimenting with the idea of offering drop-in play dates every other month and rotating them around the city.

Toddler Playgroups has exciting changes ahead as well. Some groups are welcoming moms with kids of all ages, having more themed play dates, and planning mommy only events across neighborhoods. See page 22 for a sampling of Toddler Playgroup events this month.

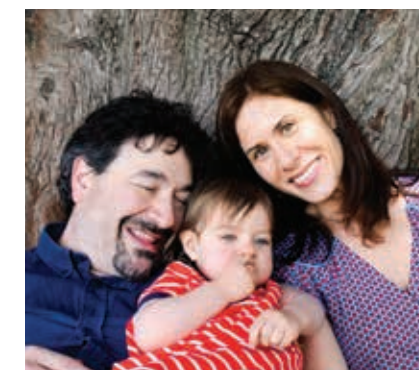
The GGMG Board and volunteers spent the last 3 months of 2014 planning for this year; all of us taking guidance from members' responses in the survey. We have lots of positive energy and are ready to make 2015 a memorable year!

Happy New Year!

Sarah Soto works full-time for Williams-Sonoma's information technology department. She has been a GGMG volunteer since 2009. Prior to her current role as board chair, she served as vice chair of the board and as chair of the Web Team. She lives with her sons, Isaac (6) and Gabriel (4), in San Francisco's Excelsior District.

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Volunteer of the Month



Congratulations to **Corinna Lu**, our February volunteer of the month! Cori began volunteering with GGMG as a copyeditor for the GGMG Magazine in January 2013, and currently serves on the Community Support team supporting the drives activities. She and her husband, Garett Dworman, are parents to their 2.5-year-old daughter Zoe.

WE WANT TO KNOW:

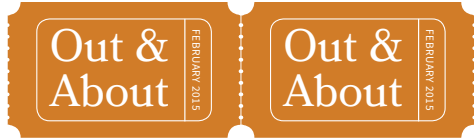
Best feature in your neighborhood: Restaurants; **City slicker or outdoor enthusiast:** Outdoor enthusiast; **Piece of baby/kid gear you could not live without:** Skip-hop diaper changing station

Cori will enjoy a free massage (child care included!) from the JCCSF. All GGMG members have access to discount membership and swim classes, free Kinder Fun Klub passes, and more through our partnership with the JCCSF.

Cabin Fever? Get Outside!

By Suzanne Barnecut

Baby, it's cold outside, maybe even a little bit rainy. But that doesn't mean we can't all still have fun. As much as the indoor fort made of blankets and dining room table is equal parts cozy and magical, the great outdoors is pretty fantastic too. Get a jump on spring fever and get moving.



The Great Baby Romp

(Bay Area Discovery Museum, March 1)

This family event allows you to sample San Francisco and Marin classes for kids 0 to 3 without long-term commitment. There's even a resource hall filled with resources specifically for urban parents. thegreatbabyromp.com



The Great Baby Romp

Beach Cleanups in Pacifica

(Various)

Join the Pacifica Beach Coalition for recurring monthly beach cleanups along the coast. It's like a treasure hunt, but with gloves! www.pacificabeachcoalition.org/beach-cleanups

Nature Walks in Lookout Cove

(Bay Area Discovery Museum, 3rd Wednesday of the month)

Take a break from playing to take a walk around Lookout Cove with National Park Ranger Lucy. She'll point out turkey vultures overhead, as well as other plants and animals. www.baykidsmuseum.org

A Magnificent Magnolias Walk

(San Francisco Botanical Garden, Daily)

Right in our own backyard, wander through one of San Francisco's stunning treasures on either a self-guided or docent-led tour. A perfect activity for you and your little Valentine(s). www.tinyurl.com/p2pgd4v

Whale Watching

(Point Reyes, Daily)

Use your binoculars to spot gray whales in their annual migration between Alaska and Baja California. Between New Year's and Easter, the park runs shuttle buses from the Drakes Beach parking lot. www.nps.gov

Sausalito Wooden Boat Tour

(Saturdays and Sundays)

This 3-hour walking tour, for kids ages 2 and up, will show your family a new side of Sausalito, from house-boat communities and the Liberty shipyards to art studios and the Wooden Boat Center. www.sausalitowoodenboattour.com

Tidepooling

(Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, 1st and 3rd weeks in February)

Families can explore the tidepools in this protected marine area at Moss Beach. You may even spot some sea lions. No dogs permitted. Be sure to check dates and times for the lowest tides. www.fitzgeraldreserve.org



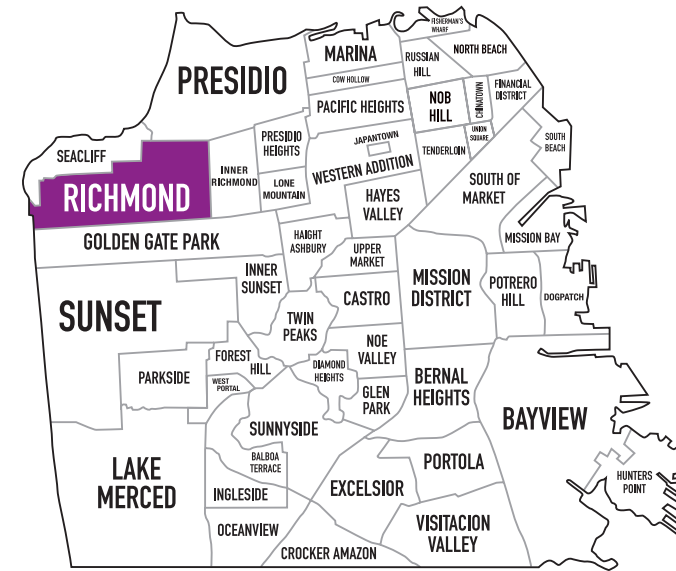
Photo courtesy of friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve

Chinese New Year Street Festival

(Saturdays and Sundays)

Events throughout February and March, with the highlight being the parade on March 7, which begins at 5:15 p.m. on Market Street and ends on Kearny Street. www.sftourismtips.com/chinese-new-year-san-francisco.html

Our Out and About pages highlight events throughout San Francisco and the greater Bay Area. If you have an event that you would like showcased, please submit to magcalendar@ggmg.org at least six weeks before the desired month of publication.



Lil' Kid, Big City: Outer Richmond

By Allison Zulawski

We have 46.9 square miles to explore in San Francisco. How and where do we start? While having your morning cup of coffee, do you ever wonder, "What could we possibly do today?" This little corner of the calendar aims to answer that question. Any tips? Do share at magcalendar@ggmg.org.

The westernmost neighborhood of the Richmond District, the Outer Richmond, is a quiet, nature-filled, and family-friendly area with so much to explore.

If experiencing the great outdoors is high on your list of preferred outings, take an easy hike along the **Lands End trail** (El Camino Del Mar and 48th Ave.) which leads down to the **Sutro Bath Ruins**. If you're feeling beachy, **Ocean Beach** is a 15-minute walk (or 5-minute drive) down the hill along Great Highway. Heading away from the coast and into **Golden Gate Park**, check out the herd of the grazing bison in the **Bison Paddock** (1237 JFK Dr.) and watch the model boats zip and clipper ships sail in nearby **Spreckels Lake** (Spreckels Dr. and JFK Dr.).

After you've had your fill of outdoor adventuring, head a few blocks north to Balboa Street for refueling. Newer, foodie-approved and family-friendly cafes are popping up on this fantastic little strip. **Cassava** (3519 Balboa St.) and **Marla Bakery** (3619 Balboa St.) are two highlights. Or visit the legendary **Shanghai Dumpling King** (3319 Balboa St.) for what some say are the best Shanghai-style dumplings in town.

And when you and your crew are too pooped to go any further, relax into a plush seat at the newly revamped **Balboa Theater** (3630 Balboa St.). Each Saturday at 10 a.m. they host the "Popcorn Palace," which shows a classic kids movie, and includes popcorn and a drink for \$10. ❖

Allison Zulawski is the owner of Allison Busch Photography and lives in the Outer Richmond with her husband and two spirited little boys. When she's not out adventuring with her boys, she can be found photographing cute kiddos and sweet, tiny babies. You can contact her through her website: allisonbusch.com



Rain, Rain...Turn It Into a Fun Snow Day

By Lynn Perkins

Rainy winter days in San Francisco mean snowy days in the Sierras. Bundle up the family for a full day trip or a weekend away in the snow. In addition to the well-known ski resorts, great sledding and snow play can be found at two lesser-known Tahoe locations. **Granlibakken Resort** offers a family sledding hill. They rent sledding saucers and there is no minimum age requirement. The resort is tucked in a valley just outside of Tahoe City. Stop at the **Fire**



Granlibakken Resort photo by Tor Johnson

Sign Café on West Shore Boulevard, south of Tahoe City, for breakfast or lunch. It's kid-friendly with a cozy atmosphere and good food. **Soda Springs**, just west of Tahoe, offers informal and organized sledding options. For children over 42 inches tall, **Tube Town** has a dozen sledding tracks. For younger children, the Soda Springs area has many sledding hills just off the main road and offers the convenience of being thirty minutes closer to the Bay Area than the Tahoe basin. Making a

weekend out of it? **The Rainbow Lodge** in Soda Springs has a family suite with bunk beds in the kids' room.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks offer beautiful winter scenery and two snow play areas that are suitable for children of all ages. **Big Stump** snow play area in Kings Canyon features multiple sledding hills for all ages. Families with older children will enjoy the ranger-led snowshoe nature walks. Sequoia National Park's **Wolverton Meadow** snow play area is ideal for building a snowman, a snowball fight, or sledding. **John Muir Lodge** in Kings Canyon and Wuksachi Lodge in Sequoia offer overnight accommodations and family-friendly restaurants.

Sports Basement in San Francisco can outfit your family for snow play. Bring a copy of your latest GGGM magazine and receive 10 percent off. ❖

Lynn Perkins, CEO of UrbanSitter, skis with her family at Squaw Valley. This might be the last season her twin boys are slower than she is down the hill.

Suzanne Barnecut is a Bay Area native, and San Francisco resident since 2001. Lately she can be found helping her daughter tricycle around the Inner Richmond. You can read more of her writing at www.suzannebarnecut.com.

Ask the Expert: All About Nanny Taxes

By Tom Breedlove



When families hire a nanny—especially for the first time—they often have a myriad of questions. We field thousands of them every year, but a few themes seem to crop up regularly.

How does the IRS define an “employee?” If someone sits for you once a week, but on

an ongoing basis, is that person legally an employee? Should I pay occasional babysitters over the table? What if they come from a service like UrbanSitter or Wondersitter? Does California law require anything more than the IRS?

The IRS says a nanny is your employee if you have the right to control the working relationship. Generally, that means you can set the hours and days the employee will work as well as define the job duties and priorities. The “employee” designation applies no matter how much you pay her, how many hours she works each week, where you find her, or even what she calls herself in your nanny contract.

However, you’re only required to withhold taxes and report wages if you paid any single employee \$1,900 or more in the calendar year. So, the occasional babysitter(s) may not trigger any obligations.

California requires wages to be reported if the total wages to all employees combined is greater than \$750 in a calendar quarter. The state also requires that every new employee be given a written wage notice or employment contract and detailed paystubs every pay period. Household employers also have to have a workers’ comp insurance policy (talk to your homeowner’s insurance agent; if that doesn’t work, we can help), and file a new hire report.

What are the benefits of paying a nanny over the table? What are the legal repercussions of not paying over the table, and is there a statute of limitations?

There are several benefits to paying your nanny correctly. First, you’ll be able to access tax breaks via a Dependent Care Account (if your employer provides one) or the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (IRS Form 2441). Utilizing one of these tax breaks—or both if you have two or more kids—can significantly reduce your household employer taxes, or even completely offset them. You’ll also have peace of mind knowing you’ve eliminated risk of an expensive audit or wage dispute.

There are also benefits for your nanny. The taxes you withhold from her pay give her credit with the Social Security

Administration toward her eventual retirement. Having access to Social Security income and Medicare coverage is vitally important—and her future benefits are directly tied to her reported earnings.

In the short term, paying over the table allows your nanny to have access to unemployment benefits if you let her go due to no fault of her own. This safety net can keep her afloat financially until she finds her next job. She’ll also have the financial safety net of State Disability Insurance (SDI) if she’s ever unable to work due to injury, maternity leave, etc. Finally, the new health care law allows for individuals under a certain income level to qualify for subsidies to lower the cost of their premiums. The catch is they have to have documented wages. That means nannies paid under the table won’t have access to this potential savings.

The legal repercussions of getting caught paying under the table are not a joy to think about. Typically, families will have to pay back all the taxes they did not remit, including interest, as well as a penalty levied by the tax agency. According to U.S. Code, a family could also be subject to fines of up to \$25,000.

What comes with paying over the table? Is it just Social Security, or are you expected to pay health insurance or other taxes too? And when nannies say they want to net out, what are they including in their calculation?

When a nanny says she wants to “net out,” she’s wanting a certain amount of money that she can put in the bank each pay period. Her actual gross wages are higher than this because they take into account the Social Security & Medicare (FICA) taxes, federal and state income taxes, and state disability taxes that are withheld by her employer.

The employer tax obligation is to match her FICA taxes (7.65 percent) and pay into the federal and state unemployment insurance pools along with a small California Employment Training Tax. Typically, this amounts to approximately 10 percent of the gross wages, but is then largely offset by the tax breaks mentioned previously. To help with these calculations (and get an estimate of your tax breaks), feel free to use our Nanny Tax Calculator at www.myHomePay.com.

You are not required to pay for any part of your nanny’s health insurance, but if you do there are some employer tax breaks to help offset the cost.

If you have more questions, visit us online or call us at 888.273.3356. We offer free individualized phone consultations for new employers and will be happy to answer all your questions personally. ❖

Tom Breedlove is the director of Care.com HomePay, Provided by Breedlove, a comprehensive payroll, tax and HR specialist, built solely for household employers.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Community Support

Drives

La Casa De Las Madres Funds Drive

During the month of February, GGMG will be working with La Casa de las Madres (www.lacasa.org) to raise funds to support local women and children affected by domestic violence. La Casa is a wonderful San Francisco organization that began nearly 40 years ago as the first shelter in California dedicated to women and children escaping domestic violence. Today, they offer domestic violence crisis services, support services, training, and outreach and education to 15,000 individuals each year.

Please consider participating in the drive and supporting La Casa de las Madres. Any amount is greatly appreciated! Find more details about the drive and how you can show your support at www.GGMG.org.



Homeless Prenatal Program Holidays Funds Drive—Thank you GGMG!

Thank you to all who participated in the annual Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP) holiday drive. GGMG collected over \$10,000 to support local low-income and homeless families, which provided them warm holiday meals and continues to fund the many great HPP programs.

The annual HPP holiday drive is a wonderful tradition of moms helping moms. Thank you for your generosity and for helping to make this another successful year!

Contest

Teresa O’Brien Photography

Win a Mom & Me Portrait Session!

Too many times moms are behind the camera and not in the images interacting with the kids. This year, try to give yourself and your kids a life-long gift of capturing you together. Let the images speak to the special bond you have with your littles. This is so much more than the typical annual holiday card portrait. Valued at \$500, this package includes:

- 45 minute on-location session
- 12 edited digital image files
- 5 immediate family members (Dads are welcome!)
- Additional family at \$25 each

This April, Teresa will be hosting a limited number of ‘Mom & Me’ sessions. All GGMG members receive a 10 percent discount for this special session. www.teresabrien.com; 415.297.3045

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH THE SUBJECT LINE “MOM & ME” TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG BY FEBRUARY 28, 2015.



DADLANDS

Trial by Fire...or Poop

By Daniel Stokes

Dads don't always get the chance to prove themselves as caregivers. Not just absent fathers, but millions of otherwise loving, dedicated dads out there just aren't in the habit of tending to their little ones' day-to-day needs. Major construction? High-contact play? Most dads are ready to go all out there. But more than a few of us don't know our way around a play date or naptime.

Since we have twins, I didn't have that luxury—like it or not, my hands were full from day one. I am a consultant with a schedule flexible enough to accommodate much of Levi's and Simon's everyday care, and I have spent at least one full weekday alone with them for half their lives.

Some days it really feels like the privilege that it is. Other days, well...every caregiver knows how it feels. A business trip my wife took a few months back offers an example.

She had traveled before. I had experience with solo dinner, bath, toothbrush, pajamas, story, and bed, and knew the routine fairly intimately. I said goodbye to my wife with an air of enough comfortably feigned confidence to subdue a churning gutful of fear. This will be easy. Hungry toddlers are always cooperative. They're going to climb right into their chairs and eat whatever is on offer.

The evening started out smoothly enough to make me feel like I had a right to be self-assured. They ate cheerfully. They agreed to go up to get ready for their bath at more or less the same time. Things didn't even show signs of falling apart for another ten or fifteen minutes.

I'd stripped them down and left them to their own devices for a moment in their bedroom—absorbed, as far as I knew, in a game

boy in my arms and did my best to comfort him without getting anything on me. Yeah, that's poop...did he step in it?

Meanwhile, the pile of turds, his brother's obvious distress, or some combination thereof was obviously upsetting Levi, even before he (Oh Jesus, he's stepped in it too!) joined his brother's tiny wailing chorus and raised his arms to me expectantly.

With a speed I hardly recognized, I assessed the situation. We've got two little boys who have been...soiled. No problem. They're not happy. Yeah, maybe my hyperventilating isn't relaxing. "Simon, it's OK. You just had a little accident and pooped on the floor a little bit. Levi, it's OK. Simon is just a little bit sad because he pooped on the floor. And I guess you stepped in some. That must have been yucky. But I'll just clean this up, then we'll go take a bath."

Inexplicably, the pep talk seemed to help.

On to clean up. A diaper to pick up the big stuff, a generous slosh from a jug of Nature's Miracle enzymatic cleaner—a stain-and-odor-vanquishing wonder left over from our late incontinent cat—a quick, adrenaline-fueled scrub, and there we go. Crisis resolved!

"OK, guys, bath time!"

Somehow gleeful again, they galloped bathward. Less than one step behind, I watched Simon approach the tub only to collapse with the all-too-recognizable wet-coconut thud of a tiny skull slamming into a tile floor. Levi, concerned anew, weaved through my legs to see what had happened, and he too slipped in the enormous puddle of baby shampoo that I had evidently allowed to pool on the bathroom floor while cleaning up in the nursery, knocking his noggin on the marble. Both my sons lay flat on their backs, wailing deafeningly.

In the space of around five minutes, children to tears twice—once with their own filth, and once with my attempt to clean it up.

But every caregiver knows how that feels, right? ♦

Daniel Stokes is an international development and corporate social responsibility consultant living in the Lower Haight with his scientist-cum-businesswoman wife Jessica and their twin boys, born July 2012: Levi, who will do it all by himself, and Simon, who needs some more raisins. They're often found at the playground in Duboce Park.



I was never more than six feet away, but they had been completely out of my line of sight for at least eight, maybe even ten seconds when a bloodcurdling shriek issued from the nursery.

of Naked Choo-Choo, a pre-bathtime favorite—while I stepped into the adjacent bathroom to run their bath (and maybe knock over a bottle of shampoo, but I didn't know that yet). I was never more than six feet away, but they had been completely out of my line of sight for at least eight, maybe even ten seconds when a bloodcurdling shriek issued from the nursery.

Simon ran into the hallway, face crimson, hot tears streaming down his chubby cheeks, leaving a trail of something on the carpet in his wake. Oh God, is that poop? I gathered the distraught

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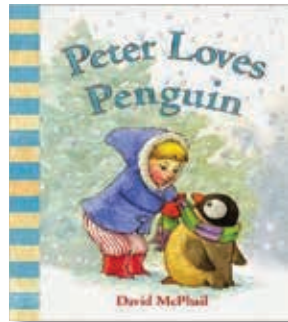
25% off all fees for returning customers

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

Subject to UrbanSitter, Inc.'s Terms of Service. Recipient must become registered user of UrbanSitter with valid credit card on file and be a current GGMG member. New customer credit valid toward babysitting services, Unlimited Access membership, or pay per sitter fees. Returning customers receive a 25% discount on all transaction fees (Unlimited Access membership or pay per sitter). Restrictions include sitter availability, sitters who accept online payment, and service to requested location (not all areas served). UrbanSitter reserves the right to modify these terms. Offer expires June 30, 2015.

Books for Kids: Love

By Laure Latham

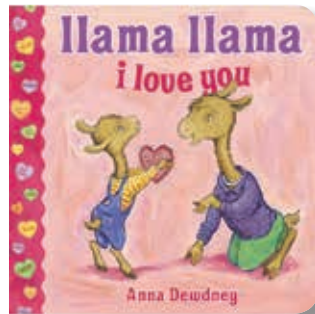


How many different ways can you say I love you? As it turns out, there are never enough words to describe that amazing feeling. Love is the greatest gift that parents can give their children. It is also a special bond that connects children to their pets or stuffed animals, or that connects friends to friends. With these books, children will celebrate the season of love and Valentine's Day whether they are at home before bedtime, at school with their friends, or anywhere they want to be!

Peter Loves Penguin *By David McPhail*

The story of Peter and his friend Penguin is an adorable and heart-warming winter tale. When Peter wakes up, Penguin does too. Holding Penguin's wing, Peter goes down the stairs in the morning and both friends dress in layers to go play outside in the snow. While looking out for and helping each other, Peter and Penguin go through the day until they come back home to a well-deserved snack and a warm fire. The simplicity of the storyline and the short text will delight little ones.

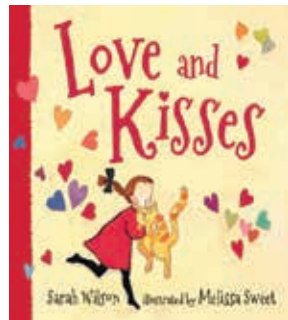
Ages: 9 months+



Llama Llama I Love you *By Anna Dewdney*

Fans of the "Llama Llama" series will love this Valentine special, a cute board book where Llama shows his family and friends how much he loves them. Making heart-shaped Valentine's cards with cupids and lace, Llama shares his Valentines with friends, both near and far. Mama gets the best card, with lots of glitter of course! Needless to say, this book has a few surprises in store to celebrate Valentine's day, and chocolate and candy will not be forgotten.

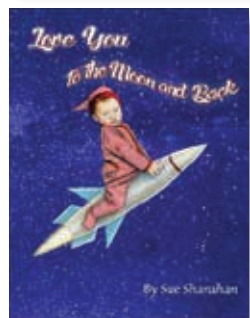
Ages: 2 to 5 years



Love and Kisses *Written by Sarah Wilson, illustrated by Melissa Sweet*

"Blow a kiss and let it go, you never know how love will grow." The book starts with a kiss from a little girl to a cat, from the cat to a cow, etc. until the kiss comes back on the little girl's cheek. Besides being a great excuse for a cuddle and a kiss, this book is a sweet bedtime read with funny rhymes and familiar animals that kids will love.

Ages: 2 to 5 years



Love you to the Moon and Back *Written and illustrated by Sue Shanahan*

Also available as a bedtime iPad app, "Love You To The Moon & Back" is a great book that shows children how they are loved just as they are by their parents. In poetic sentences, the book features children of all ages engaged in everyday activities and illustrates each one with loving words. Great for older children who may feel slightly insecure, "Love You To The Moon & Back" will show them the unconditional love of their parents. If you choose the iPad app, you can record the text with your voice and let kids interact with each page.

Ages: 4 to 7 years



Wherever You Are, My Love Will Find You *Written and illustrated by Nancy Tillman*

Written as a poem in rhyming text, this book reminds children, no matter how young or how old they are, that their parents will always love them wherever they are. Illustrated with beautiful and peaceful nature scenes, the book follows a child playing and enjoying life. Older children will like the fact the book addresses times when they are sad or when they feel lonely, as their parents' love is most important in moments of doubt. Most importantly, children will feel supported to try new things and live a happy life as they grow.

Ages: 4 to 7 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. You can reach her at info@frogmom.com.

GGMG ♥ PKC

2015 BENEFITS

GOLDEN GATE MOTHERS GROUP + PEEKADOODLE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE RENEWAL OF A PARTNERSHIP THAT BENEFITS GGMG MOMS AND THEIR CHILDREN!



COMPLIMENTARY 2 MONTH MEMBERSHIP

GGMG members can simply contact Peekadoodle or walk in to activate their free 2-month introductory membership to the Kidsclub. Membership affords your family unlimited access to the playspace, wifi, café, and lounge spaces Monday-Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturdays from 9am-4pm. This is available for first-time members only, and you must complete a membership application and agreement at Peekadoodle.



8 WEEKS OF ANY 45-60 MINUTE ENRICHMENT CLASS

To be used in conjunction with the complimentary membership, GGMG members are entitled to 8 weeks of any 45-60 minute enrichment class. Our quarters are generally 11-14 weeks in length, and you will have the option to extend your participation in the class if you decide to maintain your membership.



DEDICATED ENRICHMENT CLASS FOR GGMG

Every quarter there will be one 11-week, 45-minute class reserved just for GGMG members. This class is open to all GGMG members who have already redeemed their complimentary 2 months and 8 classes. Space is limited, and your child can take advantage of this complimentary class session once per year, so register early!



GGMG WEEKLY MEETUP

Starting in January 2015, GGMG members will receive complimentary access to Peekadoodle Kidsclub every Thursday from 2-4pm. Simply show proof of your GGMG membership at the front desk when you check in. Advance reservations are not required.



WAIVED INITIATION

If you do not terminate your membership at the end of the first 2 introductory months, we will waive the initiation fee—a \$200 value!



GGMG WORKING PARENT MEETUP

Starting in January 2015 GGMG members will receive complimentary access to Peekadoodle Kidsclub the first Saturday of each month from 9-11am. Simply show proof of your GGMG membership at the front desk when you check in. Advance reservations are not required.



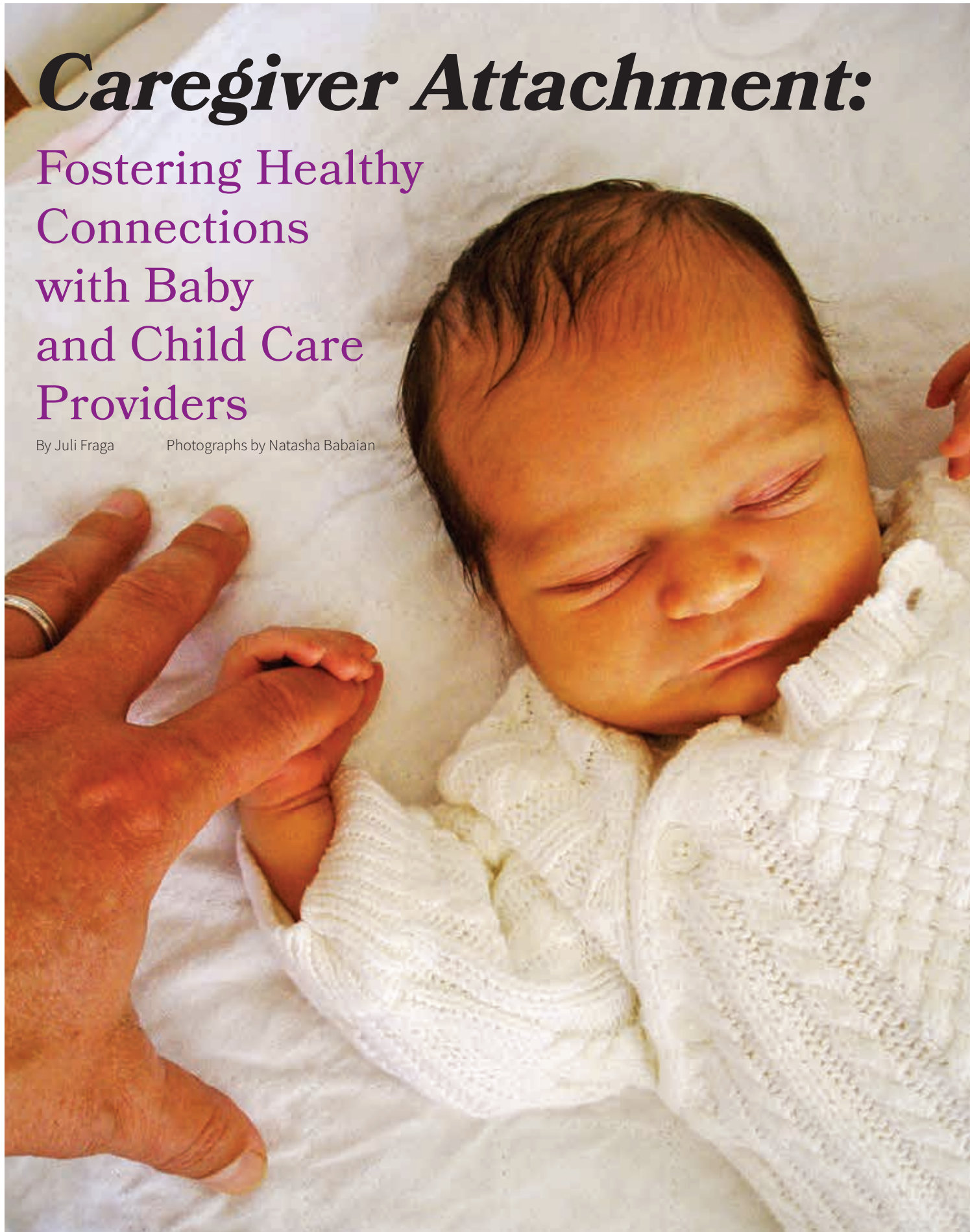
DISCOUNTED PARTY PACKAGE

GGMG members will receive \$100 off any exclusive party package with proof of GGMG membership. Contact us to reserve your date!



Simply come into Peekadoodle to complete a brief membership application. Show your GGMG card or the most recent copy of your GGMG newsletter (addressed to you, of course!) to waive your first 2 months of membership and class fees. If you remain a member after your first 2 months, GGMG will also take care of your initiation fee—a \$200 value! If you would like to end your membership after the 2 free months, you can submit a termination form at the front desk. Space in classes is limited and schedules can be found at www.peekadoodle.com. Early registration encouraged. Some restrictions may apply.

2 free months and 8 consecutive weeks of one class for first time members only. Initiation fee waived only if third month is consecutive to second month. Space is limited. Early registration is encouraged.



Caregiver Attachment:

Fostering Healthy Connections with Baby and Child Care Providers

By Juli Fraga

Photographs by Natasha Babaian

“What if my baby becomes more attached to his child care provider than he is to me?”

“Since my baby can’t verbally communicate with me, how will I know if she is bonding with her child care provider?”

“How can I help my baby attach to his new child care provider before I return to work?”

These are a few questions that emerge when parents think about finding a nanny, nanny share, au pair, or day care center. Leaving your new baby in someone else’s care for the first time is a parenting milestone, but rest assured: with a little knowledge and advanced preparation you will feel more at ease in no time. First things first; let’s talk about attachment.

Attachment 101

“Attachment” is a buzzword in parenting culture. It’s often confused with bonding, but it’s important to note that these two concepts are not the same thing. Infant bonding refers to your feelings of connection for your baby. It may take place even when your baby is in utero. “How are you bonding with your baby?” is a common question asked by many pediatricians, nurses, friends, and family members. Attachment, on the other hand, refers to your child’s connection to you. Both bonding and attachment are a process. A child’s attachment style develops largely during the first year of life. Healthy mother and baby bonding also helps facilitate a secure attachment style.

Secure attachment is established when parents consistently and lovingly respond to their baby’s needs, cues, and cries. Children who are securely attached exhibit mild signs of distress when their primary caregivers leave and are comforted when their caregivers return. It’s important to recognize that a child’s attachment style is different from separation anxiety.

Many parents I consult with become worried when their babies show signs of separation anxiety because they wonder if this distress indicates something more troubling. All babies experience separation anxiety, which is a normal part of child development. Signs of separation anxiety typically begin between the ages of 6 and 7 months, and this anxiety generally diminishes by 24 months. If you are returning

to work when your baby is 6 months or older, keep in mind that separation anxiety will play a larger role during this time, but that this discomfort is a normal developmental aspect of your baby’s growth.

When thinking about finding a child care provider, many new parents, most notably mothers, worry that the baby will become more attached to the child care provider than she is to the primary caregiver. Alyce Desrosiers, LCSW and founder of Chirp, a personalized nanny placement agency in San Francisco, says, “Worrying about how your child will attach to their care provider is a normal response. Research indicates that babies develop relationships with all adults in their lives, and these relationships are unique to

Leaving your new baby in someone else’s care for the first time is a parenting milestone, but rest assured: with a little knowledge and advanced preparation you will feel more at ease in no time at all.

each adult. Children benefit from multiple caring relationships.” At the end of the day, no one replaces mom. She reassures parents by reiterating, “Infants know who their mothers are. This is the first primary relationship, and the attachment is unique between mother and baby.”

Helping Your Baby Transition

There are several ways to help your baby transition to his new child care provider. One of the most important aspects is trusting your mama intuition when you choose a child care provider or day care. It might sound like common sense, but I have met many parents

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

Child Care AND THE City: Finding Your Sweet Spot

By Jessica Bernstein-Wax
Photographs by Ryan Lewis Photography



Whether you're a new mom headed back to work after maternity leave or a seasoned parent of three, searching for child care in San Francisco can be a daunting task. Costs for all kinds of care in the city are among the nation's highest, and it can take months—if not years—to get off the waitlist at a coveted day care center.

"There's a gap: There are more kids than there are slots (for licensed day care)," says Aaron Rosenthal, a spokesman for the nonprofit Children's Council of San Francisco. "It's most acute for infants, which people in the field consider to be up to age two."

Meanwhile, a family earning the San Francisco median income of just under \$99,000 can expect to shell out an average of 13 percent of its earnings for an in-home day care and 19 percent for a child care center, according to the council. Average costs run even higher for nannies.

The Right Care for Your Family

Given those challenges, experts recommend approaching your child care search strategically. You'll want to consider a range of factors, including your child's age

and temperament, the number of hours needed, your budget, the commute, and your own personality and comfort level.

"You really want to think through a child's temperament: how sensitive are they to what's going on in the environment?" says Lele Diamond, a therapist specializing in infant and toddler mental health at Symbio in San Francisco. "Will there be too much stimulation, too much chaos? Not just if the caregivers are warm and kind, but if they can be effective."

While each child is different, Diamond believes certain kinds of care may be better suited to kids of different ages. Young babies, for example, tend to do well with a lower ratio of children to caregivers, and it's important to choose someone sensitive enough to respond

to an infant's cues. Diamond also says that while children don't need to practice socialization until about age 3, spending time in a group environment before then can have other benefits. "One (benefit) is practice separating from the parent," she says. "The other thing kids get to practice is self-soothing and modulating their own intentions."

Budget, of course, also can be a major consideration when deciding what type of child care works best for your family. "Families spend approximately 18 percent of their overall budget on child care, and it's more in big cities," says Katie Bugbee, senior managing editor at *Care.com*. "That's a big part of take-home pay. You have to figure out what kind (of care) you can afford."

Nannies

A nanny comes to your home to care for kids from a single family, or from two or more families in a "share care."

Being in a familiar setting may help your child feel at ease, and many families report developing a close bond with their nannies. However, the intimacy of the relationship can sometimes lead to tension, as a quick read through the GGMG forum attests.

Nannies can offer families more flexible hours compared with day care facilities, not to mention you'll skip the drop-off and pick-up scramble altogether. Still, assuming the role of employer often involves drawing up a contract outlining vacation and sick policies, as well as expectations for everything from fridge raiding to severance. And paying your nanny's taxes can be confusing and expensive, leading many parents to hire a payroll service or skip the process altogether.

A survey of GGMG members with 138 responses found that the average nanny pay is about \$18 per hour for a single child, although nearly a quarter of respondents pay \$15 or less. For two or more kids from the same family, the average wage was just under \$22 an hour. It was a little less than \$12 per hour per family for nanny shares. In contrast, *Care.com* data for San Francisco puts the average nanny salary at a little more than \$16 an hour.

In our survey, personal referrals were the most popular method of finding nannies for kids in a single family, followed by GGMG recommendations, *Care.com*, and traditional

placement agencies, as well as UrbanSitter, Wondersitter, and neighborhood groups. The majority of respondents in share care arrangements hired their nanny via GGMG, with the remainder finding their caregivers through personal referrals, *Care.com*, Sittercity, and placement agencies. One mother was successful with an unusual approach: emailing her apartment building for referrals.

While the cost of a nanny may seem high, the price may prove more affordable than a day care center for families with multiple children. Nannies also can be a good choice for stay-at-home parents who need part-time help.

Lauren McDowell, for example, has a nanny come 20 hours a week to watch her twin toddlers so she can focus on volunteer work, get chores done, and enjoy a weekly date night with her husband. "Could I probably do it on my own? Yes, but I could not be involved in everything I want to be involved in," McDowell says.

Day Care

Day care can represent an affordable alternative to a nanny, while offering an opportunity for your child to interact with other kids. In addition, some parents find state regulation and the presence of more than one caregiver reassuring.

With day care there's no need to manage an employee, pay taxes, or worry about your caregiver calling in sick. "My son is around more children, and he's got a lot more space to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

Tips for Interviewing a Potential Caregiver

By Jessica Bernstein-Wax

Getting a handle on a potential caregiver's personality and qualifications can be tricky. These tips from therapist Lele Diamond will help you navigate the interview process.

Ask Open-ended Questions

"Parents will go in and tell the caregiver, 'This is what my kid is like,'" says Diamond, a therapist specializing in infant and toddler mental health at Symbio in San Francisco. "It's so easy to get an answer that says, 'Yes, yes, yes.'" Instead, Diamond recommends asking open-ended questions such as, how do you notice if a child is getting overstimulated, or how do you manage conflict?

But Don't Ask Too Many Questions

Ask about five to seven open-ended questions, and then consider whether the candidate has presented a coherent philosophy of care that you believe will work for your child, Diamond says. "What you're looking for is not necessarily, does this answer resolve any concerns," she says. "It's is this answer, intelligent, well thought out, realistic, and is it coherent with the other answers I'm getting."

Look for an Approach that's Similar, but Not Identical, to Your Own

While you want a potential caregiver's philosophy to mesh well with your own, "it's actually helpful to have some differences between the home environment and the care environment," Diamond says. She suggests shooting for about 80 percent similarity.

Have the Caregiver Spend Time with Your Child as Part of the Interview Process

It's important to observe the candidate interacting with your child before making a hiring decision, particularly if you have an infant, Diamond says. "Spend 15 to 20 minutes at least with that person holding your baby, soothing your baby, changing your baby," she says.



Professionalism at Home: A Nanny's Take

By Stef Tousignant
Photographs by Lindsay Lovier Photography

At the end of a long work day, the last thing you want to hear is that your baby cried for an hour before her nap, even though that might have happened to you the day before. But what if your nanny never told you? Knowing can be difficult, but having an open and honest level of communication with your nanny is critical in creating a professional, functional, and happy workplace within your home.

Whether you are the parent or caregiver, caring for our most precious people is

inherently emotional. Emotions that stem deep down from love and good intentions may still result in a charged and defensive environment at times, making a household one of the hardest workplaces in which to find a balance for all.

Tammy Gold, therapist and author of *Secrets of the Nanny Whisperer*, says "It's the most personal, professional, strange relationship out there, because they're in your home and the employee's job is to love their boss's child. The whole thing is just strange. It's wrought with

underlying emotions: jealousy, anger, resentment, trust issues. There's so much going on—and there's so much that the nannies tell me they just don't know."

Playing the role of what nannies call the "mom boss" and the role of a household employee has given me a unique perspective into the inner workings of many households, including my own. I have discovered there is an alarming amount of things that go unsaid

- On child rearing: "Do you let him put the sand in his mouth at the park?" or "Can I take her on public transportation?"
- On basic roles within the home: "When I do the laundry, should I just fold the kids' clothes, or yours too?" or "Do you mind if I stop sanitizing the bottles now that he is 6 months old?"

Inquiring about what sometimes feels like basic questions can be awkward for a nanny

When you hire a nanny, start off on the right foot by writing up a clear contract that lists your expectations, compensation, and job responsibilities; plus, most importantly, a clear plan for communication and a set training period.

between the parent and caregiver, which results in a lot of unnecessary awkwardness, confusion, and hurt feelings.

Things Left Unsaid

I have had amazing experiences, mediocre experiences, and just plain awkward ones, and what I have discovered over the years is that it's uncomfortable for most people to have a household employee. The traditional roles of boss and employee feel weird in the home environment, and with my "mom boss" hat on, it's hard to share your parenting priorities with someone without feeling like you are being too critical or micromanaging them. However, as a nanny, the jobs that I found most successful and professionally gratifying were with families that had invited me to become a part of their family, a loving nurturer to their children, a trusted friend, and even a coach.

I have 16 years of experience caring for children, so parents are always comfortable coming to me with questions about milestones, what is "normal", and how to get through a particularly tough phase. What is tougher for them though is talking about job expectations and security, compensation, and their own unique take on certain parenting philosophies.

My experience has taught me to take the initiative and ask the awkward questions, for example:

- On compensation: "Will you pay me at the end of the week or every two weeks?" or "When can we talk about a raise?"

because, speaking for myself, I would never want a parent to question my qualifications to do such an important job, or that I have been caring for his or her child in a way that might not meet expectations. What it boils down to is that every family is different, especially when it comes to their children and how they run their households. So even if your nanny is very experienced, it is still important to have an open dialog about even the most basic topics, and understand that training is a critical part of this job.

Laying the Foundation

Creating a comfortable work environment where your household employee feels secure enough within her role to bring things up starts with communication. Once you can establish an open dialogue, everything else will fall into place.

When you hire a nanny, start off on the right foot by writing up a clear contract that lists your expectations, compensation, and job responsibilities; plus, most importantly, a clear plan for communication and a set training period.


Tammy Gold highly recommends training your nanny "because so many times problems arise and the parents are angry and the nanny has no idea." She goes on to note that, "Nannies always tell me, 'Listen, I'll do whatever they tell me, if they tell me, but most times I get no training. I get very little direction and parents are busy with their lives and I am left to do what I think they would want.'"

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About GGMG Events: Events listed on these pages are either exclusive to GGMG members or are offered to GGMG members at a discount. Generally, registration is required and can be completed by following the REGISTRATION instructions listed under the event details or at www.gmg.org/events.html (BigTent). Rules and policies vary. GGMG members and their families only.

GGMG volunteers may occasionally take photos during our events for use in this publication or on the GGMG/BigTent website. Please understand these photographs may include images of all attendees (including children).

Vendors who would like to partner with GGMG, please contact the appropriate committee. Email addresses are listed on page 3.

 Indicates events appropriate for infants (0-12 months). Many also welcome toddlers and preschoolers (see registration rules for more details).

KIDS ACTIVITIES

Unless otherwise noted, parent participation is required for all Kids Activities events.

Lunar New Year Celebration at Fort Mason

Celebrate the Lunar New Year with a lion dance performance and crafts for kids!

DATE: Sunday, February 15
TIME: 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
PLACE: Gatehouse, 2 Marina Blvd
COST: \$7 per family

REGISTRATION: RSVP on BigTent or email: activities@gmg.org

Mazel Tots, Bagels and Babies at Congregation Emanu-El

A weekly playdate to enjoy music, stories, and puppets as we prepare to welcome Shabbat on Fridays and celebrate Havdalah on Mondays.

DATE: Mondays and Fridays in February
TIME: 9:30 to 11 a.m.
PLACE: 2 Lake St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Drop In. All ages are welcome.

Shake It! Music for Kids & Their Adults at Recess

A fun, hands-on, relaxed place to explore singing, dancing, movement, instruments, and more with your children.

DATE: Tuesday, February 3
TIME: 11 to 11:45 a.m.; free play: 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$15 per participating child

REGISTRATION: Ages 6 months to 4 years. Register by emailing info@recess-sf.com.

Yoga, Baby + Massage at It's Yoga Kids

Enrich your baby development with songs, yoga, and infant massage.

DATE: Friday, February 6
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 569 Ruger St.
COST: \$15 cash, \$18 credit card

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to pre-crawlers. Introductory rate. Register by emailing info@itsyogakids.com.

Music Jiggle Jam at Carmel Blue

Bring your babies and toddlers and join in the music making fun!

DATE: Friday February 6
TIME: 4:30 or 5:15 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$10 for one parent/one child (GGMG rate)

REGISTRATION: tinyurl.com/CarmelBlueJiggle.

Tiger Tots Martial Arts at SF Kuk Sool Won

This class is an introduction to traditional Korean martial arts.

DATE: Saturday, February 7
TIME: 10 to 10:30 a.m.
PLACE: 2450 Sutter St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 3 to 5 years. Register by emailing leora@kuksoolwonsf.com.

Playdate at Congregation Sherith Israel

Enjoy playtime, singing, puppets, bubbles, parachute games, and parent discussion in our large, cozy playroom.

DATE: Monday, February 9
TIME: 10:30 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 2266 California St.
COST: \$3

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to 4 years.

Parent Tot Class at JAMaROO Kids

Parents and children will dance and sing to music from around the world and play with a variety of simple instruments.

DATE: Monday, February 9
TIME: 4 to 4:30 p.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: FREE for first time students; \$10 drop-in for all others

REGISTRATION: Ages infant to 3 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Baby Boot Camp at the Noe Basketball Courts

Try this innovative stroller fitness program that helps moms regain or enhance pre-pregnancy fitness levels and meet the physical challenges of parenting by emphasizing strength training in a supportive environment.

DATE: Wednesday, February 11
TIME: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: 24th and Douglass streets
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: At least 6 weeks postpartum. Register by emailing kathleen.laipply@babybootcamp.com.

Totshop: Be My Valentine at Peekadoodle Kidsclub

We will be working on one edible project, one project that can grow, and of course some cards to mail to your special Valentines!

DATE: Wednesday, February 11
TIME: 11:15 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 900 North Point St, Ste F100
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 2 to 3 years. Call 415.440.7335 to reserve your spot. Space is limited. Parent participation required.

Mommy and Baby Yoga at Carmel Blue

A unique and meaningful way to connect with your baby while reconnecting with your body. Baby massage and developmental play is incorporated to keep our next generation of Yogis happy too.

DATE: Thursday February 12
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$15 for one parent/one baby (GGMG rate)

REGISTRATION: Class is limited to 6 attendees. Register at tinyurl.com/CarmelBlueYoga.

It's Yoga, Movers at It's Yoga Kids

Developmentally appropriate yoga movement with song and play for young movers with adult participation.

DATE: Friday, February 13
TIME: 9:30 to 10 a.m. or 12:15 to 12:45 p.m.
PLACE: 569 Ruger Street
COST: \$15 cash, \$18 credit card

REGISTRATION: Ages crawlers to 2 years. Introductory rate. Register by emailing info@itsyogakids.com.

Baby Boot Camp at Crissy Field

Try this innovative stroller fitness program that helps moms regain or enhance pre-pregnancy fitness levels and meet the physical challenges of parenting by emphasizing strength training in a supportive environment.

DATE: Wednesday, February 18
TIME: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: 99 Yacht Rd (meet at the landing to the west of the parking lot)
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: At least 6 weeks postpartum. Register by emailing kathleen.laipply@babybootcamp.com.

Yoga at JAMaROO Kids

Children will work on strengthening their growing bodies and stretching their little muscles, while improving their balance, coordination, and concentration.

DATE: Wednesday, February 18
TIME: 11 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: FREE for first time students; \$10 drop-in for all others

REGISTRATION: Ages 2 to 3 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.Jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Infant Massage at Carmel Blue

Join Kari Marble for this great class introducing a deep hands-on bonding experience for parents and babies. Learn techniques that can last a lifetime to enhance your bonding time with your baby. For babies 4 weeks to pre-crawling.

DATE: Sunday February 22
TIME: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$65, 2 parents for the price of one (GGMG rate)

REGISTRATION: Space is limited, register at tinyurl.com/CarmelBlueMassage1.

Mixed-age Classes at My Gym

Your child(ren) will have a ball as they work to enhance their balance, coordination, flexibility, and strength.

DATE: Monday, February 23
TIME: 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.
PLACE: 901 Minnesota St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 6 months to 5 years. Register through BigTent.

Parent Tot Class at JAMaROO Kids

Parents and children will dance and sing to music from around the world and play with a variety of simple instruments.

DATE: Thursday, February 26
TIME: 9 to 9:30 a.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: FREE for first time students; \$10 drop-in for all others

REGISTRATION: Ages infant to 3 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Introduction to Sign Language with Bill White at Carmel Blue

This workshop introduces basic baby signs based on American Sign Language and is designed for parents with preverbal babies from birth to 24 months old. You are welcome to bring your baby, but it is not required.

DATE: Friday, February 27
TIME: 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$35 for one parent/caregiver and \$30 for additional parent/caregiver (GGMG rate)

REGISTRATION: Register at tinyurl.com/CarmelBlueSign.

ED SERIES

When Boys Become Boys with Judy Y. Chu at Recess

Based on a two-year study that followed boys from pre-kindergarten through first grade, *When Boys Become Boys* offers a new way of thinking about boys' development. Judy Y. Chu reveals boys' early ability to be emotionally perceptive, articulate, and responsive in their relationships, and how these "feminine" qualities become less apparent as boys learn to prove that they are boys primarily by showing that they are not girls.

DATE: Thursday, March 5
TIME: 7 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: FREE

Hiring a Nanny: Challenges and Solutions at Presidio Sports Basement

Hiring a nanny is not a simple task, particularly for parents of multiples. In this workshop, Alyce Desrosiers, LCSW Child care Consultant for Families and Nannies, LLC will teach you meaningful step to take to successfully hire a nanny who fits your family. Checklists, forms, and worksheets will be provided so you have all the tools needed to make this most important hiring decision.

DATE: Tuesday, February 24
TIME: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: admin@chirpchirp.com

Schools and Real Estate in the East Bay and Peninsula at the Bryant Street Sports Basement

Join us for a discussion about choosing schools, housing prices and trends, and how buying real estate will tie into the school process on the Peninsula and in the East Bay. Hosted by Heidi Maierhofer with Keller Williams, Claudia Mills with McGuire Real Estate, and Julie Shumate with Stearns Lending: three real estate professionals and moms sharing their knowledge. Dads welcomed.

DATE: Tuesday, February 17
TIME: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1590 Bryant St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: shumate.julie@gmail.com

Schools and Real Estate in San Francisco and Marin County at the Presidio Sports Basement

Join us for a discussion about choosing schools, housing prices and trends, and how buying real estate will tie into the school process in San Francisco and Marin County. Hosted by Jamie Comer and Liz McCarthy with McGuire Real Estate, and Julie Shumate with Stearns Lending: three real estate professionals and moms sharing their knowledge. Dad welcomed.

DATE: Monday February 23
TIME: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: shumate.julie@gmail.com

JUST FOR MOMS

See registration note at the top of page 20.

Prix Fixe Night Out at Roti Indian Bistro

Join other moms for a delicious family-style dinner with a menu designed with carnivores and vegetarians in mind. It's a fun way to meet new friends and try a child-friendly Indian restaurant that is near convenient parking and the West Portal station (L, M, K lines).

- DATE:** Monday, February 23
- TIME:** 7 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 53 West Portal Ave.
- COST:** \$20 (GGMG to subsidize coverage)

REGISTRATION: Registration required seven days in advance. Space is limited. Please sign up early!

Mom's Night Out at the Blue Jeans Bar

Shop for your new favorite pair of jeans while enjoying some light refreshments. Get an exclusive GGMG discount!

- DATE:** TBD, watch BigTent for updates
- TIME:** 6 to 8 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1829 Union St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: \$5 to reserve your space, refunded at event.

NEIGHBORHOOD TODDLER PLAYGROUPS

GGMG sponsors Neighborhood Toddler Playgroups, which includes regularly scheduled play dates, monthly mommy-only wine nights, book club meetings, and movie nights. To join the group in your neighborhood, visit www.ggmg.org/playgroups.html.

RSVPs are required for moms' night out gatherings and special/themed play dates as noted below. For regularly scheduled play dates, just show up and look for the person wearing a GGMG branded visor.

Glen Park, Bernal Heights

MOM'S NIGHT OUT AT ROCK BAR

GGMG will sponsor a few appetizers to get the fun started!

- DATE:** Monday, February 2
- TIME:** 7 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 80 29th St.

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT CAYUGA PLAYGROUND

- DATE:** Wednesdays in February
- TIME:** 4 to 5 p.m.
- PLACE:** 301 Naglee Ave.

The Heights

VALENTINE'S DAY PLAY DATE AT ALTA PLAZA PARK

- DATE:** Thursday, February 12
- TIME:** 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** Washington and Scott streets

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT LAFAYETTE PARK

- DATES:** Mondays in February
- TIME:** 11 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** Washington and Gough streets

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT HAMILTON RECREATION CENTER

- DATES:** Wednesdays in February
- TIME:** 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1900 Geary Ave.

QUARTERLY WEEKEND PLAY DATE AT ALTA PLAZA PARK

- DATE:** Sunday, February 8
- TIME:** 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- PLACE:** Washington and Scott streets

Mission/Castro

MOM'S NIGHT OUT AT WEST OF PECOS

GGMG will sponsor a few appetizers to get the fun started!

- DATE:** Thursday, February 5
- TIME:** 6 p.m.
- PLACE:** 550 Valencia St.

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT MISSION PLAYGROUND

- DATES:** Tuesdays in February
- TIME:** 4 p.m.
- PLACE:** 19th Street between Guerrero and Valencia streets

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT THE CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY MUSEUM

- DATES:** Thursdays in February
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** 221 4th St.

Noe Valley

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT NOE VALLEY COURTS PLAYGROUND

- DATES:** Mondays in February
- TIME:** 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** Douglass and 24th streets

Richmond

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT ROCHAMBEAU PLAYGROUND

- DATES:** Sundays in February
- TIME:** 11 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** 24th Ave. between California and Lake streets

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT FULTON PLAYGROUND

- DATES:** Tuesdays in February
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** Fulton St. and 10th Ave, GGP

SOMA

MOM'S NIGHT OUT AT COCKSCOMB

GGMG will sponsor a few appetizers to get the fun started!

- DATE:** Tuesday, February 10
- TIME:** 7:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 564 4th Street

WEEKLY* PLAY DATE AT SOUTH BEACH PLAYGROUND

- DATES:** Thursdays in February (*note the day change)
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to noon
- PLACE:** The Embarcadero between Second and Townsend

Sunset

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT BLUE BOAT PLAYGROUND

- DATES:** Saturdays in February
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 4400 Lincoln Way at 45th Ave

WEEKLY PLAY DATE AT SUNSET RECREATION CENTER

- DATES:** Mondays in February
- TIME:** 3:30 to 5 p.m.
- PLACE:** 2201 Lawton St.



On December 18, The Heights moms gathered to celebrate the holidays at Alta Plaza Park. Kids decorated ornaments, sprinkled cookies and made paper wreaths. Moms brought canned goods for donation.



A Child Care Expert and Mom of Three Shares Her Wisdom

Lynn Perkins, CEO of UrbanSitter and a mother of three, knows firsthand about the range of feelings that emerges when choosing a child care provider. Her company, UrbanSitter, a GGGM partner, connects parents with sound and safe babysitters, but Lynn's knowledge about the common worries that all mothers encounter when they leave their babies for the first time stems from her own personal experience.

I sat down and talked with Lynn about her own experience as a working mom, and how she has coped with her worries about leaving her kids with a child care provider. Here is what she shared.

- 1. I'm not missing my baby's firsts.** "What if I miss my baby's first steps?" "What if I miss my baby's first words?" While Lynn worried about missing her baby's firsts, too, she realized that, "Even if it's not his first time when I see it, it is still my first time to witness it. The warmth and pride is still there."
- 2. I'm exposing my kids to new interests and skills.** My nanny has skills and interests that I don't, such as spearheading art projects. My children benefit from interests that are different than mine.
- 3. There's another person who loves my kids.** My coworkers aren't really interested in hearing about my children's growth and development. My nanny, on the other hand, is always excited to hear about their new discoveries. It is nice to have another adult vested in my children's growth and well-being.
- 4. No one can replace Mom.** One could get the impression that my children like their nanny more than they like me. However, when I walk in the door, they yell "Mom!" and shower me with love. They often save some of their emotions from the day, good or bad, for my arrival because they seek the comfort that only Mom can provide.
- 5. I own my insecurities.** I own my mommy guilt. I think all moms experience guilt and normal insecurity about leaving their children in the care of someone else. I try to reflect about my own feelings. Self-awareness is a great antidote for these sorts of mama worries.

you feel about this transition. Being aware of and present with any feelings that arise will help ease the normal anxiety as the day nears. It is common for moms to feel sadness, guilt, and worry when they transition back to work. Support will carry you through this time, and the anticipation is often worse than the actual return. We hear this feedback from new moms repeatedly in our support group. And if something leaves you feeling uneasy, trust your gut feeling, especially with in-home care, where boundaries can become fuzzy. Pay attention to anything that does not sit well with you and trust yourself to communicate about it. How your provider hears and receives feedback is important, and no one knows about your baby's care better than you do. ❖

Juli Fraga is a psychologist specializing in maternal mental-health concerns. She writes about the psychology of motherhood for Huffington Post Parents, Psychology Today, and Mamalode. She lives in San Francisco with her husband and her daughter, Lucy.

who chose a provider because the provider had plenty of experience caring for babies, but the personality was not a good fit. Trust will help you communicate about any concerns that arise, and help you feel more confident leaving your child in someone else's care.

You can help your baby attach to his new care provider by spending ample time together with the new nanny or in the new day care setting. In the new mom support group that I co-facilitate, this topic comes up frequently, and we generally recommend that, if possible, moms spend two weeks helping themselves and their babies adjust to the new care routine. If you have a nanny or a nanny share, spend some time with the nanny and your baby each day. If your baby is going to day care, spend some time each day orienting yourself and your baby to the new setting. If your baby has a special blanket, toy, or lovey, bring that along and let your care provider know how important this is for your child. Keep a detailed list of your baby's routine and let your care provider know about your baby's sleep, feeding, and soothing routines. Keeping care consistent will help your baby adjust to being in someone else's care, and it will help you feel more at ease, too.

Helping Yourself Adjust

Your own emotional adjustment plays a role, too. Prior to returning to work, talk with trusted friends and family members about how

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In an effort to be "Green", would you ever consider using just baby wipes to cleanse your body? Would you dine at a restaurant that only uses baby wipes to wash the dirty dishes in an effort to be "Green"? Of course not! Well the shocking truth is- that is exactly how most "Green" carpet cleaning companies are cleaning your carpets and rugs.

Today in order to be considered "Green" in the cleaning industry means: To conserve natural resources. That means that "green" cleaning companies must conserve water. If a cleaning company uses chemicals instead of water, then this is considered "green": which in turn means to leave behind more contaminants and chemicals in the home; just like the baby wipes example.



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Committee Spotlight: *Just for Moms*

With Co-chairs Amanda Hermann and Flesché Hesch

Describe the personality of your committee.

Just for Moms is a wonderful group of women dedicated to providing varied experiences where GGMG moms have the opportunity to nurture themselves, foster community, and, most of all, have fun!

What's been an unexpected benefit of being involved with the Just For Moms committee?

It's been wonderful to take part in our annual Just for Moms strategic planning for 2015. Our committee is very thoughtful about selecting events that are valuable to our membership. It is a pleasure to work with such smart and motivated women.

What types of activities or projects do you undertake?

We are working on several types of events for 2015 that we are very excited about, including mom's nights out, spa days, and cooking and fitness classes.

How do you know when you're making a difference?

I think this can be measured in a multitude of ways. If our members are

able to nurture themselves, forge new friendships, learn a new skill, or have a relaxing evening at one of our events, then I feel like we've accomplished our goal.

Who are your current volunteers?

Amanda Hermann, Flesché Hesch, Dena Mendelsohn, Michelle Tom, Shelley Wu, Phyllis Timoll, and Neelam Noorani.

How can interested GGMG members get involved in Just for Moms?

E-mail justformoms@ggmg.org. We'd love to hear from you!



Member Support

Many of us lack local family to look to for support, which can be especially scary when facing a crisis. GGMG mom Sherri Howe recently shared a forum post about her family navigating a difficult time and gave advice on "building a village."

Our family was in "crisis mode," dealing with my MIL's illness from afar, moving her to SF, and her eventual death. During that crazed time, we found out just how much of a village we had actually created for ourselves, and that even though we do not have blood family here, we have an amazing group of friends.

When our son went off to preschool, we made a concerted effort to get to know the other parents. We have also focused on developing friendships from GGMG and other places. As a result, 2.5 years later, when we needed it, [we found it].

You CAN build a village. It takes time and effort to develop these friendships, but the result is a beautiful network of adopted "family" who is there for you.

For Sherri's full post, visit: tinyurl.com/GGMG-Village

If you or someone you know is experience a difficult time, contact our member support team at member.support@ggmg.org. We work confidentially and have many resources to call upon.

Forum Tips:

The ABCs of RSVPs

To RSVP for a GGMG event:

On BigTent, find the RSVP page for the event you want to attend and follow the directions to register.

To cancel an RSVP:

If you have registered via BigTent, check if the registration is still open on the event page.

- If it is open and you do not wish reimbursement or the event is free, change your answer to "No" in the "Your RSVP" box.

- If it is closed, or still open for registration but you hope for reimbursement, DO NOT change your RSVP. Post the availability on **either the Parenting or the Miscellaneous forum**. Once a replacement has been found, please inform the organizer (listed under "Contact" on the event page) so they know who to expect. Arrange payment exchange with the member who has agreed to take your spot. GGMG Kids Activities does not provide refunds.

If you have registered with the vendor, cancel by contacting the vendor directly. A refund may be granted upon their discretion.

As always, feel free to contact webmaster@ggmg.org directly for help with questions about online forums or the GGMG website. GGMG Forum Guidelines can be found at www.ggmg.org/Forum_Etiquette.html.

Recruiting: *Enjoy Your Neighborhood Playgroup? Help by Volunteering!*

The Playgroups committee consists of New Mommy and Toddler Neighborhood committees. Both are designed to be a gateway for moms to meet up regularly. This is a great way for you to give back to GGMG while enjoying one of its great benefits!

Infants & Prenatals Meetup Committee (aka New Mommy): New and expectant moms are encouraged to join the new GGMG subgroup in BigTent to stay engaged during their journey through the early parenthood years. This committee will support and track meetups of moms with young babies (0-12 months) and expectant moms by hosting formation events or playgroup meetup events monthly. They are looking for a co-chair, a meetups administrator, and two volunteers.

Neighborhood Events Committee (aka Toddler): Neighborhood Events Committee hosts playdates and moms-only events across the different neighborhoods. These playgroups meet weekly at a designated neighborhood playground. Some also have monthly moms-only wine nights, book club meetings, and movie nights. Each neighborhood is represented by an ambassador who organizes and communicates with the participants. There are current openings for Nopa/Alamo Square, Noe Valley, and the Marina.

Interested in volunteering? Contact recruiting@ggmg.org.



Social Events

The Social Events committee brings you GGMG member-wide signature events like the picnic at the Botanical Gardens and big Halloween event in Golden Gate Park.

We appreciate all the feedback received in the GGMG member survey and will incorporate many of the suggestions into this year's events. Our goal is to have something for everyone, and we encourage all to attend. Remember, these events are for you to socialize and to have fun with your family.

Stay tuned for announcements about the upcoming Spring event on BigTent and in the March issue of the *GGMG Magazine*!

On November 3, 2014, GGMG honored its hard-working volunteers at the annual Fall Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. We are so grateful for the donors who helped us give back to those who give so much of themselves. Without their generosity, these incredible gifts of appreciation would not be possible!

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Doulas: There When it Counts By Jennifer White

Our doula provided the right amount of emotional and informational support I needed and, more importantly, she supported my husband so that he could, in turn, support me.

In searching for a doula, I wanted to find someone I would be friends with, notwithstanding her chosen profession. After all, if you're going to share what might be the most intimate moment of your life with a person, you should at least enjoy her company.

And enjoy her company we did—for over 36 hours. When my labor began Friday afternoon, our doula came to our house and intuitively knew what I needed before I did, coaching my husband on how to meet those needs. Mostly, it was the little things, like dimming the lights to make the room more comfortable, but she also didn't hesitate to help my husband move our couch from one room to another when that was what I needed.

She accompanied us to the hospital, where she continued to monitor my pain and my husband's growing concerns. I wanted a

natural childbirth, and she advocated for us as long as she could. Even when it was looking fairly certain that a C-section would be necessary, she helped me get on my hands and knees to try one last time to rock the baby into the correct position. Our son was born via C-section on Sunday at 11:30 a.m. Considering she had slept for two days in a club chair, no one would have blamed her for finally going home to sleep, but she stayed throughout the day to ensure our safety and well-being.

In the end, our doula gave us not only the gift of a baby, but also the gift of an intimate and even romantic birth experience. Childbirth is hard enough; having a doula makes it easier for a couple to focus on each other. ❖

Jennifer White resides in the Inner Sunset with her husband and five-year-old son. Three years ago she gave up her career to be a SAHM and to pursue her lifelong dream—to become a writer. Check out her writing and parenting skills at www.my-watercooler.com.



Changing Child Care Needs By Shaheen Bilgrami

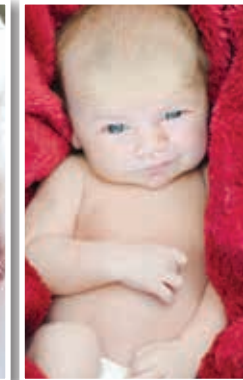
Finding a caregiver for your baby is one of the most important decisions you will make. There are some obvious things to consider in this process, such as checking references and making sure that your family “clicks” with the caregiver. Other things may come to light when you do working interviews. However, it's easy to forget that your caregiver needs might change as your family evolves.

To avoid long-term problems, here are some things to consider:

- **Toddler experience:** If you are looking for a caregiver who will stay beyond baby's first year, look at applicants who have experience with toddlers as well as babies. If you have a more sedentary, home-loving nanny, this may not work well for an energetic toddler.
- **Experience with multiple children:** If you are considering having more children within the next year or two, it's worth asking about your caregiver's experience with siblings (and desire to take care of more than one child).

- **Baby chores and housekeeping:** Let potential caregivers know about the chores that you require such as baby laundry and tidying baby's room. These will evolve as your baby grows—once your child is eating solids you might want your nanny to prepare baby food. As they hit toddlerhood, you may want help with family meals. Also, some caregivers agree to take on additional housework such as cooking or family laundry. Bear in mind that as babies grow, they nap less and require more supervision and attention, which may leave less time for housework.
- **Getting out and about:** As your child gets older, you might want your caregiver to take baby out more. Consider how this is going to be done. If by car, check your caregiver's driving record. ❖

Shaheen Bilgrami is freelance writer, editor, and blogger. You'll often find her chasing her 3-year-old daughter, Afsheen, through the parks of Parkside. Contact her through her website, www.shaheenbilgrami.com or her blog, www.girlinfofcity.com.



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Andrew Weeks

roam and explore,” says Theresa Buckley, who recently switched her 1-year-old from a nanny share to a day care center for financial reasons.

While the city’s most coveted day care centers boast stunningly long wait lists—the Children’s Council recommends putting your name in for infant care during your first trimester of pregnancy—in-home day cares tend to have more availability, along with lower prices and a family-like home environment. Not to mention they’re plentiful: San Francisco is home to 681 family day cares.

As a first-time mom, Addie Bjornsen was nervous about leaving her 3-month-old son, Oliver, at an in-home day care that she found through Craigslist. But after a couple of weeks, “I knew it was the right place for him—(my provider) just loves him,” she says. Three years later, Oliver continues to thrive at his day care, and Bjornsen has become close friends with the provider.

According to our survey, GGMG moms pay an average of \$70 to \$80 per day, or around \$1,550 a month, for in-home day care. Most respondents found their provider through caregiver websites, personal recommendations, or GGMG referrals. By contrast, the average cost of a day care center was about \$1,800 per month, with the tab often running higher for children younger than two. More than 50 percent of respondents said their day care center was connected to their work, though others found their facility through personal recommendations or Yelp.

The Children’s Council generally agreed with our findings: Its data put average costs for an

who is between 18 and 26 years old and lives with your family, providing up to 45 hours a week of child care, with two weeks of vacation per year. The relationship typically lasts a year, although it’s possible to extend your au pair’s stay to two years.

Au pairs can be a great option for parents with long working hours who need flexibility or help with school drop-offs and pick-ups, as well as single parents, or those with partners who travel frequently. You must have an extra bedroom for the au pair and be willing to welcome her into the family.

Au pairs earn around \$200 per week, but with agency fees and costs for food, transportation, cell phones, and classes, GGMG moms estimate the yearly cost at around \$20,000. And while au pairs can help with infants, it is against the rules to leave them alone with a baby younger than three months.

“The flexibility was a big thing,” says Amanda Hermann, whose au pair started caring for her daughter when she returned to work after maternity leave. “With (my husband) traveling and having kind of crazy hours, it was really nice to have someone else in the house with me.” For lawyer Flavia Naves, hosting an au pair was a game-changer after years of juggling drop-offs and pick-ups with a demanding career. She’s now on her fifth au pair and plans to keep using them until her youngest daughter can take herself to school.

The U.S. Department of State regulates the au pair program, with sponsor agencies matching families and au pairs, as well as providing support and education. The two



chores while you are home. They are often students and may be as young as middle-school age.

For stay-at-home parents and those who work from home, a mother’s helper can provide a much-needed break. Even parents who work outside the home and have other care during the day may hire a mother’s helper to pitch in at bedtime or on weekends. *Care.com* estimates the average cost for a mother’s helper in San Francisco at \$16 per hour, but that number can be much lower depending on experience.

“This is a babysitter-in-training,” *Care.com*’s Bugbee says. “They’re helping you maintain this clean, steady home, but you’re not really leaving the house.”

Since many mother’s helpers are students, posting on a school email list or bulletin is one way to find a helper. Other options include asking neighbors or online neighborhood groups or using caregiver websites.

Do Your Homework and “You Probably Can’t Go Wrong”

If all that sounds overwhelming, don’t despair.

While selecting care for your child is an important job, “if you are organized, thoughtful, and responsible enough to gather information and weigh your options..., you probably can’t go wrong,” the Children’s Council’s Rosenthal says. “There are enough good, solid child care programs around San Francisco that...even if you don’t pick the cream-of-the-crop best one, you’re still going to be in a good program. Your kids are going to be safe and having a good time.” ❖

Jessica Bernstein-Wax is a former newspaper reporter who works as a Web editor for UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital. She grew up in the Richmond District but defected across the park to the Sunset, where she lives with her husband and son.

You will be busy and everyone will be tired at the end of the day. Training first, then establishing a communication plan, will help to bring up concerns either party may have. Start with at least two or three days of one-on-one training and then institute a weekly check-in, like an evening phone call or a chat over morning coffee, and then detail this into your contract. (Another tip on contracts: schedule a sit down to go over the contract line by line after the two week mark, once training is over and the nanny has had a chance to experience the daily flow.)

Of course, you may already have a nanny! I would still suggest you set up a weekly check-in when you are both rested and refreshed. Here are a few topics you can address sooner rather than later to strengthen your relationship with your household employee:

1. Go through her day and ask her to share all the little things that she has been thinking about but hasn’t brought up, like what vacations you have coming up or tiny household things like where you store the extra baby formula, or even if she think it’s time for a bigger raincoat for your son, etc.
2. Talk about compensation and job security. This is important—most nannies really, really don’t like to talk about this, especially because we love your children and value being “a part of the family.” It’s awkward, but this is part of your responsibility as the “boss” to check in every 6 months or so. In addition, it is important to address where you see her role headed in the future and how she feels her compensation matches up within the market and with respect to her level of household responsibility.
3. Tap into her expertise. Ask if she has any suggestions for working on developmental milestones, birthday gifts that your kids would love, or activities to do on the weekends. You employ an authority on all things kids! By asking her to share her valuable knowledge (and giving it a try), you create a workplace filled with mutual respect.
4. Say “thank you” often. You know from experience that caring for children all day

is mentally and physically exhausting; make sure to show your gratitude for her hard work. As Gold says, “You can never thank a good nanny enough. Never.”

Playing the “Mom Boss”

I have employed the most amazing part-time nannies who treat my two children like their



own and are comfortable asking me crazy questions, as well as letting me know that my youngest had a bad day (or spit at her, or decided not to eat, etc).

So I know that when you come home from work you just want to be home with your kids. You want to care for them and ask them about what they did that day. It’s hard to find the time to check in with your nanny, not to mention to check on how she is doing when you aren’t there. Is she living up to your expectations? How can you tell?

I am a strong advocate of unannounced drop-ins. It is extremely important to show up at home, or at the park, every so often. Yes, there should be a level of trust you share with your nanny, but just like any employee outside of the home, job performance is important and so is quality of work (it’s even more important when the “work” is the care of your children). As a professional nanny, I would welcome a

check-in because I want you to see me “in action” going above and beyond, playing in the sandbox or rocking your baby to sleep, because I am proud of the quality of my work!

Gold also points out that offering scheduled observation times will help to strengthen your relationship as well. “Your nanny’s success is based on your direction. It’s never too late to



change and to tell a nanny I am invested in you; I want you to stay; I want to help you; I want to hear from you; I want to learn from you.” ❖

Stef Tousignant is the nanny from AskaNanny.com and the founder of the popular family event, The Great Baby Romp. She lives in the Inner Richmond with her high school sweetheart and two boys, (ages 3 and 6) who love build things and exploring Golden Gate Park in sunshine and in fog! #askstef



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A few random things I have actually done for my clients...

Went to my sellers' house at midnight to let them in after they locked themselves out. Recommended a service provider who successfully removed a spirit from a house. **Talked buyers OUT OF buying a home that was entirely TOO RISKY for them.**

Cleaned poop (dog, I hope) off of the sidewalk before an Open House. **Hiked up my skirt and climbed over a fence IN MY HEELS to access a poorly-placed lockbox.**



One thing is certain... the real estate market in San Francisco is unpredictable! Sherri knows that being a great Realtor is more than opening doors and writing contracts. It means providing her clients with an amazing array of services that goes above and beyond what is expected. Sherri does whatever it takes to ensure her clients' happiness and financial success.

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I ♥ Mom

A Mom is Always a Mom

By Tara Hardesty

Over the years, I have lost count of how many times my mom has been rushed to the emergency room or stayed in the hospital. I don't know how many times my sisters have called saying, "We don't think you need to come down yet, but..." I have stopped counting the calls from Mom where she obviously feels bad but tries to show a brave front for me. And, I have blocked out recent episodes involving fire department rescues after she's lain on the floor all night because she fell trying to get from bed to wheelchair.

My mom hasn't always been in such poor health, but over the years her health has declined, resulting in her having no mobility and living with chronic pain. Despite this, she is not her poor health. It is a huge part of who she is and has defined my experiences with her for years, but she is much more than that. She is a dynamic, strong, hilarious, sometimes manipulative mom. She's a diva. She is a mom's mom, a dyed-in-the-wool, nurturing, can-tell-something-is-wrong-before-you-utter-a-word type mom. My mom is my mom, no matter the circumstances.

I often tell people that my mom is a "professional mother." She instilled in each of us a sense of compassion, of nurturing, and of always looking out for others. As an adult and a caregiver, I regularly try to "channel" my mom and to live the things she taught us.

My mom remembers standing in the hallway of her Catholic high school, seeing my dad on the stairs and knowing he was the one for her. They moved quickly and found themselves pregnant and unwed, a scandal in 1961. They eloped and went on to have another six pregnancies resulting in four more children over the next 10 years.

Thirty-six years later, we learned that while my mom felt love at first sight, my dad's story was different. His story involved marrying my mom because she was pregnant and it was the right thing to do. In 1995, he explained to us each individually that he had stayed with her for us kids and that he was now leaving.

The end of my parents' relationship brought a renewed life for my dad. Perpetual dark circles disappeared, and so did the propensity to drink too much. An unexpected liveliness and candor replaced his somber, quiet demeanor. On the other end of the spectrum, the separation and divorce floored my mom. She had dedicated her life to being a good wife and mother. Divorce had never been an option for her. Even after he left, she harbored hope that they would reunite. With this, and such a serious turn for the worse in her health, my mom seemed to be crumbling.

Not surprisingly, it was around this time that I felt like I lost my parents. They started to feel more like children, each in their own way. Gone were the feelings of structure and stability that they

had provided most of my life. In their place were the emotions that parents feel: concern, frustration, the burden of responsibility, and the feeling that everything was on me. My security network seemed to have disappeared overnight. I think my siblings and I all felt this way, although at the time we didn't come together to process.

This feeling continues as my mom's health worsens. One of my sisters works in senior care, and she tells me that as people near the end of their lives, as their bodies start to wind down, they regress in age. I've found this to be true with my mom. Sometimes when we speak, she is a petulant teenager with as many mood swings. Other times, her voice is quiet and afraid like a young girl's. And sometimes, on good days, she is Mom: inquisitive, irreverent, wise, dispensing love that brings tears to my eyes and reminds me of better and healthier times. I consider myself lucky to be able to care for her, to laugh or cry with her, and to be able to tell her how much I love her.

When I was young and my mom dropped me off for school, she would always kiss me, tell me she loved me, and say, "Do something good for someone today." Every day she would say this and more often than not I would roll my eyes. But as an adult and a mother, I hear those words and remember her instruction. She is ill with a dismal set of circumstances and yet she still finds a way to make people laugh, to engage them and make them feel valued, and to give of herself as a way of finding purpose in her life. I am humbled by her and hope that I can carry her brightness of spirit and her ability to give into the world with me, and that I can pass it along to my son. ❖

When I was young and my mom dropped me off for school, she would always kiss me, tell me she loved me, and say, "Do something good for someone today."

Tara is a freelance writer and marketing professional who specializes in commercial real estate ventures. At TheDailyWrites.com, she blogs about the hairy underbelly of life, urban mommyhood, and entrepreneurship in downtown San Francisco.





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