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magazine

Identity





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Letter from the Editor: Finding Myself

By Kirsten Pflieger



Kirsten and her husband Karl are raising their daughters, aged 5 and 2.75, in the Castro, where they are often reminded that it takes all types to make the world go around, and that conformity would not be as colorful.

In college, I had a two month internship in Manhattan. I recall seeing the Statue of Liberty from the airplane and feeling pretty terrified. It was the first time I had been to Manhattan, the first time I had traveled alone, and the first of my final steps before graduation and “the real world.” I also realized that no one in that huge city knew me. Rather than increasing my terror, this awareness made me realize that I could be anyone I wanted. While I didn’t make sweeping changes, I did convince myself to pretend to be more confident and outgoing, to not hesitate to ask questions of my new co-workers, and to be proactive in making friends with the other women living at the Webster House. To my surprise, it worked. I learned more, made friends faster, and had more fun. My nomadic early adulthood allowed me to put this lesson of re-imagining myself into practice more than once. Those were some magical times, when I was able to try on different versions of myself—hard to do when surrounded by people who already know me and have certain expectations. For better or worse, those who love us the most can hinder our personal evolution. It is easy to apply labels: “she’s the smart one; he’s the funny one.” I see myself doing it already with my girls. Stephanie AuWerter takes a look at how our children develop their identities and how we can support them on this journey of self discovery on page 16. Our expert, Juli Fraga, looks

specifically at how we can help our children develop a positive body image on page 8. The flip side of self-directed reinvention is when life changes force us to re-evaluate our priorities. Motherhood is one of those life changes. No matter how ready we think we are, becoming a parent can throw the most well-planned life into chaos. Most of us can attest to the fact that our lives and our visions of ourselves have changed in ways we never expected. On page 22, Tara Hardesty speaks with four local moms about their transformations during the early years of motherhood, and Joel St. Julien gives insight into how he grew into himself when he became a father on page 10. Many of us grew up in the ’70s and ’80s, when gender was considered preordained and race was rarely discussed. It was believed that, if adults didn’t talk about it, children would not notice that people came in different shades and would not make preconceived judgments. Catherine Symon approaches the topic of race from a genetic viewpoint on page 26, and gives tips for starting conversations with our children on page 28. On page 39,

No matter how ready we think we are, becoming a parent can throw the most well-planned life into chaos.

Stef Tousignant shares her relationship with her transgender brother, and on page 20, our shopping guide can help you break your child out of traditional gender-specific clothing. Figuring out who we are and how we fit into this world is a lifelong process, one that our children are just embarking on. Although we all have times of abject confusion along the way, hopefully we continue to improve upon the previous versions of ourselves as we become more comfortable and proud of who we are.

KPflieger

Housekeeping

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THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: one last trip to Tahoe, spring break,

so many birthdays, vacation without the kid, weight watchers, margaritas, House of Cards binge-watching, a bumper dandelion crop.

COMING NEXT: June—Under the Hood; July—Feminism

CONTEST: Congratulations to **Emily Andrews Julian** who won a month of free yoga and childcare at Yoga Flow.

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

Letter from the Board: GGMG Is Here For You

By Laurel Kellam

Twenty years ago, a group of women formed a cohort for new mothers in San Francisco, creating Golden Gate Mothers Group. 1996 was such a different time. The “Macarena” was the number one song in the country. If you had email it was accessed most likely via AOL and through your dial-up Internet service. As our lives have changed, our organization has also grown and evolved.

One thing that has remained the same throughout is our organization’s goals. GGMG was created to bring moms together and help each other survive the turbulent first few years of motherhood. We strive every day to continue that mission, and here I’ll share some of the ways you can find your community today.

This month is our large Spring Social event. Held May 15 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Bay Area Discovery Museum, this is an opportunity for you to meet other GGMG moms while your little one enjoys all the museum has to offer. We’ll have face-painters

As our lives have changed, our organization has also grown and evolved.

and other special activities on hand and admission is FREE! Space is limited and you will need to RSVP to attend. For more details, visit www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96970815.

As you may recall, we recently expanded our membership to include moms of elementary school-aged kids. It’s been wonderful to see so many members stay part of our organization past the five-year mark and watch this new community grow. To accommodate those moms, we created a new BigTent forum, so

as the questions change from “sleep training” to “soccer practice,” GGMG can still be a resource and a community. We received feedback—and some of us experienced it personally—that GGMG’s large social events are great for the little ones but don’t have enough stimulation for older children. We decided to tackle this by offering moms of elementary school-aged children date night drop-off opportunities throughout the year. These will also be FREE and available only to GGMG members. Stay tuned for details!

Another way to build your community is, of course, to volunteer with GGMG. If you’re looking to dust off old work skills, build up your resume, or just escape the bedtime routine with dinner and drinks once a month, please get in touch. (To current volunteers, a quick reminder that our volunteer meeting this month will be our annual chairs-only meeting: we’re having a team building bowling night in the Mission. Woohoo!)

And finally, as we continue to celebrate our 20th anniversary, we are planning a party! Save the date of July 15. In partnership with the Homeless Prenatal Program (www.homelessprenatal.org), we are hosting a fundraiser on their behalf. A fun night with music and drinks is in store. Details to come.

Laurel Kellam



Laurel is a mom to three kids, wife to an amazing husband, and sales rep for a financial software company. When not managing all that (plus volunteering with GGMG), she enjoys wine, running, reading, and sunshine.

Volunteer of the Month



Congratulations to **Viorica Ciobanu**, our volunteer of the month! Viorica began volunteering in April 2014, serving for a short time on the recruiting and operations committees before volunteering with the Membership Committee. She was born in Moldova, lived in Ireland for six years, and has lived here in San Francisco for the past two and a half years. Viorica and her husband, Dorin, are parents to Eva (5) and Adam (3).

We want to know your favorite **Pastime(s)**: Dancing and dressing up; **Book**: Most recently, all the novels by Donna Tartt; **Film**: *Knocking on Heaven’s Door* (1997); **Parenting advice**: Don’t overschedule your kids with afterschool activities!

Tell us: **Something about you that might surprise people if they knew it**: I read the whole Bible when I was 12 or 13 years old; **Which piece of baby/kid gear you could not live without**: I like to walk everywhere, so my stroller.

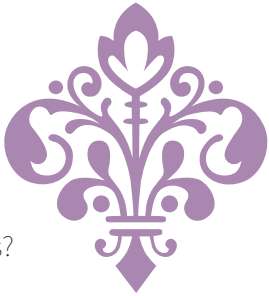
Viorica will enjoy a 60-minute massage at International Orange Spa (2044 Fillmore St.). Book yourself a massage today at www.internationalorange.com.



San Francisco Heritage and Cultural Museums

By Megan Bushnell

Tired of waiting for MOMA to open? Sick of the crowds at the Academy of Sciences? Here's a list of lesser-known museums to explore with your little learners.



Museum of the African Diaspora

MOAD showcases modern art and cultural history resulting from the migration of Africans throughout the world. Grab a Family Passport with a museum map and colored pencils to guide your visit.

OPEN: Wednesday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 685 Mission St.
COST: \$10 (children 12 and under free)
www.moadsf.org

The Mexican Museum

Inside Fort Mason, the Mexican Museum includes artwork from Latinos across the Americas. Once a month you can join Family Sunday for an interactive project for parents and kids of all ages.

OPEN: Thursday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 2 Marina Blvd., Building D
COST: FREE
www.mexicanmuseum.org

GLBT Historical Society Museum

Take advantage of our unique opportunity as residents of SF to explore exhibitions of queer life from the 1940s onward. A trip here can broaden the views of even the smallest minds among us.

OPEN: Wednesday through Monday
ADDRESS: 4127 18th St.
COST: \$5 (first Wednesday of the month free)
www.glbthistory.org/museum

Pacific Heritage Museum

Currently housed in the U.S. Subtreasury Building, the museum honors Pacific Rim peoples and has both a replica bank vault from the 1800s and a rare coin display.

OPEN: Tuesday through Saturday
ADDRESS: 608 Commercial St.
COST: FREE
www.sfstation.com/pacific-heritage-museum-b347

Wells Fargo History Museum

Learn how to drive a stagecoach and send a telegraph across the country in the same afternoon!

OPEN: Monday through Friday
ADDRESS: 420 Montgomery St.
COST: FREE
www.wellsfargohistory.com/museums/san-francisco

Contemporary Jewish Museum

On second Sundays, the museum opens early just for preschoolers, with performances, story time, and art projects. Families can also enjoy the drop-in art studio with a guest artist every Sunday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

OPEN: Thursday through Tuesday
ADDRESS: 736 Mission St.
COST: \$12 (children under 18 free)
www.thecjm.org

Asian Art Museum

On first and third Sundays, stART Tours use storytelling to expose young children to Asian art and culture. For kids 5 and older, grab an Elements of Art Explorer Pack at the family activity table.

OPEN: Tuesday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 200 Larkin St.
COST: \$20 (children 12 and under free)
www.asianart.org

Museum of Craft and Design

Craft with the littles on Saturday afternoons, 1 to 3:30 p.m. during MakeArt Family sessions.

OPEN: Tuesday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 2569 Third St.
COST: \$8 (children under 12 free)
www.sfmcd.org

If you feel like the last time you absorbed some culture was during your semester abroad, check out these (practically) free museums—your baby’s IQ will definitely increase while strapped to your chest or zonked out in the stroller.

Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts

Visit the gallery for a taste of Latin American culture. While you are there, check out their incredible array of classes (Mexican folk dance, guitar lessons), workshops (graphic design, Venetian mask-making), and more.

OPEN: Tuesday through Saturday
ADDRESS: 2868 Mission St.
COST: \$2
www.missionculturalcenter.org

Museo ItaloAmericano

Take a look inside the first museum dedicated entirely to Italian and Italian-American art and culture.

OPEN: Tuesday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 2 Marina Blvd., Building C
COST: FREE
www.museoitaloamericano.org

Museum of Russian Culture

Exhibitions and archives related to Russian emigration across the globe.

OPEN: Wednesdays and Saturdays
ADDRESS: 2450 Sutter St.
COST: FREE
[Call 415.921.4082 for more information.](tel:415.921.4082)

North Beach Museum

Educate yourself on the history of local Beat poets and the Italian influence of the famous neighborhood.

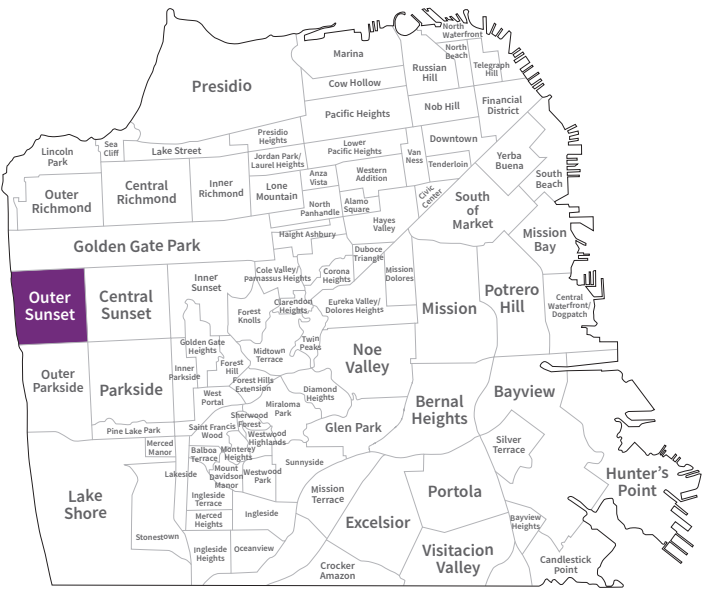
OPEN: Monday through Friday
ADDRESS: 1435 Stockton St.
COST: FREE
[Call 415.391.6210 for more information.](tel:415.391.6210)

California Historical Society Museum

The gallery and library emphasize the environmental, economic, social, political, and cultural heritage of the entire state.

OPEN: Tuesday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 678 Mission St.
COST: \$5 (children 12 and under free)
www.californiahistoricalsociety.org

Megan Bushnell is a former marine biologist who spends much of her time trying to get two little girls to experience as much of the outdoors as possible, within the confines of preschool, naps, and traffic. She also digs museums.



Li'l Kid, Big City: Outer Sunset

By Suzanne Barnecut

A great tactic for exploring the Outer Sunset is to pick one of the main arteries—Judah, Noriega, or Taraval—for a quick bite or a sweet treat before hitting the sand at **Ocean Beach**. There’s easier beach access at the foot of Judah Street, but a wealth of sand dollars to be collected closer to Noriega.

On a weekday or off hours, **Beachside Coffee Bar & Kitchen** (4300 Judah St.) is a casual spot to grab breakfast or lunch. A thick slice of cinnamon sugar toast from **Trouble Coffee** (4033 Judah St.) is also a kid-pleaser, along with their driftwood parklet. Moms will want to stop into **General Store** (4035 Judah St.) before the sugar rush hits.

On Noriega, try **Devil’s Teeth Baking Company** (3876 Noriega St.) for lunch, pastries, or shark-shaped cookies. You’ll pass **Sunset Shapers** (3896 Noriega St.) for a peek at surf boards and will be dangerously close to **Polly Ann Ice Cream** (3138 Noriega St.). Alternatively, **Marco Polo Italian Ice Cream** (1447 Taraval St.) offers classic gelato flavors as well as unusual options like guava, mango, and red bean.

Finally, while **Kingdom of Dumpling** (1713 Taraval St.) is not the easiest (or largest) place to take kids, that’s no reason to miss out. You can visit their factory (2048 Taraval St.) to pick up frozen dumplings for later. ❖

Suzanne Barnecut is a GGGM Magazine contributing writer and mother to a newly empowered 4 year old girl. She currently works as a senior writer at Zendesk. Find her on Twitter @elisesuz.



Ask the Expert

Positive Eating Habits, Positive Body Image

With Juli Fraga, Psy.D

How can parents instill a positive body image in their children? How might this protect them from developing problems such as eating disorders?

We can instill a positive body image in our children by beginning with ourselves. This means refraining from negative self-talk or body talk around our children by not using words like “diet” and “losing weight,” as well as avoiding labeling ourselves based on the food choices that we make (e.g., I was so bad because I ate dessert). Instead, we can point out the positive things that our bodies do for us. When our children are engaged in physical activity or play, ask them how their bodies help them feel healthy and strong. For example, my daughter loves gymnastics and I often talk with her about how her strong arms and legs allow her to do cartwheels.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture strewn with messages about thinness and the importance of attaining the “thin ideal.” Children internalize these messages very quickly and research indicates that by middle school, boys and girls believe these messages, but most have not yet begun engaging in disordered eating behaviors. Prevention programs that focus on bolstering body image awareness and interpersonal connection can help protect children against eating disorders. It’s never too early to begin teaching children about the amazing ways their bodies help them each and every day.

Oftentimes, we don’t even realize how we internalize messages that we receive about food. We might label certain foods (oftentimes sweets) as treats or we may tell our children, “If you eat a good dinner, you can have dessert.” While we certainly want them to eat their healthy food before having cupcakes and ice cream, it’s vitally important not to communicate that “desserts” are “special” or rewarded for good behavior. When we do these things, we give this food power, when it’s simply food. I encourage parents to label food by their name, which means refraining from the words like “dessert” and “special treat,” because children begin to draw emotional meaning from these words, which can increase the likelihood of emotional eating later in life.

What is mindful eating and how can it bolster a child’s body image?

Mindful eating is a meditation exercise that brings present-moment awareness to mealtimes. For example, in a mindful

eating practice, children may be given a raisin or an M&M and before eating, they are asked to use their five senses to investigate the food that’s placed before them. Research indicates that this form of eating helps children and adults tune in to bodily sensations, such as hunger and satiety, which allows them to strengthen their mind and body connection. A sturdy mind and body relationship can also help bolster body image.

Many schools are now embedding these practices in the classroom (part of the Mindful Schools movement) as a way to help students become more present with themselves and their bodies during mealtimes. Many students I’ve spoken with tell me how this practice helped them discern between “fake” and “natural” flavors.

You can begin this practice at home by asking your children to take a few deep breaths before eating. Then, you can ask them to put on their imaginary scientific lab coat as they investigate the food that’s placed before them. What do they notice about the texture, the smell, and the taste of this particular food? How does it feel after they take the first bite?

Childhood obesity is increasingly common. How can parents support an overweight child and instill healthy eating habits without making him feel singled out?

Parents can support an overweight child by focusing on healthy food choices and exercise without mentioning the words “overweight,” “obese,” “fat,” or “diet.” If a parent is worried about a child’s body weight, try reaching out to the child’s pediatrician, who can also recommend pediatric nutritionists. If you’re concerned about your child’s weight, it’s important to talk with your doctor, as there may be underlying medical conditions, such as diabetes, that affect a child’s weight and overall health. ❖



Dr. Juli Fraga is a psychologist in San Francisco, where she specializes in women’s health concerns, such as eating disorders, postpartum depression, and reproductive health concerns. She can be reached at www.drjulifraga.com.

It’s vitally important not to communicate that “desserts” are “special” or rewarded for good behavior.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Community Support

Diaper Drive

GGMG is partnering with the Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP) to host our annual diaper drive during the month of May.

HPP works to break the cycle of childhood poverty by finding housing for homeless families, providing prenatal and parenting support, and stabilizing families by addressing issues related to mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse in their clients’ lives. In addition to providing basic emergency needs and child care, HPP offers a community technology center for clients and arms families with the tools they need to build financial stability. One way they do this is through their community health worker training.

Please consider joining us in supporting this organization in one of three ways:

1. Donate funds directly to HPP

via their website:

www.homelessprenatal.org/donate

Please be sure to choose “GGMG Gives”

in the gift designation scroll-down.

This will help us track donations.

2. Donate diapers directly to the

HPP via Amazon:

<http://amzn.com/w/1OCL6IUOTFP65>

3. Drop off diapers at the following locations:

Peekadoodle, 900 North Point St., Suite F100

Peek-a-Boo Factory, 2 West Portal Ave.

Recess, 470 Carolina St.

Thank you so much for your support of this drive! For more information, please email drives@ggmg.org.

Contest

Happy Belly Cooking Camp

Happy Belly is a San Francisco-based, fun, educational, and interactive urban camp for 4 to 9 year olds. Centered around exploring all aspects of food, we create a playful and hands-on environment for kids to explore their taste buds and the food world around them.

At Happy Belly, we develop recipes, we cook, we visit kitchens around town, and we are visited by chefs and nutritionists in our quest to learn about this important vehicle of communication. This is an opportunity to step outside the world of typical children’s comfort foods. Yes, we might bake a batch of cookies here and there, but mostly we expose our participants to natural, traditional, unprocessed, wholesome foods, and give them more reasons to love them.

This month one lucky family will receive a full scholarship for a week of Happy Belly Cooking Camp in the summer of 2016 or 2017 for one child (a \$435 value).*

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH “HAPPY BELLY” IN THE SUBJECT LINE TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG BY MAY 31, 2016.

For more information and June 2016 camp dates, please visit www.lahappybelly.com/cookingcamp.

*Reservations are subject to availability. Blackout dates may apply. Prize is nontransferable, nonrefundable, and may not be combined with other offers.



DADLANDS

Gaining a Clearer Identity with Fatherhood By Joel St. Julien

Before I was a parent, I used to be a “go with the flow” person—wait for things to happen and let fate take me wherever it would. My wife and I married quite young at 22 and 23, respectively. Fortunately, we had the understanding to know that having kids would be a future venture, as we were just kids ourselves when we married. We could go to sleep when we wanted, sleep away the day, and party into the night. As artists with no roots, we moved from Philly to San Francisco, again with no worry about what was next as it was only each other we kept in view. My wife went to grad school while I worked in social work and pursued my music. I could go on tour with the only risk being that I was away from my wife for a few weeks, which in hindsight, was no real risk at all!

My wife and I had been married for almost eight years when the topic of having children came up. We had seen many of our peers’ marriages and relationships come and go, and we had let go of the fantasy of raising kids in that community, having peers to figure everything out with. Despite those losses, we were confronted with the fact that we needed to make decisions apart from our friends. When my wife brought up the idea of having a child, all of a sudden I was thinking practically and fearfully with a ton of excuses—I

Life would not be wasted—my daughter deserved the best version of me.

wasn’t making enough money...if we just waited a bit longer that’s when I’d get what I was looking for. Underneath it all, I was sinking in fear. I did not know what I wanted, so who was I to be responsible for raising a child? What type of world would she be living in? How would my marriage change? What about my career—I hadn’t even had a chance to start it! What was going to happen? To be quite honest, I wasn’t sure about a lot of things going into the pregnancy, but eventually I had to let go of the questions and simply show up as a father.

Five and a half years ago, my daughter was born, and like many parents have experienced before me, it was the most surreal and

beautiful moment of my life. What surprised me though was the sense of direction and purpose that was also birthed in me. Life would not be wasted—my daughter deserved the best version of me. Becoming a father did not mean that my life would come to an end or that my career as a then-budding composer would be ruined. Instead, I gained a clear focus of who I wanted to be.

I once was a dreamer, and now I get stuff done. Since my daughter’s birth, I’ve scored two full-length documentaries and two short movies, composed music for three dance performances, collaborated on a few sound installations at local art galleries, and released two albums. I just released an album this year and will be putting two more out in the next few months. I accomplished all this while working a full-time job and figuring out this experience of being a father and loving partner.

Though it seems like I’m bragging, I just want to show that life can be what you make of it. I meditate. I exercise regularly now. I have something more than myself to live for. There have been long nights and hard deadlines, but I’ve been doing what I want with the complete love and support of my family. I have lost nothing and truly gained so much—the identity I take in being a father is sacred to me. How I act, the decisions I make, the words I choose all play a role in her development. With that, I have the opportunity to plant seeds for my daughter to produce a healthy sense of self where she sees herself as a strong individual, to befriend herself, and to know deeply her parents’ love and unconditional support for her. Rather than instilling fear and uncertainty, I have the opportunity to show her how to open herself to the vast experience of being human.

Life doesn’t and shouldn’t end with kids—something new within you can be born as well. ♦

Joel St. Julien wears many hats. By day, he manages the youth employment programming at New Door Ventures for disconnected young people ages 17 to 24. By night he is a husband, father, and composer of all this music and sound. You can hear his latest album, Every Rise, at joelstjulien.bandcamp.com.





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This short list of culturally diverse books will make you want to travel the world and explore. Short of a long flight, these stories are a fabulous way to show children of all ages how people live on the other side of the planet, or those down the street who have a different cultural background.

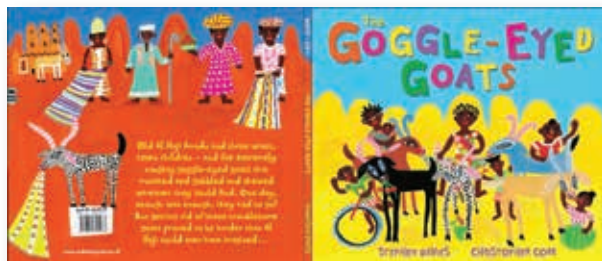


Carry Me (Babies Everywhere)

By Star Bright Books

While we are used to carrying babies in child carriers, other cultures tote their tots in baskets or ring slings. From Ecuador to Kenya, England to India, every country has a special way of carrying young children. Babies will love this richly illustrated book and you can find which country the pictures come from at the end. It is a very cute introduction to diversity.

Ages: 0 to 2 years

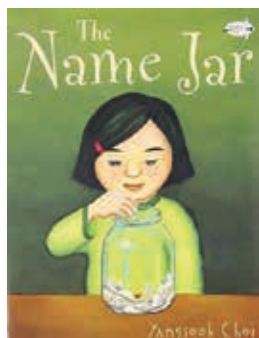


The Goggle-Eyed Goats

Written by Stephen Davies, illustrated by Christopher Corr

Old Al Haji Amadu has his hands full in Timbuktu. With three wives, seven children, and five naughty goggle-eyed goats, his life is not dull. However, his goats are so naughty that he decides that they have to go. That, unfortunately, is easier said than done, and hilarious adventures ensue. Illustrated in vibrant colors and strokes, this book presents a fun way to learn about another culture while polishing counting skills.

Ages: 3 to 5 years

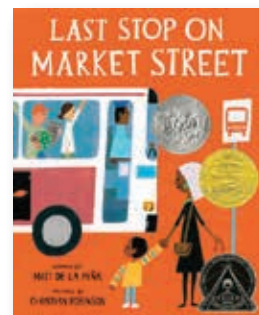


The Name Jar

Written and illustrated by Yangsook Choi

Unhei has just arrived from Korea in America and starts second grade at the local school. On the bus, she is teased about her name, which means “grace” in Korean and is hard to pronounce. When other

school kids ask her name, she announces that she will pick a name by the following week. Fascinated, her classmates help her fill a glass jar with names for her to pick from. This story is a great way to teach preschoolers about being different. Ages: 3 to 7 years

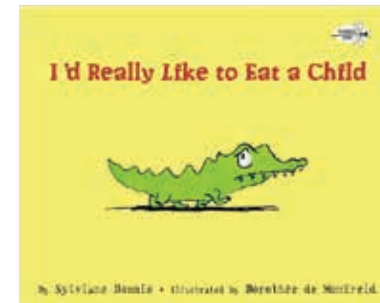


Last Stop on Market Street

Written by Matt De La Pena, illustrated by Christian Robinson

Traveling on the bus with his grandmother through a city, little CJ questions everything. How come it’s always so dirty over here? How come we don’t

have a car? For every question, his nana has the perfect answer, and by appreciating little things around them she helps him make sense of his observations. The story could be set anywhere but the topics of urban life, volunteerism, and wealth will resonate with many families. A positive attitude goes a long way in life. Ages: 3 to 5 years

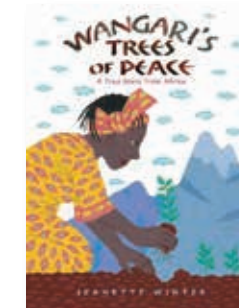


I'd Really Like to Eat a Child

Written by Sylviane Donnio, illustrated by Dorothee de Monfreid

Tired of bananas, a moody little crocodile looks for a child to eat. His mother thinks that it’s a funny idea because children don’t grow on trees, as opposed to bananas, and bananas are all she can offer for breakfast. Follow the darkly funny story of the little crocodile who won’t be swayed and wants a child for breakfast but who, in the end, decides that bananas aren’t such a bad choice.

Ages: 3 to 8 years

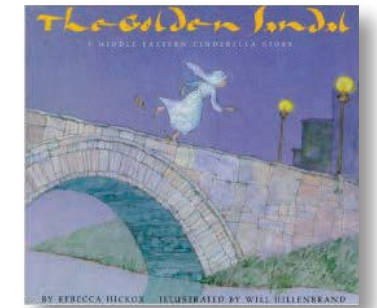


Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa

Written by Jeanette Winter

This book tells the true story of Kenyan environmentalist Wanfgari Maathai, who grew up in rural Kenya back when the nation was covered with trees. When returning to her homeland from America years later, she found that the land had been deforested. Seed by seed, she planted trees and inspired other women. Not only is this book a great read, but the message is wonderful for kids.

Ages: 4 to 8 years



The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story

Written by Rebecca Hickox, illustrated by Will Hilenbrand

The Golden Sandal is the Iraqi version of Cinderella, only the protagonist is a fisherman’s daughter with an evil stepmother. When the daughter finds a small red fish in a basket one day, she releases it back in the river, and in return for her kindness she gets help from a magical creature to dress up for the Grand Henna, the big event in town. Kids will be amazed at the similarities between this Iraqi story and the Cinderella we know.

Ages: 4 to 8 years

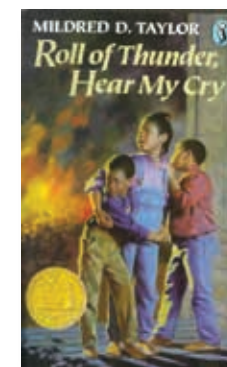


The Birchbark House

Written and illustrated by Louise Erdrich

For a unique and rarely told perspective, follow 7-year-old Omakayas through four seasons on Lake Superior’s Madeline Island in the 19th century. The Native American answer to Laura Ingalls Wilder’s pioneer life is a riveting insight into the daily life of the Obijwa people before their way of life was altered by foreigners on their land. From fireside ghost stories to roaming wild bears, living on the island is a different world that young readers will fall in love with.

Ages: 9 to 12 years



Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

Written by Mildred D. Taylor

Cassie Logan is a 9-year-old African-American girl whose family lives in segregated Mississippi in the 1930s. Told through the eyes of the young girl, the book follows the Logan family’s struggle to keep their land and stay strong despite brutal racist attacks, illness, and poverty. A Newberry Medal-winning story, this book has become a classic and can be enjoyed by tweens and high-schoolers alike.

Ages: 11 and up

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.

From Womb to World

Making Important Decisions

By Shaheen Bilgrami

Beginning with your first pregnancy, you are confronted with endless information and advice. Eat this, but don't eat that. Do this, but never do that. You will also need to make a multitude of decisions about your pregnancy and the birth, including decisions about your birth plan, birthing classes, and delivery location. It can be completely overwhelming.

And this is just the beginning. Once your child enters the world, there are more decisions to be made. Are you going to vaccinate? Will you follow the immunization schedule or an alternative schedule? Which one? And then there's the "Great Diaper Debate:" cloth, disposable, or compostable? Will you feed the baby breastmilk or formula? With each of your decisions, you find yourself in a particular camp or team. Once you're on a team, it's difficult not to pass judgment on those who aren't.

You are the expert on your kids and on yourself. Believe in yourself and your potential to be a great parent.

And there's more! As your baby grows, you'll need to make decisions about sleep and sleep training (Cry-it-out? No cry? No sleep training? Co-sleeping?), child care (Nanny? Share care? Corporate day care? Home day care?), and introducing solids (Purees? Baby-led weaning? Organic-only food?). The decisions are seemingly endless. Discipline approach, preschool type, enrichment activities, and socialization are just a few of the decisions still to come.

Adjusting expectations

Sometimes your decisions will be the result of much thought and debate, while other times they will be the result of simple, practical considerations. And sometimes, despite the best-laid plans, your choices will not work for your family, and you will need to rethink the situation. Your child may not have the temperament for "cry-it-out." The preschool you've chosen may not work for Junior. You may end up adopting practices and philosophies you had previously rejected. It's OK to go with your instincts. It's alright to change your mind.

You might be in the position of discovering that your child is dealing with a unique issue that requires professional intervention or treatment. If this happens to you, *do not panic!* Many children have something "different" or "quirky" about them. A surprisingly large number of kids are faced with issues ranging from food allergies to social or developmental issues or delays that require medical intervention, occupational therapy, speech therapy, or play therapy. If you and your child are dealing

with one of these issues, and you need to tweak your parenting style or choices, don't feel like you've failed as a parent. Cut yourself some slack. Reach out and find other moms for support, perhaps with older kids, who have trodden this path. Even when you've made the choices that feel right for your family, you may encounter criticism or judgment from family and friends, as well as from other moms. Take a look at some of the contentious "red chili" threads on the GGMG forum. It can get to a point where you become afraid to reach out and ask questions for fear of being judged by other moms. This should not be the case.

A universal truth

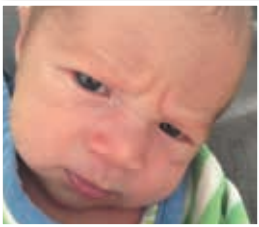
One way to overcome this dynamic and support one another is to remember that there is something universal in motherhood. We

are *all* muddling through, trying to do the best for our kids, our families, and ourselves. If following a particular parenting philosophy works for your family, or whether, like me, you read and pick up useful tips from a zillion different sources, our goals are the same. Do what works for you and don't judge others who are following different paths. Don't make your choices out of guilt or out of a desire to conform to someone else's notion of a great parent. You are the expert on your kids and on yourself. Believe in yourself and your potential to be a great parent. If you are struggling, reach out to your family and community, and the help will come. Ignore the haters and the trolls.

When you have the opportunity, be supportive of other moms who are struggling. Even if you have strong views on a subject, be considerate in the way you broach it. Pass on any useful advice in a gentle, non-abrasive, friendly way. And remember that even small gestures, like a supportive nod to that mom whose toddler is having a tantrum at the grocery store, or an affirming word to a mom who's doing a good job, can make a huge difference. We're all making parenting decisions that work for our individual families, but it's worth remembering that few decisions are permanent. We may change our minds down the line, and that's OK! ♦

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

New Arrivals



Alexis K.
Amy Angerami
Archana A.
Caitlyn Sauce
Carla R.
Carolyn P.
Christina A.
Courtney A.
Emilie I.
Emily Wang

Baby Emilia Samantha
Baby Dominic David
Baby Naiya
Baby Chloe
Baby Vincenzo P.
Baby Alexander
Baby Silas
Baby Parker Quinn
Baby Nathalie Simone
Baby Oliver Kai Loening

Jennifer Jimenez-Cruz

Laura M.
Lauren W.
Lisa V.
Mackenzie K.
Madeline P.
Sarah F.
Stephanie Jackson

Babies Jacqueline Lily
and Isabella Rose
Baby Alden Stewart
Baby Joseph Bryan
Baby Ryan Paul
Baby Bijou Kay
Baby Owen Richie
Baby Miles Moses
Baby Oliver Tyler

Congratulations to **Lisa V.!**
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Proud to Be Me

Helping your child establish a positive self-identity is one of your most important—and trickiest—challenges as a parent.

By Stephanie AuWerter

Photographs by Carmen Dunham

When your baby was born, you looked into her eyes and wondered, *Who is this magical little person? Who will she become?* Every day since then she’s been on an epic journey to answer that question, with you by her side. “The journey from baby to adult is a long one, where identity is being transformed and rethought,” says Dr. Martin Woodhead, a U.K. childhood studies professor and co-editor of the research paper *Developing Positive Identities: Diversity and Young Children*. “From the pre-verbal days to adolescence, it’s an ongoing search to figure out *Who am I? Where do I fit in?*”

Our identities begin to develop as young babies, as we weigh the responses we get from our coos, cries, and smiles, says Woodhead. By roughly 18 months, many toddlers can recognize themselves in a mirror, and by age 2 to 3, they begin to categorize themselves and others (*I’m a girl; I’m strong; I have brown eyes*). Slightly older children begin to retain the emotional memories that will start to become part of their personal narrative.

Throughout childhood (and let’s face it, in adulthood, too), identity remains a malleable, messy, multi-faceted thing. That’s because each of us is a kaleidoscope of many identities: social, cultural, racial, sexual, genetic, socio-economic, spiritual, and so on. “Some aspects are more stable, while others can change within minutes,” says Woodhead. “We are not a single flavor.”

Additionally, our identity is heavily influenced by the world around us. “It isn’t just about how one sees oneself,” says Dr. Peter Scales, senior fellow at Search Institute, a Minneapolis-based nonprofit dedicated to helping kids succeed. “It’s also the

reflection you get as you interact with others, through both verbal and non-verbal feedback,” he says.

As squishy as it all may be, having a positive self-identity is one of the key factors in living a fulfilling life. That doesn’t mean you’ll be happy all the time, of course, but it does mean you are able to carve out a life you feel good about and can weather the storms that come with it, says Scales.

Experts have lots of ideas about how to foster a positive identity in kids, all of which need to be customized to your family’s situation. With this type of advice, try to “filter it through your values, the reality of your life, your heart, and your gut,” says Scales. And be prepared for some bumps along the way.

Connect with your kid

The best way to help your child feel good about himself is gobsmackingly simple: love, notice, and engage with him. Like what he

likes, know his friends, laugh at what he finds funny, empathize when he’s sad or frustrated. Every moment doesn’t need to be magical, or quite frankly, even pleasant. But “at the end of each day your child knows you truly enjoyed him,” says Dr. Laura Markham, founding editor of the Aha! Parenting website (www.ahaparenting.com), who likens sharing your child’s interests to falling in love with a

Praising a child is one of the simplest things you can do to make her feel good about herself.

new significant other: if he’s into antiquing, you may suddenly find yourself “fascinated” by the nuances of vintage timepieces. “When children feel safe, valued, and delighted in, they feel like it matters that they are on the planet,” says Markham.



So, adore them. And then let go of the premise that you get to decide who they will become. Influence them? Of course. But “the idea that if you parent in just the right way that you’ll have just the right outcome needs to be retired,” says Leslie Roffman, director of San Francisco preschool The Little School, and co-author of *Including One Including All: A Guide to Relationship-Based Early Childhood Inclusion*. “Your child came into the world as a complex being. Know that it’s not all on you.” Focus instead, she says, on creating a loving home environment where each family member knows that he or she is accepted as is.

Work out your own issues first

If you are concerned about some aspect of a child’s identity (such as a disability or how to talk to your child about his adoption story), start by getting help—for yourself. “If a parent feels anxiety, they need to work on that themselves,” says Dr. Wendy L. Moss, a New

York psychologist and author of *Being Me: A Kid’s Guide to Boosting Confidence and Self-Esteem*. “Otherwise the child may pick up on that.”

Discussing complex identity issues in an authentic way that’s not leading, charged, preachy, or worried isn’t easy, acknowledges The Little School’s Roffman. But by working on your own fears, you can hopefully parent from a calm and confident place. Books are often a gentle way to introduce identity issues. Then, once a topic has been introduced, let your child know you are always available to talk and let her approach you with questions.

Mind the A,B,Cs

Search Institute has spent the last several decades studying what attributes lead children towards “success” (loosely defined as being confident, fulfilled, connected to others, and productive). Over the course of studying more than 5 million kids around the world, it has concluded that positive self-identity largely boils down to three things, which they call the A,B,Cs:

- **Autonomy:** Parents gradually allow a child greater freedom to exercise his own will and make his own decisions.
- **Belonging:** Children need to feel connected, first to parents, and then to friends and at least one adult outside of the family.
- **Competency:** Parents should encourage a child to learn new skills and do age-appropriate tasks on her own. For a young child, this can be as simple as learning to use a zipper. But as she gets older, look for a deep



personal interest, whether it’s art, sports, helping people or animals... whatever. The goal? To foster activities where you feel quintessentially “you” when engaging in them.

Success in these areas can help generate a feeling that you can walk a path in the world that you have some control over, that you have passions, that you can make contributions to others, and that you can deal with setbacks and disappointments, says Scales. Not bad, right?

Don't just talk about it

Many parents focus on what they *say* to a child regarding complex identity issues like race and gender, but actions are often more impactful. If you want your child to be comfortable with those who have some outward differences—and to ultimately find similarities beyond



those differences—strive to have different types of people in your life, too. Likewise, you may talk about good deeds such as helping kids who are bullied or those less fortunate than you, but do you model similar behavior? “Kids learn by watching what a parent does and seeing how that parent interacts with others,” says The Little School’s Roffman. “That’s how messages are really delivered.”

Observe but don't project

So your son's clothing of choice has been a tutu for the past two months. If your child is exploring a new identity, notice it, gently support it, and follow your child’s lead. Keep in mind that kids try on all sorts of identities during childhood: don’t assume that you fully understand the meaning that an identity has for a child. A girl who wants to look like a boy may be enjoying the more physical play delivered by the boys in her class, for example. “By being supportive and open, the child will have the confidence to explore and figure things out,” says Roffman.

Don’t look for a quick fix

If a child is struggling with some aspect of his identity, don't try to fix it with empty words, says Dr. Mary Lamia, a Marin-based psychologist and author of *Understanding Myself: A Kid’s Guide to Intense Emotions and Strong Feelings*.

For example, if a child is frustrated that she’s the smallest in her class, don't say, "You're just a late bloomer, you’ll have a growth spurt soon." Honor her feelings by letting her talk or cry about it, but don't suggest or support the idea that the problem should be corrected, since that validates that the child is not okay as is, says Markham. Instead, you might find an example from

Each of us is a kaleidoscope of many identities: social, cultural, racial, sexual, genetic, socio-economic, spiritual, and so on.

your own life where you struggled with some aspect of your identity and found success. Something like: “I was short as a child, and I still am. Big whoop! And when I was your age I worked hard at soccer and was quite good. Let’s chat about some things you’re good at doing.”

It’s also worth discussing with a child that no single aspect of his identity fully defines her, says Moss. A child’s disability, for example, is just one characteristic out of many. Help her understand that “it’s a part of you, it’s part of what makes you unique, and it can be part of what makes you strong,” says Moss. “But you also want her to understand that there are a lot of difference pieces to who she is."

Praise away

And what about the fear that all this nurturing and encouragement is raising a generation of narcissists? Nonsense, says Lamia. Praising a child is one of the simplest things you can do to make her feel good about herself.

Keep in mind, kids are the ultimate B.S. detectors. So rather than vaguely saying “good job,” try to focus on something specific that you

liked, says Markham. Imagine if your boss only said “good job” to you without providing any concrete feedback—over time you’d begin to suspect she was asleep at the wheel.

So be genuine, and dole out praise frequently. “Kids thrive on encouragement,” says Markham. “It helps us raise kids who feel that they are more than enough just the way they are.” And at the end of the day, isn’t that what we all want? ❖

Stephanie is a San Francisco freelance journalist whose identity got a serious makeover during the past eight years, going from single NYC professional to work-from-home wife, mom, and step-mom. She’s traded high heels for a high chair, and would have it no other way.

Ways to Encourage Positive Identity Formation, by Age

Source: Search Institute; search-institute.org; reprinted from *Ideas for Parents Newsletter 45*.

0 to 1 year

- Love, respect, and accept your child unconditionally
- Delight in your child’s unique personality
- Play together in ways that make your baby laugh and enjoy the time together

2 to 3 years

- Focus on the behavior; do not blame your child when correcting her
- When a child says phrases such as “me do it,” let him
- Create an atmosphere that is loving, supportive, and affirming so that your child enjoys and feels good about her environment

4 to 5 years

- Encourage your child to take pride in his cultural heritage
- Break new tasks into small, manageable steps that a child can master without becoming too frustrated
- Use positive and encouraging phrases around a child. For example, say “let’s try it,” instead of “that won’t work” or “that looks hard”

6 to 10 years

- Respect the decisions a child makes
- Focus on your child’s strengths and encourage her in these areas
- Encourage a child to seek out answers and solutions when he faces obstacles

11 to 15 years

- Encourage your child to explore and experiment within her areas of interest and ability
- Expect your child to experience ups and downs in self-esteem and for it to increase as he gets older
- Avoid comparing your child with others

16 to 18 years

- Continue to support your child as she struggles with issues and questions of identity
- Show your teenager positive possibilities in his future
- Delight in your teen’s talents, capabilities, and discoveries; share your delight

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A Big Helping of Kids’ Fashion, Hold the Stereotypes

By Gail Cornwall

Punky Brewster. Transparent. Sex and the City. Blossom. In art, as in life, fashion is one of the primary ways we express and experiment with our identity. “You are what you wear” means that what you wear can be pretty darn important.

As a grown woman I can wrap myself in Lululemon to prove that moving freely doesn’t require looking frumpy, slip into a BCBG cocktail dress as a declaration of MILF-hood, or don a black suit to broadcast my intent to get down to business. Our children, however, are painting their self-portraits with a much more limiting palette. Boys get dinosaurs, airplanes, cars, wild animals, skateboards, and all things science. Girls are left with hearts, flowers, tiaras, ballerinas, shopping bags, and domesticated animals wearing bows.

Retailers have increasingly set out to give our kids more flexibility in their clothing and self-concept. These labels—many launched by parents for the express purpose of combating gender stereotypes—hope to create a world where both sexes have access to clothes that stretch and launder with ease, to adventurous and intellectual sartorial themes, and to every color on the wheel.

Gender neutrals

A. The rocket t-shirts created by buddingSTEM (\$19.50) are out of this world. www.tinyurl.com/BuddingStem

B. Quirkie Kids says any kid can dig both massive prehistoric lizards and fuschia with its “Chompers” dino t-shirt (\$19.99). www.tinyurl.com/QuirkieKids

C. Baby Blastoff! offers a wide range of cool onesies, including an excavator on raspberry pink fabric (\$25.95). www.tinyurl.com/BabyBlastoff

D. Jessy & Jack makes “clothes without clichés for happy little humans,” like this “Robot Friends” long-sleeved tee with gold foil print (\$21.99). www.tinyurl.com/JessyJack



Dressed for action

E. Princess Awesome’s “Trains Busy Dress” (\$79) tells girls they can like both a hulking feat of engineering and the prettiness of flowing fabric at the same time. www.tinyurl.com/jtjybrj

F. Svaha, maker of “clothing that empowers,” pitches its organic science dress (\$30) with a pun: “Are you made of copper & tellurium? Because you’re Cu Te!” www.svahausa.com/product/science-lab-dress



Head to toe

O, P, Q. Some of my favorite outside-the-gender-box items include a statement bib from Jill and Jack Kids reading “Half of all T-rexes were girls” (\$12), Boden’s dino swimsuit (\$24.50), and the “Pi” headband by Princess Awesome (\$11.95). www.tinyurl.com/JillJack www.tinyurl.com/zldnct9 www.tinyurl.com/PrincessAwesome



As we prepare our kids to go out into the world, we tell them the sky’s the limit, to shoot for the stars. These new options can help us make sure the contents of their drawers and closets send the same message. ♦

Gail Cornwall is a former public school teacher and recovering lawyer who now works as a stay-at-home mother and freelance writer in San Francisco. Her work has been published online by the Washington Post, Salon, the Huffington Post, and Scary Mommy, among others. You can find Gail on Facebook and Twitter, or read more at gailcornwall.com.



Shifting Focus

Our roles and sense of self must shift when a baby arrives, which creates unique opportunities for us to grow and reinvent.

By Tara Hardesty

Photographs by Lindsay Lovier

Before becoming a parent, other people will tell you that life changes when you have a baby and that you can't understand how until you experience it yourself. I can say with certainty this is true; until my son was born, I didn't truly understand the emotional awesomeness of having a child or the staggering level of upheaval that follows. All of a sudden my life had another person in it—a person for whom I am 100 percent responsible, and a person who necessitates a re-evaluation of every aspect of my life, including my career.

For as long as I can remember I have wanted to work and have a career. My mother was a stay-at-home mom and she was amazing. I believe everyone has a gift, and hers was being a nurturing, loving, and persistent parent of five children. She was a natural. I watched her sacrifice and give 200 percent at all times. However, from an early age, I knew that this wasn't the path for me.

In college I landed an internship that expanded into a successful 20-year career working with large developers in the shopping center industry. I went through my first reinvention in 2005; realizing that I didn't want to work for large corporations forever, I started my own business. It felt like jumping out of a plane with an unreliable parachute. Now, over a decade later, I am still a business owner, and I still love to work, but I have added more to my plate: partner, wife, and mother.

Almost every mother I talk to feels the need to reinvent themselves and/or their careers after having a child. For some it happens the moment they meet their baby, and for others the realization comes months after returning to work. The adjustments can sometimes be realized with minor schedule tweaking, but in other cases, it requires a complete change in lifestyle and/or perspective.

Reinvention takes many forms for new moms, so it felt important to speak with women who have already metamorphosed in some way, in addition to those in the process of seeking a change.

An immediate shift in priorities

Leslie Kelly spent decades building a career in the technology-marketing sector, working for some of the Bay Area's largest companies. She traveled for work frequently, putting in many hours over the years to establish her career. Though she enjoyed her work and her colleagues immensely, when Leslie had her daughter, she felt an immediate need to change her priorities. Although it felt wrong, she worked for a year after her maternity leave ended. "I cried every day that entire year. I just wanted to be with my baby." After 12 months of misery, she decided to take a leap of faith and follow her heart. She spent the first year focused only on being a mom, and then started her own business as an independent contractor. "In the end it worked out perfectly and relatively easily. I now get to spend the majority of my time with my daughter, which is the thing I want most in the world."

Inevitably, everyone has to ask themselves difficult questions about how to move forward, amidst the chaos of being a new parent.

These days, Leslie spends daytime hours with her daughter and works at night, with assistance from a nanny a few times a week. By freeing herself from the incredibly demanding hours required of a corporate job, she has also been able to pursue her dream of becoming a cancer coach. "I feel that my life's work involves helping people through their cancer journeys. I never would have been able to pursue this career if I hadn't created space in my life and prioritized the things that matter most."

Building community

Kathryn Corro has a successful background in both real estate and the start-up world. She was considering her next move when she got pregnant, and although she knew she wanted to continue to work as a parent, she didn't know what that looked like. "The thoughts you have when pregnant are very different from those you have once you deliver your baby."

Kathryn and her husband chose to go into a "bubble" for the month after their daughter was born, to introspectively and privately examine their new life and the imminent changes upon them. "I emerged after that month totally in love with my child and knowing I didn't want to travel, didn't want to be anywhere where I couldn't get to her quickly."

Now that she was a mom, flexibility at work was a high priority for Kathryn, but she knew that would be hard, if not impossible, in the corporate world. She was pulled toward entrepreneurship and felt most comfortable remaining in the technology sector. So she started to focus on creating a community for moms, something to really add value to a mother's crazy life. This is how Moment, an app that allows moms to create an intimate online community, was born. Moment is

designed around the idea that every mom needs a trusted group of women who understand the challenges and victories of motherhood throughout the journey.

“Becoming a mom can be a real challenge: meshing the person you are with the person you want to be is not an easy undertaking. Inevitably, everyone has to ask themselves difficult questions about how to move forward, amidst the chaos of being a new parent.”

Shifting gears

Desiree Jones put in more than 40 hours per week in a fast-paced, client-services work environment during the first two years of her son's life. Unfortunately, this is considered "part-time" in her field, she notes. "I feel a real tension between being available to clients by working evenings and weekends (which is expected at my job) and rigidly protecting my time with family." In her current position, Desiree doesn't see any colleagues advancing unless they are working practically around the clock.

As a result, she is preparing to start a health-focused coaching business. Her hope is to work two to three days per week so she can be home for her preschooler and have time for her second baby, arriving in early

If you are considering a change in your career, a good place to start is to find like-minded women with whom you can collaborate and brainstorm. Consider gathering an informal group of women in similar circumstances to share ideas, or take advantage of the many online resources that focus on helping women shift careers:

The Second Shift connects professional women with interesting projects from top companies.

thesecondshift.com

Maybrooks offers career resources for moms, providing family-friendly job opportunities and general resources for those thinking of returning to the workplace. maybrooks.com



summer. “I feel like I can always go back to the workforce full-time, but I won’t be able to get these years back. So for me, [starting my business] felt like a logical decision.” Desiree feels lucky to have a partner with an income that allows her the freedom to start a business.

Always a mission-driven person, Mercy Manning's desire to make a positive impact on the world and the environment grew stronger after having children. She has also re-prioritized her workday hours. "My work style has become much more focused and efficient, as the time I spend working is now time I spend away from the most important people in the world: my three children, who are all under 5." She feels strongly that if she has to leave them with a babysitter, it had better be for a good reason. Now she is even more results-oriented at work, and she has noticed "a major correlation between the time I invest in my own physical health and managing my stress levels (via acupuncture, body work, and physical exercise) and my effectiveness and productivity at work." Mercy currently works in a sales role for a large-scale, sustainable commercial business; however, in the future she has hopes of pursuing something more aligned with her interests and her lifestyle as a mom. She has recently soft-launched a holistic wellness business that she hopes will be her sole focus in the years to come.

A personal transformation

Like Kathryn, the first clear instinct I had as a new mom was to hunker down with my family immediately after the birth of my son. We needed the time to be together and to reflect on how our life needed to change to accommodate our new family. By altering our daily schedules (shifting work hours so that one of us can be with our son in the afternoons and part of Friday, and adding in some weekend office hours), we determined a way to maintain both of our full-time jobs without the cost of a full-time nanny. We learned how important it is to make sure that our time together, both as a couple and with our son, is quality time.

Aside from the emotional aspect of leaving my child to go back to work full-time, there was also the struggle of shifting and transitioning my identity. I am a hard-charging career woman. I am confident in my abilities to earn a living and do well for myself; it is a foundation for me. But upon becoming a mother, I knew that I had to make changes. In some ways it was terrifying, to mentally shift from the role I'd occupied for so long to that of being a mom. I worried about how I would sustain a thriving business, how I would earn money, and if I could stay viable in my industry. Yet despite all the questions, I was certain that I needed to somehow reinvent myself so that my new role as a mom became my priority. So now I jump out of bed and spend the early morning, pre-child care hours getting a toddler dressed, making sure most of his breakfast lands in his mouth, and answering high priority emails and calls.

As women, we are used to juggling and adapting—these are key tools to growing in our lives and careers. Putting these skills to use is perhaps most important when taking on the ultimate new role of mom. Each of these women, myself included, felt the overwhelming urge to re-evaluate and reprioritize our lives when our children were born. The way in which we responded is by making changes, or reinventing, in a way that is unique to us as individuals and as mothers. ❖

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

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The End of Race

What does race mean today?

By Catherine Symon

Not only can all humans alive today trace their origins back to the same physical location, we have the same ~2000th-great grandmother.

This past February, *Fresh Air* host Terry Gross interviewed Trevor Noah, the anchor of *The Daily Show*. Early in the conversation Noah talked about getting accustomed to life in the U.S. and learning to navigate American norms. In one experience, which he adapted into a comedy routine for his 2013 album *African American*, he recalled filling out a form to open a bank account and being stumped by the question asking him to select his race. In his native South Africa, he was used to being called “colored” (Noah’s father is white, his mother is black), but the American bank form lacked that option. He asked whether he was supposed to choose white or black. A bank representative told him to choose whichever check box he wanted, which left Noah flabbergasted. Any one he wanted?

The exchange got me thinking: What does race mean today? Society is nowhere near being post-racial. Yet race seems more fluid than ever—more of us come from mixed heritages and, as Trevor Noah found, racial identity is partly a choice. Can we redefine race for our children? Could our kids’ generation be the one to finally extricate us from years of racist ideology? The scientific community has been calling race a social construct for some time now, but what does that really mean? I looked into what geneticists have to say about race. Genetics and race are each incredibly complex in their own ways, and this one article cannot fully do all the nuances justice. But one amazing story told by DNA investigators shows that all living humans, regardless of our apparent physical differences, are much more alike than we ever thought before.*

Historical attempts to define race

Attempts to classify people by race stretch back at least to the Middle Ages. For centuries, the predominant theory shared by Christians, Jews, and Muslims was biblical: all people are descendants of the three sons of Noah (Africans from Noah’s son Ham, Europeans from Japeth, and Asians from Shem). The dark skin of the Africans was considered to be the “curse of Ham.” By the 17th century, this so-called Hamitic curse was co-opted by proponents of the slave trade to justify their cruelty: it was God’s curse on Africans that made them inferior and therefore available as property.

Eventually race classification transitioned from the religious domain to more scientific disciplines, but the deeply ingrained prejudices persisted. In the early 18th century, Danish botanist Carl von Linne (more widely known as Linnaeus, creator of the taxonomy still used in the classification of plants and animals) claimed that *Afer* people were governed “by impulse” and *Asiaticus* “by opinions.” *Europeus* people, on the other hand, were “governed by laws” and therefore the most civilized. In the 19th

*As in all scientific disciplines, not everyone agrees with the details described here

century, influential French physician Pierre Paul Broca concluded that the “superior races” had larger brains.

These theories (and others not included here) assumed there was some fundamental property that explained the physical and cultural differences between groups of

How are DNA mutations used to trace lineage?

A mutation is like a typo in your genes. These errors commonly occur during cell division but are usually corrected by the cell’s machinery. Occasionally, a mutation is not corrected and gets passed along to the next generation. As mutations accumulate over time, a genetic “record” is formed.

Geneticists trace ancestry with mitochondrial and Y-chromosome DNA because these forms of DNA are much shorter than the full genome, and therefore easier to analyze. More importantly, they are not subject to the reshuffling (“recombination”) that nuclear DNA undergoes each time a sperm or egg cell forms. Recombination makes analysis prohibitively difficult.



people. They were, however, based on what could be observed with the naked eye, the knowledge available at the time, and subjective assumptions.

The discovery of DNA in 1869, and subsequent understanding of gene structure and genetic inheritance, are what finally gave us a more objective look at who we are. As it turns out, the family history of the entire human race is written in our genes. Here are several breakthroughs that helped illuminate the human story.

Four genetic breakthroughs, one human race

First, a watershed discovery came in 1972 when evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin did what appeared, at the time, to be a trivial comparison of DNA profiles. His goal was to determine “how much of human diversity between populations is accounted for by more or less conventional racial classification.” Lewontin compared selected genes of people from seven “races” representing more than 170 populations. He made the comparison in three ways: (1) within a given population (e.g., Australian Aborigines), (2) between populations but within the same race (e.g., Caucasian Austrians and Caucasian Portuguese), and (3) between races (e.g., Black Africans and Oceanians).

Lewontin found that 85 percent of the genetic variation occurred within a population (and therefore within the same race) and 8 percent of the genetic variation occurred between populations within a race. The average genetic variation between races was only 6 percent. In other words, genetic differences occur much more often between people of the same race than between people of different races. The results were unexpected (even to Lewontin) and turned assumptions about race and genetics on their heads. But the findings have since been confirmed by numerous other studies. Lewontin’s 1972 paper, *The Apportionment of Human Diversity*, is now a landmark in human genetics.

A second paradigm-altering finding came in 1987 when Rebecca Cann and her colleagues at UC Berkeley published a paper in *Nature* tracing the ancestry of 147 international test subjects to a single woman who lived in Africa about 200,000 years ago. The ancestor was dubbed “Mitochondrial Eve,” because the researchers analyzed mutations on mitochondrial DNA to trace lineage to her. Cann’s paper effectively quashed theories that people arose from different genetic origins. Not only can all humans alive today trace their origins back to the same physical location, we have the same ~2000th-great grandmother.

A third and related finding came 15 years later from Spencer Wells, a population geneticist and former student of Richard Lewontin. By tracking mutations on the Y chromosome, Wells charted the patrilineal lines of today’s population and determined that all living humans share a single male ancestor known as “Y-chromosome Adam.” More importantly for the emerging story of

A fourth revelation came after the sequencing of the human genome in the early 2000s. Researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Celera Genomics, the two organizations who worked simultaneously to sequence the genome, discovered that the genetic difference between any two individuals is minute. Here is how the finding is described on the NIH website: “When researchers completed the final analysis of the Human Genome Project in April 2003, they confirmed that the three billion base pairs of genetic letters in humans were 99.9 percent identical in every person. It also meant that individuals are, on average, 0.1 percent different genetically from every other person on the planet.” Combine that finding with Lewontin’s assertion and the genetic basis for “racial” differences is around 0.006 percent of our genetic makeup. While our genes do play some role in our appearance

So how does all this DNA analysis help to illustrate the experience of early humans? Combined with what we know about the conditions of the Earth in the last 100,000 years, here is the picture that emerges:

The earliest human ancestors appeared in Africa about 6 million years ago. By the time *Homo sapiens* (that's us) emerged roughly 200,000 years ago, there had been plenty of time for naturally-occurring DNA mutations accumulate in our pre- and early-human family tree. We were a highly diverse genetic group. Then an ice age intervened. Africa was still warm, but colossal ice sheets closer to the poles drew seawater miles away from shorelines all over the world. People who relied on seafood starved. The ice also sucked moisture from the air and Africa's deserts

As each group left Africa, they took with them a very small subset of *Homo sapiens* genetic diversity. The emigrants and their descendants, therefore, had a relatively narrow genetic profile. While more DNA mutations have accumulated since our ancestors left Africa, 60,000 years is a drop in the ocean of evolutionary time; there hasn't been enough time for us to gain enough meaningful genetic variation to be "different" from people of other races that is relevant in

RACE – The Power of an Illusion
(www.pbs.org/race)

A PBS website covering societal, scientific and historical aspects of race. The companion documentary is for sale at pbs.org with limited free clips posted on YouTube.

Catherine is a medical writer. She wishes she had another 10,000 words to squeeze in all the information she wanted to cover in this article.

Sources: James Moody, PhD; Rebecca Bigler, PhD; Phyllis Katz, PhD; Po Bronson & Ashley Merryman (Nurture Shock)



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NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS: Noe Valley

The current **Noe Valley Neighborhood** Meetup Committee came together late last year, as each member individually saw a need for a supportive community of moms and their families in the neighborhood. Noe Valley is already known for its large concentration of young families (and dogs!), so all we needed was to bring coffee—and sometimes wine—for everyone to share.

We have a lot going on: a group of moms of infants meets every two weeks at La Boulangerie de San Francisco, we host a monthly play date at Noe Court, and we have a monthly wine night just for moms. We have also hosted special events for holidays, as well as book readings for the kids at a local bookstore.

Vivian Perez (mom to Sebastian) is the neighborhood director and lead for the weekday playdates, and our awesome ambassadors are Joanne Wan (Remy), who is the lead for the infant meetups, Kristy Duchak (Julie), Natasha Mohanty (Anushka), and Michelle Chan (Ali).

Our goal is to host events that everyone will enjoy, whether a new mom or a “veteran.” Noe Valley may be world famous for all the strollers, but its best kept secret is the awesome community of moms!

Weekend Play Date at Upper Noe Rec Center

Can't make it to play dates during the week? Don't fear, we've got you covered! Meet us at the Upper Noe Recreation Center. The entire family is invited and we'll provide snacks. Hope to see you there!

- DATE: Sunday, May 8
- TIME: 9:30 to 11 a.m.
- PLACE: 295 Day St.
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/96733753

Noe Valley Moms Wine Night

Join us at a Noe Valley mom's home for a chill night of wine, small bites, and good conversation, without kids! Meet other neighborhood moms in a relaxed setting. We hope you can join us.

- DATE: Thursday, May 19
- TIME: 8 to 9:30 p.m.
- PLACE: Address will be sent after you RSVP
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/96733728



Get connected

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



PARENT EDUCATION

Toddler Sharing & Taking Turns at Recess

Sharing is a point of anxiety for many families. Amanda Hyer will present a workshop on how to establish rules about sharing and how to take the awkwardness and ambiguity out of around balancing your child's desires and those of other children.

- DATE: Tuesday, May 3
- TIME: 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
- COST: \$38 per individual; \$58 per couple (save \$5 with promo code GGMG16)

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Conscious Parenting at the Park Branch Library

Parenting can be a complex and demanding task! Dr. Joanna Adler will present strategies for becoming skillful parents and discuss how to cultivate and support the authentic expression of your child, how to meet your own needs as a parent, and how to support your child in the best way possible. We will have a sitter from UrbanSitter available.

- DATE: Wednesday, May 11
- TIME: 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- PLACE: 1833 Page St., Program Room
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96544576

PLAYGROUP/NEW MEMBER

Playgroup Formation Event at Gymboree

This is a call for moms in search of playgroups. It'll be a great morning filled with snacks, prizes, and new friends.

- DATE: Sunday, May 15
- TIME: 9 to 10:30 a.m.
- PLACE: 1503A Sloat Blvd.
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/96613860

Parent Education Presents: The Birds and the Bees and Beyond

This seminar will feature three essential conversations to have with young children about sex and relationships. What's your plan for teaching your young child about sex and relationships? From teaching the facts of life to preventing sexual abuse to standing up for oneself, there's a lot to talk about! Come to this interactive workshop to learn what conversations are developmentally appropriate, strategies for presenting the information comfortably, and methods for teaching key relationship skills. Don't wait until puberty to start talking—set your family up now for success later by having open and skillful conversations.

Live Seminar

- DATE: Thursday, May 12
- TIME: 7 to 8:30 p.m.
- PLACE: 200 Brannan St., Community Room
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: [Register on BigTent.](#)

Webinar

- DATE: Wednesday, May 18
- TIME: Noon to 1:30 p.m.
- PLACE: Webinar
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: [Register on BigTent.](#)

JUST FOR MOMS

May Member Mixer at Peekadoodle

Want to meet other moms in person instead of online? Come to the second Member Mixer of 2016. Take a night off from the family and make some new mom friends. There will be appetizers, wine, mocktails, and of course, cupcakes. We will also have a raffle at the event!

- DATE: Wednesday, May 25
- TIME: 7 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE: 900 North Point St.
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/96809680

Parent Education Presents: Getting Ready for the Kindergarten Fall Admission Process

Darcy Campbell will provide an overview of the kindergarten admissions process and discuss important considerations when choosing a school.

- DATE: Wednesday, May 18
- TIME: 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- PLACE: St. Mary's, 1111 Gough St.
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/96895541

KIDS ACTIVITIES

Family Day at Tara Firma Farms

Join us for a day of farm tours, scavenger hunts, music, animals, face painting, and BBQ.

- DATE: Saturday, May 14
- TIME: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- PLACE: 3796 I St., Petaluma
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/96888523

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & CAREER

How to Make a Career Change

Do you feel stuck in a soul-sucking job and long to do something that feels more fulfilling, even if you have no idea what that might be? Do you know you're in the wrong career but are struck by fear or self-doubt when you think about trying to make a change? Whether you're going back to work after maternity leave, thinking about returning to the workforce after time as a SAHM, or are currently in a job and just know you're meant to do something more, this workshop is for you. Join GGMG mom and career coach Julie Houghton at WeWork for this popular career change workshop so you can start to get clarity and take steps towards finding work you love.

- DATE: Thursday, May 26
- TIME: Noon to 1 p.m.
- PLACE: 25 Taylor St.
- COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96756626

Committee Spotlight: *Member Engagement*

Describe the personality of your committee.

We are a group of fun-loving moms who want to give back to GGMG in any way we can, as a way of saying thanks for all that GGMG has done for us!

Why do you do what you do? What has been an unexpected benefit of being involved with the Member Engagement Committee?

We cannot imagine how we would have survived motherhood so far without GGMG—it is such an invaluable resource for every stage of mommyhood. We consider ourselves to be incredibly lucky to be able to give back and be a part of the rockstar group of dedicated volunteers who have made GGMG what it is today.

What types of activities or projects do you undertake?

The Member Engagement Committee is responsible for the four-part newsletter series sent to new members during their first month, which details all member perks and benefits, how to navigate BigTent, and how to find and attend events, meet other moms, and join playgroups. We also host events and co-sponsor events with other committees throughout the year for both current members and potential new members. Stay tuned for some exciting upcoming events this summer!

How do you know when you are making a difference?

It's the best feeling in the world when a mom comes up to us at an event and thanks us. As we all know, it can be really hard to get out of the house sometimes, with or without little ones in tow. It's all worth it to know that we are helping moms have fun and meet other moms!

Who are your current volunteers?

Karen Brein, Amanda Herrmann, Amy Kronberg, Janet Lee, and Virginia Green.

What's next for the member engagement team?

We are in the midst of planning a few fun events for the summer—and we are always looking for ideas for upcoming events as well! If anyone has ideas, they can reach us at membership@gmg.org.

How can interested GGMG members get involved?

We don't currently have any openings on our team. If someone is interested, they can contact volunteer@gmg.org to be placed on a waiting list or see if any other committees might have similar openings.

Member Support By Vicky Keston

GGMG Village

Many of us have no local family, so we join GGMG looking for camaraderie in this journey of motherhood. I've been enormously grateful for this village, which has supported me in everything from breastfeeding to potty training to school selection. If my kids are being difficult, the forums give me fantastic suggestions for how to handle them. If I can't find our CARES harness, someone who has never met me and yet trusts me as a fellow GGMG mom will lend it to me.

Just last year, after Little League practice, my car battery died for no apparent reason. The dads belittled me: Why hadn't I bought a new battery? The tow truck driver refused to take us because no children were allowed. Five minutes after posting on Facebook, six GGMG friends offered to pick us up at Crissy Field. One took me back the next day to wait for the tow truck.

Here's my kindness challenge for the week: let's try to remember that the mom in the other car, the one who is driving poorly or blocking the sidewalk, is doing her best. Maybe she is worn out. Don't honk back. Give her a word of kindness. Offer to take her child into school or keep an eye on her car if she needs to step away. We are the village.

Recruiting

Do You Like Planning Parties?

Join GGMG's Social Events Team!

Join GGMG's Social Events Committee and you can help plan GGMG's Spring Fling! This is GGMG's biggest event of the year and a fun family outing that many of our members look forward to. Volunteers are needed **right away** to help with this fun event. Volunteering with GGMG is a great way to meet other moms and is a great resume builder as well! Contact us at volunteer@gmg.org for more information.

OTHER VOLUNTEER POSITIONS AVAILABLE:

- *Operations*
- *Community Support: Co-chair for Events*
- *Parent Education*
- *Kids Activities*
- *Magazine Photographer*
- *Neighborhood Meetups: Haight, Mission/Castro, Nob Hill/North Beach, NOPA/Alamo Square*

Social Media

Instagram

Heading to the beach this summer? Taking a cross-country road trip? Staycation in the city? Let us know what your family is up to by tagging your pictures with the hashtag #ggmgfsf. One lucky mom will receive a Sport-Brella portable wind and sun weather shelter as well as an assortment of beach and sand toys! Tag your Instagram photos by July 31 to be eligible to win.

LinkedIn

Are you a current or past volunteer with Golden Gate Mothers Group? LinkedIn is a business-oriented social media network. Enhance your profile by including your volunteer experience(s) with us: www.linkedin.com/company/golden-gate-mothers-group.

Facebook

Are you a mommy blogger? We're always looking for fresh perspectives and great parenting content to share on our Facebook page, and what better content to share than postings created by fellow GGMG moms. If you have some you'd like to share, send them over to socialmedia@gmg.org. Remember to LIKE our page at www.facebook.com/ggmgfsf and keep an eye out for more exciting event announcements and contests.

Committee Chairs

Do you have an event you want to promote? Send your content (keep it brief) to socialmedia@gmg.org.



Spring Social

GGMG-wide Annual Spring Event at the Bay Area Discovery Museum

Sunday, May 15

9 a.m. to noon
557 McReynolds Rd., Sausalito

The spring social is FREE and is open only to GGMG members and our guests. Register at www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96970815.

Come join other parents and their children as we celebrate spring at the Bay Area Discovery Museum in Sausalito! We'll have exclusive use of the indoor theater, where we'll have face painting, a bounce house, and many more other fun activities, as well as full use of the museum exhibits for the morning. With the backdrop of the stunning Golden Gate Bridge, we're excited to let our imagination run wild with you!

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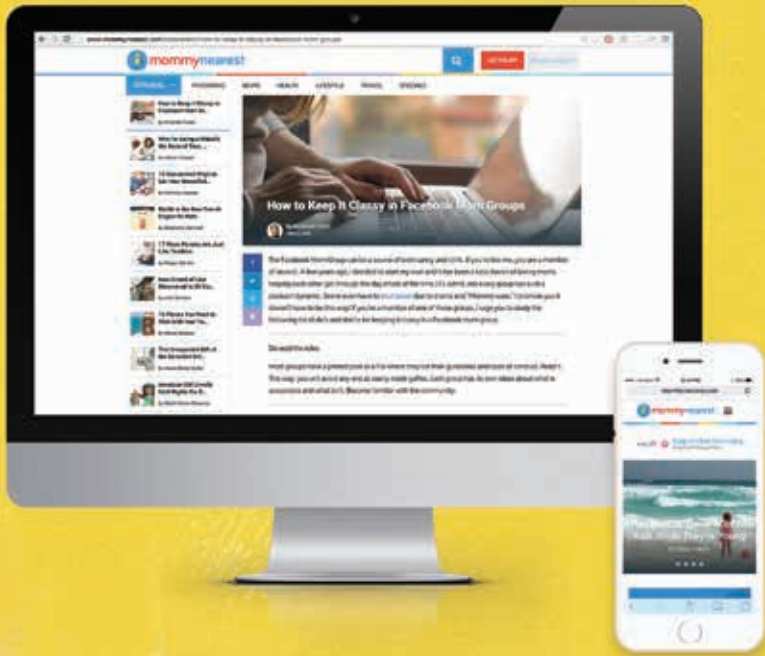
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I ♥ Mom

Love, Family and Change

By Stef Tousignant

When I was a child, I thought I would always have two younger sisters and two younger brothers. But life is full of surprises. Today I have one sister and three brothers, and my identity as a supportive sister and secondary matriarch has been challenged.

Growing up in a small rural community in Massachusetts, my family was probably the most diverse in town. Three out of our five kids were Asian, and two—my biological sister and I—were Caucasian of Canadian descent. Every Sunday in church, filling the entire front row, there we would be: blond, blue-eyed older siblings, my chubby-faced Korean brothers, and finally my parents, passing a pigtailed Filipino baby between themselves. For our conservative, almost all-white town, it must have been a sight to see.

Our family can credit its size to a documentary my mother saw when I was 6 or 7 on the orphanages of Romania, which included the kind of heart-wrenching scenes that can have a powerful effect on any mother. From that moment of extreme empathy, it became her mission to do what she could to help children in need of a loving family. Over the course of the next five years, my parents adopted my brothers from South Korea and my youngest sibling, Olivia, for whom they journeyed to the Philippines.

I was 12 when Olivia joined our family. She was the cutest little pile of pudge, and it was so amazing to have a baby to laugh with—a baby that was like my very own living doll. During the many nights I cared for her while my parents were working, the only way she would sleep was with my hand on her chest. Having



Coming to terms with the idea that loving my brother is the same as loving my sister has been a bigger challenge than I thought it would be.

spent the first year of her life alone in a Manila hospital, she had never experienced the deep connection or the gift of loving touch, and now that she had felt it, she wouldn't let it go. Resting my forehead on the rails of her crib, I would watch her lay there, calm and at peace with someone nearby.

Emotional scarring from her early days alone resulted in wild, uncontrollable toddler years, and throughout her childhood Olivia remained socially and emotionally stunted, hitting and biting and lashing out in whirlwinds of terrible rage. When she was in elementary school, a doctor diagnosed her with bipolar

disorder and so began the '90s solution: meds of every kind. After I went away to college, our relationship remained for her a desperate and profound need. For me, it became one of complicated long distance love and helplessness. Love was always a hard thing for her to experience: her reflex was to push back at, to hate, or to hurt instead.

The emotional burdens an adopted child may live with, from fear of abandonment to attachment disorders, are assault enough, but what it took my sister 19 years to discover was much greater. At her core, her inability to love stemmed from the fact that she was, in fact, a he, and couldn't love herself. I wasn't totally surprised when she began sharing her secret desire to become a man with me. In a way, it was a relief to know that there may be a solution in sight

for her lifelong unhappiness. As a new mother myself, I desperately wanted for her to be happy no matter what. If she wanted to explore this side of her, it was my job to be supportive and to work out my own feelings in time.

My parents handled it differently. My father was very supportive and my mother was convinced it was a "stage" she would grow out of—we all remember how uncertain life was at 21. But Olivia was ready to make the transition and she wasn't waiting for anyone else's approval. She had waited long enough.

So when my children were 6 and 2.5, the aunt they had known since birth became their uncle. The concept that some people aren't born with the body that their brain actually wants was quickly absorbed by my oldest, and after a few curious questions like, "Will Uncle OJ still visit us when we go to Nana's?" and "Will I have to be a girl when I grow up?", he was reassured. My 2.5-year-old didn't bat an eye at the change, as is his nature. Auntie Olivia had become Uncle OJ and that was that.

For me, the transition has been a bit harder. There are days I mourn the loss of that chubby baby girl that entered our lives, so flamboyant and yearning for love. Coming to terms with the idea that loving my brother is the same as loving my sister has been a bigger challenge than I thought it would be. However, when I see the confident, calm, and truly happy man OJ has become, I know that this is how things were always meant to be, and I'm willing to take the challenge head on. ❖

Stef Tousignant lives in the Inner Richmond with her high school sweetheart and two boys (4 and 7) who love to play air guitar and explore Golden Gate Park.



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