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LETTER FROM
THE EDITOR:

How We Occupy Ourselves

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is an editor and photographer living in Cole Valley with her three children.

One area where I've never been quite sure if my parents made the right decisions, however, is the landmine-rich territory of afterschool activities. My parents utilized the spray and pray method, signing me up for anything and everything,

“Were they being sensitive to my worries and preferences, or simply rushing me from activity to activity in order to occupy my time, rather than engage and nurture my mind and body?”

from soccer and gymnastics to pottery and improv, hoping something would stick. It rarely did, though, and I would inevitably come home on the first day of some class or another, ballet or tap shoes in hand, and dejectedly announce I was quitting. My parents usually acquiesced immediately and pushed me toward the next activity, more than anything just eager to get me out of the house. At the time, I was grateful that they caved so quickly. Looking back as an adult, I often wonder if they gave in too soon, and if there were

opportunities missed and talents unnurtured because I wasn't forced out of my comfort zone. Were they being sensitive to my worries and preferences, or simply rushing me from activity to activity in order to occupy my time, rather than engage and nurture my mind and body?

In this issue, our writers occupy themselves by examining how we spend our time and structure our family's time, and identify ways to improve our own experiences. Jessica Williams sets her sights on higher education and offers practical advice and suggestions for moms who are considering dipping their toes back into academia to pursue degrees and certificates while balancing education with family. First Partner of California Jennifer Siebel Newsom speaks to moms in our capacity as Chief Technology Officers of our households, and shares best practices for strengthening our children's relationship with technology and screen time, revealing findings from her state-wide virtual listening tour with parents. And, from our archives, we offer up Suzanne Barnecut's examination of overscheduling children and finding a balance between structured and free time.

From soccer to art, my kids have tried and quit it all. I usually make them finish one season or course sequence of an activity, but after that, they're free to leave. There's a lot of guesswork in parenting, and as I gently prod my children to roll up their sleeves, tie their laces, and try new activities, I remind myself that I won't always know where encouragement and pushiness meet, and that's OK. The important thing is that I offer opportunities to the best of my ability, cheer them on, and help my children recognize that they're capable of more than they can imagine, without assuming that they'll be masters of everything.

Sonya Abrams

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.

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NEXT ISSUE: Exploration

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

LETTER FROM
THE BOARD:

Defining Ourselves by Our Life's Work

By Connie Lin



Connie lives in Forest Hill Extension with her husband and two young kids. She is cautiously optimistic that things like travel and eating inside restaurants will be safe again later this year.

COVID helped me to see my family's living situation more clearly: how things were really going in my home, how family relationships were doing, and what I wanted from work. I learned that while I loved getting to play with my kids, hear their opinions about the world, and enjoy extra hugs throughout the day, I didn't want to be their full-time teacher and snack ninja. I missed being at work, tackling challenging projects, negotiating with colleagues, getting to use the restroom by myself, and having conversations with adults other than my husband.

This year, my resolution theme is to be more deliberate about where and how I invest my time and energy. I do many things because I'm supposed to, but honestly, no one would notice if I didn't dust daily. It'd be okay if it happened once a week, right? I could instead enjoy a 5-minute coffee break in the morning and use that time to plan out my top two to three to-dos, and start the week a little less stressed.

Happy New Year! At the beginning of each year, I like to crack open a new planner, brew a cup of coffee, and dream about what the year will look like. I'll come up with a short list of resolutions to tackle, from small habits to bucket list goals. What New Year's resolutions have you chosen? What would a better version of you include, addressing personal nits, big goals, physical feats, career aspirations, etc.? For me, being stuck at home for nearly a year because of

With this in mind, I encourage you to broaden your view of this month's theme of occupation to go well beyond "work" or "job." While we need to be able to put food on the table and provide a roof for our families, we can create space to think about what matters to us and whether how we spend our time matches up with our priorities. How are we contributing to our community—our children's schools, our neighborhoods, where we work? How important is it to land that promotion at work this year? Or put another way—what is the story we would want our kids and others to tell about us once we are gone?

You're part of our amazing mama community and GGMG could use your help as a volunteer, committee lead, or board

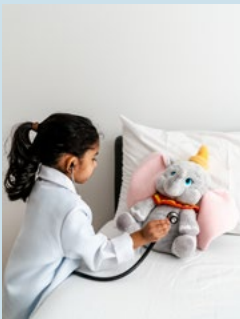
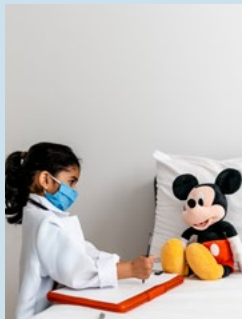
“This year, my resolution theme is to be more deliberate about where and how I invest my time and energy.”

member. After two years of mostly virtual events, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that we'll be able to have safe in-person meetups again. We need volunteers to brainstorm and organize these, check in attendees, and keep GGMG running. If this sounds like you, email me at board@ggm.org for more information or check out the forums and monthly bulletin for open positions.

Connie Lin

P.S. Please join me in expressing thanks to Erin Cahill, our outgoing GGMG Chair, for all her work and contributions over the years. Erin, we appreciate you!

COVER OUTTAKES

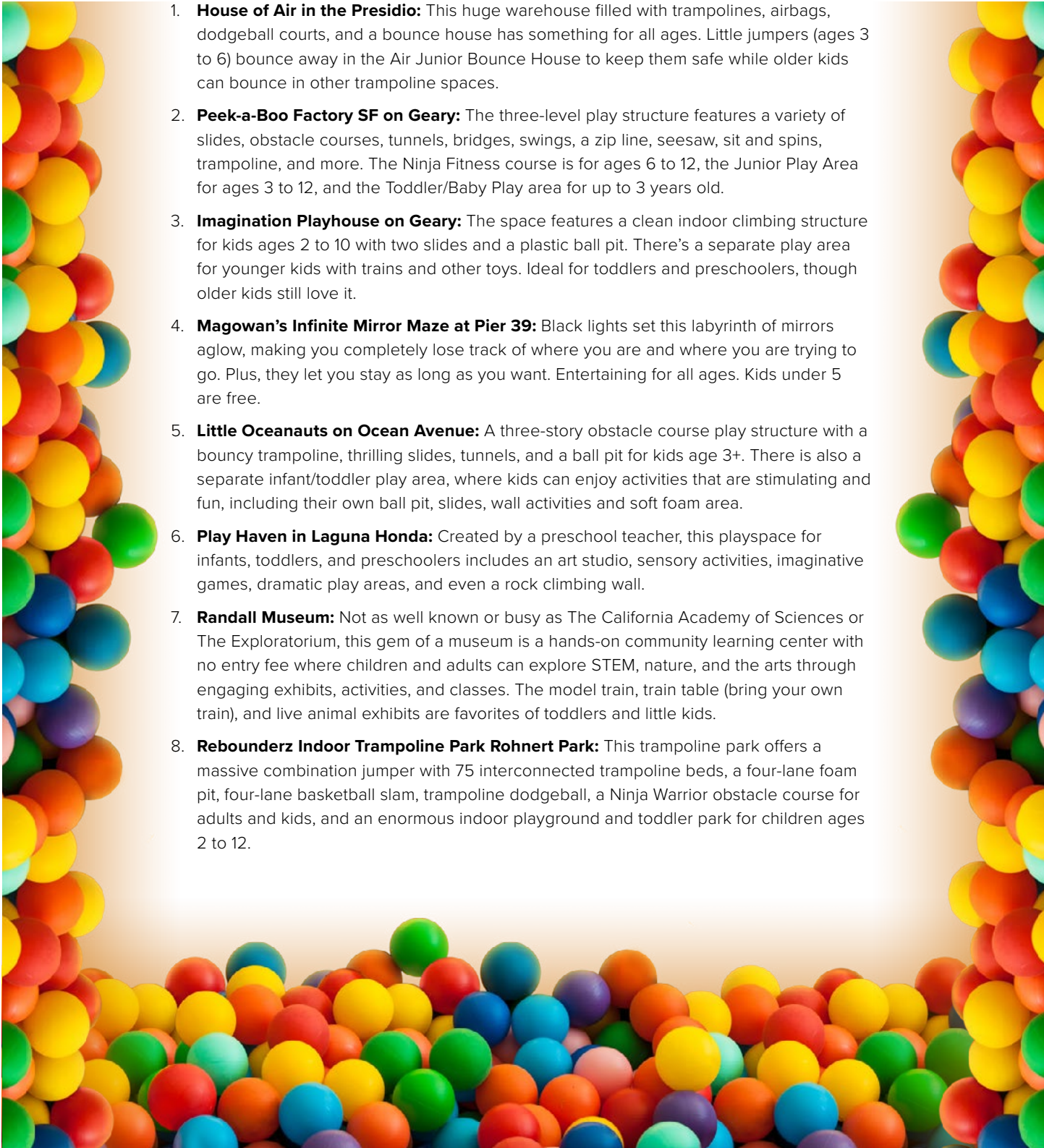


Only one shot can make it to the cover. Here are some of our other favorites.

Cover photo by Bhavya Thyagarajan
Model: Maya, age 4

Indoor Playspaces

By Christine Chen



1. **House of Air in the Presidio:** This huge warehouse filled with trampolines, airbags, dodgeball courts, and a bounce house has something for all ages. Little jumpers (ages 3 to 6) bounce away in the Air Junior Bounce House to keep them safe while older kids can bounce in other trampoline spaces.
2. **Peek-a-Boo Factory SF on Geary:** The three-level play structure features a variety of slides, obstacle courses, tunnels, bridges, swings, a zip line, seesaw, sit and spins, trampoline, and more. The Ninja Fitness course is for ages 6 to 12, the Junior Play Area for ages 3 to 12, and the Toddler/Baby Play area for up to 3 years old.
3. **Imagination Playhouse on Geary:** The space features a clean indoor climbing structure for kids ages 2 to 10 with two slides and a plastic ball pit. There's a separate play area for younger kids with trains and other toys. Ideal for toddlers and preschoolers, though older kids still love it.
4. **Magowan's Infinite Mirror Maze at Pier 39:** Black lights set this labyrinth of mirrors aglow, making you completely lose track of where you are and where you are trying to go. Plus, they let you stay as long as you want. Entertaining for all ages. Kids under 5 are free.
5. **Little Oceanauts on Ocean Avenue:** A three-story obstacle course play structure with a bouncy trampoline, thrilling slides, tunnels, and a ball pit for kids age 3+. There is also a separate infant/toddler play area, where kids can enjoy activities that are stimulating and fun, including their own ball pit, slides, wall activities and soft foam area.
6. **Play Haven in Laguna Honda:** Created by a preschool teacher, this playspace for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers includes an art studio, sensory activities, imaginative games, dramatic play areas, and even a rock climbing wall.
7. **Randall Museum:** Not as well known or busy as The California Academy of Sciences or The Exploratorium, this gem of a museum is a hands-on community learning center with no entry fee where children and adults can explore STEM, nature, and the arts through engaging exhibits, activities, and classes. The model train, train table (bring your own train), and live animal exhibits are favorites of toddlers and little kids.
8. **Rebounderz Indoor Trampoline Park Rohnert Park:** This trampoline park offers a massive combination jumper with 75 interconnected trampoline beds, a four-lane foam pit, four-lane basketball slam, trampoline dodgeball, a Ninja Warrior obstacle course for adults and kids, and an enormous indoor playground and toddler park for children ages 2 to 12.

Now fully vaccinated, Christine's 8- and 6-year-old children are looking forward to going to indoor playspaces again at some point, hopefully soon.

Baby Animals

By Christine Chen



Enjoy time in nature at **Slide Ranch near Muir Beach**, where goats, sheep, honey bees, chickens, and ducks are a highlight, along with hiking trails teeming with wildlife next to the ocean. **Berkeley's Tilden Little Farm** is fantastic and free. For the price of a stalk of celery (bring your own), you can get up close and personal with cows, pigs, chickens, bunnies, and more. At **Lemos Farm in Half Moon Bay**, a food cup to feed the animals costs \$1. Ride a pony in the ring or even milk Maggie, a life-sized milking cow machine! **Harley Farms Goat Dairy in Pescadero** is a working goat farm with tours that you can book in advance or explore the farm on your own during working hours. Stop by the farm shop before you leave to purchase products to take home. **Gilroy Ostrich Farm** offers the chance to see the quirky behavior of ostriches along with other animals such as goats, chickens, pot-bellied pigs, and alpacas. You can even adopt one of the cute little bunnies through the farm's adopt-a-pet program. At **Hidden Villa in Los Altos Hills**, milk a cow, join a bird hike, or take the barnyard babies tour in the spring. Parking is \$10 unless you are there for a paid activity. **Menagerie Hill Ranch in Vacaville** is a small family-run ranch, known primarily for breeding and raising alpacas. They offer both visits with the alpacas as well as farm tours, all by appointment. **Safari West in Santa Rosa** recently welcomed a brand new baby giraffe born on the Sonoma Serengeti.

Christine hopes you enjoyed her piece on Indoor Playspaces, where her bio can be found.



Campsite Reservations

By Sonya Abrams

Northern California is home to some of the most beautiful campgrounds in the world, and with the pandemic spurring more people to spend time outside, sites are harder to come by than ever. With competition fierce, how should you go about snagging a spot? **Reserve California** is the best known website, offering reservations at state parks throughout California, which you can book up to six months in advance of your desired date. If you're looking at a weekend slot, however, you may discover that your preferred campground is fully booked within minutes of reservations opening. Luckily, there are an increasing number of options for the eager outdoors person. **Facebook** has several groups devoted to helping campers, prominent among them the 12,000-member **NorCal Campsite Cancellations & Reservations** group, where folks can offer up reservations they're no longer able to use. The **Dyrt Camping App** lists a far broader array of sites than Reserve California, including federal land, KOA spots, private sites, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sites (there are some swaths of BLM land where people can set up camp without a reservation or permit; this varies by area). **Hipcamp** connects campers with private landowners, who offer options ranging from traditional campsites, RV space, and cabins to yurts, treehouses, and other offbeat options.

Sonya hopes you will go explore the outdoors. You can find her bio with her Letter From The Editor.



Pediatric Occupational Therapy

With Dani Prissman M.S., OTR/L



Dani Prissman is a pediatric occupational therapist that received her degree from Columbia University. She is from New York, and currently resides in San Francisco, as a mother of 2 young boys.

What is pediatric occupational therapy?

A child’s primary role is to play and engage with other children. Pediatric occupational therapists (OTs) refer to these types of daily activities as occupations. Sometimes a child can have difficulty participating in meaningful occupations because of sensory, motor, emotional, social, or behavioral challenges. Pediatric OTs use an individualized and holistic approach considering the developmental and skill level of each child. Since play is the primary occupation of children, pediatric OT sessions are organized using the therapeutic use of play to target underlying skill deficits (i.e., self-care, attention, fine motor, sensory processing disorder). The goal of OT is for the child to reach their fullest potential through improving their skills, preventing further deficits, and/or adapting their environment to promote greater independence.

How do I know if my child would benefit from occupational therapy?

There is a common misconception that occupational therapy is only beneficial for children with developmental disorders, disabilities, or who have received a diagnosis of some sort. There are, in fact, many reasons why a child might benefit from OT services including: delays in fine and gross motor skills, sensory integration issues, delays in play and social interaction skills, poor visual perceptual and visual motor skills, cognitive delays, decreased writing skills, and to increase independence. A newborn may require assistance to strengthen the suck-swallow reflex, while a middle schooler needs help paying attention in the classroom because he is unable to filter out background noises. Sometimes it can be as subtle as a child whose fingers get tired quickly when coloring (decreased finger strength), or seems to get more upset than her peers about messy hands (tactile defensiveness).

What are the benefits of school-based occupational therapy?

School-based OTs work with children from kindergarten through age 21, with a primary focus on academic

achievement and social participation (i.e., school routines, recess and cafeteria participation, etc.). There are two methods of service delivery: Push In, in which the OT provides services wherever the child is during the time of that session (i.e. amongst their peers). This is beneficial if the child is having difficulty in a group setting. The second is Pull Out, in which the OT removes the student from the class for a private session to work on a variety of tasks without the distraction of peers (i.e., writing skills, fine motor, etc).

One major benefit of school-based OT sessions is participating in real-life situations with the child, helping them through the process instead of just attempting to recreate it in a clinic. It’s incredibly rewarding to observe a child problem-solve through a challenging situation, or watch her master a skill that she has been working on the entire school year.

“There is a common misconception that occupational therapy is only beneficial for children with developmental disorders, disabilities, or who have received a diagnosis of some sort.”

Public schools are required by federal law to participate in FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education), and provide access to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to any child who requires one. The quantity and duration of OT services are determined at the initial IEP hearing, and updated annually based on progress.

Private schools are not required to provide an IEP because they do not receive federal funding, however some will provide an IEP at their own discretion. In this case it’s worth looking into whether your insurance will reimburse you for services.

Are there simple play strategies to encourage baby/toddler development?

Absolutely! Many pediatric OTs work in the child’s home through early intervention (EI) services which includes birth through age three. OTs will utilize resources available in the home so caregivers can continue to do the work outside of OT sessions. Read the next page for some ideas:

Play Strategies to Encourage Baby/Toddler Development

0 to 3 months

- Tummy time (supervised)
- High contrast books or printed pictures
- Sing/read/dance

3 to 6 months

- Tummy time—with toys (3m), toys just out of reach (6m+)
- Textures (carpets/towels, soft blankets)
- Turning thick board book pages while reading together

6 to 12 months

- Mirrors! Playtime near (secured) mirror
- Rolling a ball back and forth
- Tissue paper! Crinkle it, rip it, throw it
- Three-inch blocks for grasp and release
- Cheerios or puffs to practice pincer grasp



1 to 3 years

- Whipped cream/yogurt play
- Water play
- Guess the animal sound
- One-step directions
- Rip paper
- Squeeze water from sponges
- Wheels on the Bus and Open Shut Them song/dance
- Catch/throw a ball
- Blocks to stack
- Blocks to imitate a structure
- Shape sorter (DIY with a coffee can. Cut a circle in the lid, and use small balls to push through. For an increased challenge, cut a coin slot and use coins)



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Fully Occupied

By Paul Vig

The Dogon people of West Africa have a belief that man was created in the image required to perform specific tasks related to work. For example, the arm was straight until man beat metal on an anvil, and thence it cracked in half, forming an elbow. It is human evolution as the ultimate exemplification of form meets function. I’m not an anthropologist, so I do not seek to explain this belief, but I appreciate the power of the image: the body formed explicitly for work, the body formed by work. I believe that at our core, we are animals of creation. We build things. Our bodies and minds are wired to make stuff, so this image resonates very strongly for me.

I grew up in Sydney, Australia. It’s a very outdoorsy sort of place. I spent almost all my childhood out in the suburban bushland fringes and on the waterways around the harbor. My friends and I built boats from whatever we could find: Folded up sheets of corrugated iron with duct tape to hold and waterproof the ends; empty plastic bottles by the hundreds stuffed into sacks, with plywood on top; found broken boats, which we repaired. This was great fun and I guess it sparked my interest in making and creating things that go in and on the ocean. Although I expected to go to college someday, I wasn’t interested in finishing school at that age. I left school early and went to work as an apprentice at a shipyard on Cockatoo Island.

On the island, we built and refitted navy ships and submarines. One of my first jobs as an apprentice was to rebuild a sunken World War II mini sub, which is still on display at the Australian War Memorial today. I spent hours down in the bowels of these ships and subs, fitting steel fabrications which I had built in the shop, under the watchful eye of my tradesman. My tradesman taught me the valuable lesson to always “measure twice and cut once”—an adage which is commonly uttered, but has real meaning when you are building precision fabrications which must fit into a small sub, and would have to pass QA examinations. Many of my first attempts as a first year apprentice found their way to the bottom of the harbor, a way of hiding failures commonly known as “deep sixing” in the vernacular of the dockyard workers.

After four years as an apprentice, I became a tradesman.



And then I left to do other things. I traveled, and worked abroad. I had no career, just a series of jobs, which enabled me to earn money and do the things I wanted to do. After a while I got a degree, then another and another. I funded study (and living) by working. I probably had 50 jobs of one kind or another before I started my current career in technology—kitchen hand; bartender; carpet installer; bricklayer; metal worker; alfalfa packer; truck auction house driver; store clerk; outdoor movie concession stand operator; milk delivery driver; olympic pool manager; copy editor; media store manager; heavy machinery operator.

Many of these jobs were just a means to an end, but what I learned along the

way is that the jobs which involved the creation of a thing, be it a wall in a house, a part of a ship, or a technology product (as I do now) are the most rewarding for me. There is something in the act of creation which is deeply satisfying, and is, as the Dogons knew, ingrained in our form. We are meant to make things.

As a father now, I see my young daughter learning to make things too. She has an intense level of concentration when she is working on a project, and you can see that she easily achieves a state of flow, which is total immersion in her activity—total occupation. It can be frustrating to try and talk to her when she is occupied in this way; it seems like she is willfully ignoring her parents. But, from another perspective, to be fully occupied in this way is a wonderful thing, and I think we as adults sometimes forget the simplicity and joy of working in this fashion. As we get older and advance in our careers, we have more distractions and an ever increasing amount of micro tasks, and this can detract from pleasure derived from being solely focused as we did when we were children. Now that I’m a dad, perhaps that is my lesson from my daughter. Try to stay in the moment, and just enjoy it. I don’t worry too much about what my daughter may become; she will find her way. But I do hope that she gets to take many paths on her journey.

Paul is currently a business development guy for cloud services and video games in the Bay Area. He’s working on the next possible chapter, which may include, but is not limited to, beer baron, author, pavlova purveyor, dog walker, and man of leisure.

“I believe that at our core, we are animals of creation. We build things.”

CONTEST

Cuppa Tea or Coffee?

Who couldn’t use a little extra something during these crazy COVID days? Enter our contest today to win one of our fabulous prizes! A nice cuppa tea or kick-start coffee can help any mom who imbibes. All three of our cafes are women-owned, local San Francisco businesses! Please support them if you can.

Winner A will win a \$40 gift card to Pinhole Coffee in Bernal Heights. Enjoy the bustling Bernal neighborhood vibe at 231 Cortland Ave.

Winner B will win a \$40 gift card to Hey Neighbor Cafe in the Portola neighborhood. This cafe is a hidden gem located in the former Blue Bottle building on an adorable cul-de-sac parklet at 2 Burrows St. (cross street is major artery San Bruno Avenue).

Winner C will win a \$40 gift card to newly opened La Lucha Coffee Bar in Noe Valley, located along walkable “Slow Sanchez” at 1598 Sanchez St. (corner of 29th Street).

Each winner will be selected at random and will enjoy just one gift card. And in classic mom parlance, “you get what you get, and you don’t get upset.”

Enter by emailing contest@gmg.org with the subject line “**Cuppa.**” by March 5. Good luck!



NEW ARRIVALS



Congratulations to **Ashley R!** She will be getting joyful moments captured by Anna Munandar from Mini Anna Photography. Anna specializes in capturing joy and every milestone in your family, from birth to college. See her work at minianna.com.

Rachel O.
Erin Flynn
Catherine St Clair
Ashley R.
Leena

Baby Brooks Luka
Baby Oberon Keith
Baby Ava Christine
Baby Uma Devi
Baby Amina

To announce your new arrival in the magazine and for a chance to win a \$150 gift card from **Mini Anna Photography**, fill out the form at tinyurl.com/gmgNewArrivals.



Exploring Different Career Paths

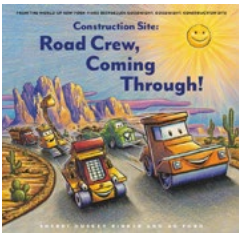
By Laure Latham

When your kids grow up, what do they want to become? Also, what do grownups do all day? Asking the right questions and being open-minded are very important so that your child becomes aware of the different professions that he/she can choose from freely. Some careers are born out of passions that we nurture as children, while others come organically from personal skills. These books provide a first insight into a variety of professions.



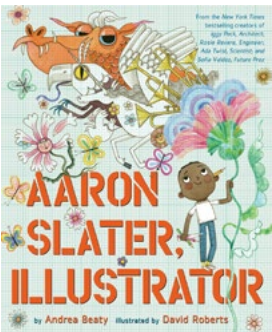
Hello, World! Garden Time
Written and illustrated by Jill McDonald
What does it take to grow vegetables, fruits, and flowers? This board book introduces young

ones to gardens and how people put food on their tables. From the tools needed to tend the garden to the plant growing process, this book will inspire future green thumbs to grow their own plants. **Ages: 0 to 2 years**



Construction Site: Road Crew, Coming Through!
Written by Sherri Duskey Rinker, illustrated by AG Ford
Young engineers, read up! This familiar and cheerful crew of trucks and tractors shows little ones how roads are built when they are needed. A true story of successful teamwork and project management, this book features

construction site members that kids already know from a previous book (excavator, dump truck, etc.) as well as a new road crew (paver, striper, water truck). Adapting to modern biodiversity concerns, the book's end pages also mention wildlife corridors and tunnels in a welcome nod to the environment. **Ages: 2 to 5 years**



Aaron Slater, Illustrator (The Questioners)
Written by Andrea Beaty, illustrated by David Roberts
Can everybody become an artist? Printed with a dyslexia-friendly font, "Aaron Slater, Illustrator" tells the empowering story of a boy with dyslexia who discovers that his learning disability may inform who he is, but it does not define who he is, and that there are many ways to be a gifted communicator. The acknowledgement of the individual's skills being most important, where we sometimes focus only on shortcomings, is important to ensure our children are raised celebrating what makes them unique and not what they "can't" do. Other books in the Questioners series feature careers as diverse as community organizer, architect, or engineer, and provide great inspiration for school-age kids. **Ages: 5 to 8 years**



Someone Builds The Dream
Written by Lisa Wheeler, illustrated by Loren Long
As you drive across a bridge or watch your children run around a playground, have you ever wondered *Who built*

this? Scientists and architects have a vision and plan, but it's the frequently-underappreciated skilled workers who hammer the nails and weld the steel to make that dream come true. Beautifully written and illustrated, this story is a tribute to the many women and men who work tirelessly to create our amazing world. **Ages 5 to 8 years**

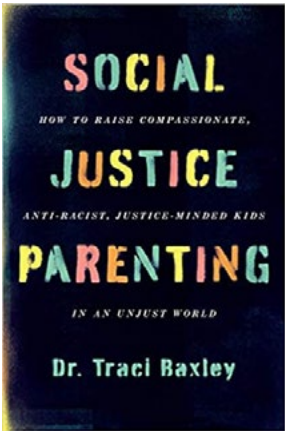


The Green Glass Sea
Written by Ellen Klages
Dewey, age 10, embarks alone on a mysterious train trip from her grandmother's home in St. Louis to New Mexico, where she will rejoin her often-absent mathematician father. It's 1943, and Dewey's dad is working at Los Alamos—"the Hill"—with hundreds of other scientists and their families on a project that they call the "gadget." Based on historical facts, this novel provides a glimpse into life during the Manhattan Project from a child's perspective. It is highly recommended for girls interested in science and the ethics of science. **Ages 8 to 12 years**

Laure blogs on healthy living and adventure travel at Frog Mom (frogmom.com), and is the author of Best Hikes with Kids: San Francisco Bay Area. She works in legal marketing and lives in London, where she peppers adventures with her two teenage daughters with wild swims, foraging, and cream teas. You can find her on social media @frogmomblog.

Books That Tackle the Hard Work of Parenting and Partnering

By Gail Cornwall

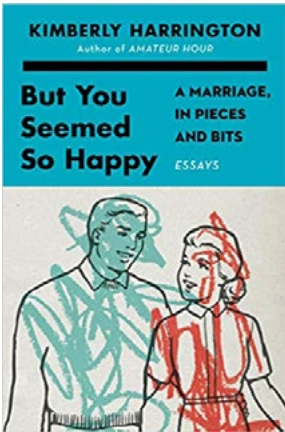


Social Justice Parenting: How To Raise Compassionate, Anti-Racist, Justice-Minded Kids in an Unjust World
Dr. Traci Baxley quotes Ruth Bader Ginsburg saying, "Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you." And that's exactly what the Black mother of five sets out to do in *Social Justice Parenting*. Writing like a preacher striving for universality, Baxley acknowledges anti-racist believers while giving skeptics an open-armed welcome. "Give me your hand...Together we can raise a better generation."

If you want to be part of the solution, but aren't quite sure where to start, Baxley has you covered. Begin by diversifying your child's toys and books, "but the minute you feel comfortable with what you are doing, move on to something that scares you," she encourages. "The goal of Social Justice Parenting is to raise and nurture a child who can ultimately self-advocate, empathize with others, recognize injustice, and become proactive in changing it."

Read that mission statement again, and notice how Baxley links socially responsible parenting to just plain good parenting. Setting firm boundaries and sticking with them, for example, "is a foundation for teaching fairness and equity." She considers belonging as a basic human need, which is why she exhorts us to make home a safe place, leading with "open-heartedness, engaged listening, and making others feel like they matter"—and do the same in multicultural settings. Don't let fear of social discomfort or messing up thwart efforts at anti-racism, and push back against garden variety perfectionism too: "live in radical love, for yourself as much as you do for your children."

Social Justice Parenting is aspirational but also realistic. "Like everyone, I sometimes don't show up as my best self," Baxley writes, but she keeps trying and asks us to do the same. "My kids need you, and your kids need you."



But You Seemed So Happy: A Marriage in Pieces and Bits
Kimberly Harrington is known for writing incisive, humorous essays about motherhood. Now she turns to divorce, which she describes as, "an opportunity for people to wonder if you couldn't have done a better job, not just with your marriage, but with your entire life." *But You Seemed So Happy* is billed as a compendium of essays, but it reads more as a memoir, albeit with interludes such as the hilarious "Some Questions for Men in Engagement Photos" and the satirical "Thank You, Acquaintance, for the Very Good Advice on How to Save My Marriage."

Anecdotes about Harrington's teen years and twenties felt like having to park a mile from the trailhead. But the hike begins in earnest, once Harrington turns to "perfectly okay divorces" that we don't hear enough about. "It is rarely the big things that kill a marriage," she tells us, describing "all the hills we maybe should've died on." A marriage without curiosity "is as devastating as infidelity, yet somehow working in a slower, gentler, more insidious way." Harrington reports, "It is being unfaithful to your own life." More hard-earned wisdom is imparted: How risky saving money with DIY therapy can be, how one's commitment to her kids' stability and happiness can "form a cage," and more.

Still, I couldn't help loving the scenes from Harrington's middle-aged singlehood. "Feeling unhinged at fifty is quite different than feeling unhinged at, say, twenty-eight," she explains. "At twenty-eight you can arrogantly assume you have loads of runway left. Unhinged is even a bit adorable when you're that age, like you're the lead character in your own rom-com. If you're fifty and unhinged, your movie is going to be a drama and it will not be a good one."

I won't spoil her Tinder experience, but will share a description that alone makes the book worth reading: Harrington decides to go man-watching with a porch vantage point. "I found a mellow rhythm with the rocking chair, nothing too showy. Something that said, 'I understand how rocking chairs work' and also 'but not completely.'" It could be a metaphor for her take on life, love, and divorce.

Gail works as a mom and writer in San Francisco. Read about parenting and education from the perspective of a former teacher and lawyer at gailcornwall.com or by finding her on Facebook and Twitter.



Addicted to Being Busy

By Julie Houghton

For years, whenever anyone asked me how I was, most of the time I responded by talking about the fact that I was busy.

Although I've come a long way, I know I have a tendency to let myself become so busy that it reaches the point of overwhelm. I did it back in my life in the corporate world, when I was often in environments where the expectation was to work long hours & always be ready to put your life on hold for the sake of work. And later my vision of myself as someone who was perpetually "busy" reached a whole new level when I left my corporate job & started a coaching business while also working a part-time job and taking care of two kids under two.

I remember the first time I heard of the idea of being addicted to being busy. Part of me wanted to protest: "But I HAVE to do these things. I don't WANT to be so busy." But deep down I knew that even if I did have obligations, I was taking on things I didn't want or need to do & telling myself stories about what it meant if I didn't do them.

"Many of us have absorbed the idea that if we're not busy we're not reaching our full potential."

When I stopped and examined my constant state of busyness, I realized that even though I was pushing myself to the breaking point and felt pretty miserable, I was actually "getting something" from trying to do more than I could handle.

It might sound strange to think there is a payoff to pushing ourselves to the breaking point, but the truth is our culture celebrates busyness. When someone is busy, our tendency is to see them as more important, more productive, stronger, even potentially more selfless (i.e. sacrificing their own well being for the sake of "getting it done"). Many of us have absorbed the idea that if we're not busy we're not reaching our full potential.

I had started to build my awareness of this idea—I was telling myself stories that were not true about what it meant if



I didn't get it all done or get it all "right." I was saying yes to things I wanted to say no to, but I should have set boundaries instead. I was making good progress towards being less "busy."

And then the pandemic hit. And the idea of being busy took on a whole new meaning. In addition to working, I was now suddenly making endless meals for my whole family and managing remote learning for my 2nd and 3rd grade kids

while also stockpiling things like toilet paper and dried beans as if the world could end at any time. If being busy had, to some extent, been a choice before, it now felt like a matter of survival.

Looking back on the past two years, I can see that my experience of the pandemic has been a strange mix of busyness combined with forced stillness. We are all practiced now in the shifts we have to make when there's a surge in cases—canceling plans, shrinking our social bubbles, staying home instead of going out. We have been forced to pivot to stillness.

Although I now have pandemic fatigue and am tired of telling my kids we have to cancel plans yet again, I can also appreciate that this pandemic has given me a new awareness of how I spend my time. Both in my personal life and in my experience working with coaching clients, I can see that the pandemic has given us a chance to really zero in and get clarity about what matters to us. Now, more often than not, when I make plans or invest my time and energy into something, I really do so with intention.

Despite my frustration with having to repeatedly slow down these last few years, I now try to bring some stillness into my life on purpose. The quiet can be deafening but it has the uncanny ability to also help us focus on what we really want out of our careers, lives, and our interactions with other people. There is no way to know what will be required of us in the near future but we can certainly move forward mindfully.

Julie Houghton is a career and business coach with almost 10 years of experience helping people find careers and launch businesses they love. She's a mom to two amazing kids and one very cute dachshund poodle mix. You can connect with her at juliehoughton.com or julie@juliehoughton.com.

Kara Newport

Interviewed by Alissa Harrison

Kara Newport is the CEO of Filoli, a cultural center located in Woodside, California. Kara shares her experience as a woman leading a successful business by motivating her team and community.

What would you say to the little girls who dream of becoming a leader one day?

Always do you. Be yourself. I call this "Carry one purse." So often, little girls are taught they have to dress up to do a certain thing, act a certain way, or be a different version of themselves and it's taken me my whole life to go back to being me. So just stay that way, as when you were little. That's the way to do it, present the best version of yourself, but never one that is not you. I think that's the best advice I can give.

As a parent, you want to guide them, but not form them. You have to balance that out. You want to share your values. You want them to have values and ethics, but that's different from letting them be whatever version they want to be. You have to define the box pretty big, but still give them some kind of structure. It's a tough balance.

How can we sustain and strengthen current efforts to increase cultural representation, including support and respect for women?

I've been an advocate for myself my whole life. Along with that is being an advocate for women's rights. I always knew what my counterparts made and I always asked for it. I was always offended when I had to. So I think that is very much who I am and I think that positioned me in a way that I felt like I could be in a place where I could be a part of the conversation about diversity because I had some level of experience with that as a woman. I most certainly understand what it feels like to not be invited to the table and to not feel welcomed in certain circumstances. So you know having that level of shared experience made it very important. I make sure everyone's invited and feels welcomed.

Do you offer mentorship to women who aspire to be leaders?

When people express an interest in being a leader, I try to help them and see what their career path might look like. Brittany Jones started at our Visitor Services Department and shared, "I want your job one day." And I said, "Great, let me help you because one day I won't want it anymore! Let me help you get there. She got her masters degree at UCSF and now she's our



Photograph by Jeff Bartee

"Present the best version of yourself, but never one that is not you."

Chief Experience Officer. If anybody wants help, I want to be that person that is available. The invitation is open and hopefully people that know me know that."

How have your leadership roles in your career path prepared you to be the CEO you are today?

Leadership is a team game. My first leadership roles were in fundraising. The beauty of fundraising is you work with different people actually delivering the work. It is important to rally people around an idea and get everyone on the same page because one person's vision isn't everybody's vision sometimes. You have to get that all together. That's what I hope to achieve today—to bring people together over an idea, celebrate it, and find ways that everyone has a part in it, and use that idea to connect people to what we do. That's ultimately all of our goals.

What have you learned about yourself during the process of becoming Filoli's CEO?

What people don't realize about change is that it's constant. You can change one thing and if it doesn't work, you can change it to something else. I've been open minded to trying things. It takes a combination of resilience and patience in transforming together. So it's about that difference in perspective. To understand not everybody's going to love an idea at first, but once they have the experience, it can change their perspective. That's how we got to where we are today. Ask people what they want and would enjoy. The community responded and you know we just keep giving, and it's been really working. As far as the future goes, I think what I'd really like to see is continually expanded opportunities for people. We have so many people from different backgrounds that are visiting Filoli so we want to make sure there's a way that everybody can intersect with what we are doing.

The SF Bay Area has a multitude of women who have excelled in their careers and are making an impact in their local communities. GGMG Magazine is thrilled to launch our feature highlighting these amazing women sharing stories of how they started out, what their business is doing now, and how they'd like to move forward.



Parents as Chief Technology Officers

How building strong relationships and setting limits can mitigate the fallout from pandemic-fueled increases in technology use.

By Jennifer Siebel Newsom

As a working mom with four young kids, I know firsthand how difficult this pandemic has been on our families. After almost two years of on-again, off-again screen time and an increase in technology use in our families’ lives, we are all looking for solutions to help parents manage our kids’ media and technology consumption. Solutions that help us, as parents, feel less burnt out as a result of the added responsibilities and changes the pandemic has ushered into our daily lives—all while keeping our kids “tech safe.”

Soon after I stepped into the role of First Partner of California, I co-founded the California Partner’s Project (CPP;

calpartnersproject.org) to amplify the work I was doing as First Partner supporting children’s mental and physical health, as well as providing families with tools to help kids build a solid learning foundation. As a mom, I wanted to reach out and connect with other moms to better understand their family’s experiences with technology, and what they needed to help their kids overcome the downsides of technology saturation. So, over the last year, I led a virtual listening tour with moms across California to personally hear about the influence media and tech was having on their kids’ health and wellbeing.

Not surprisingly, I listened to countless moms discuss the

“As a mom, I wanted to reach out and connect with other moms to better understand their family’s experiences with technology, and what they needed to help their kids overcome the downsides of technology saturation.”

overwhelm of tech in their kids’ lives. Collectively, parents shared the challenges in safeguarding their children from anxiety-fueled news coverage and exposure to hypersexual and violent social media and content online. Many talked about being unable to enforce video game boundaries with their boys. All is understandable given kids have experienced so many new norms and had so few options to socialize over these past two years.

Session after session, moms bravely discussed their anxieties and fears about their kids’ tech addictions. They were worried about kids who had not only stayed in their homes, but hadn’t even left their bedrooms since the onset of the pandemic!

Faced with challenges like these, it’s easy to feel like we’re navigating uncharted territory on our own—whether we work outside of the home or not. But throughout the tour, I found comfort in this community as other mothers came together to provide support to one another and share best practices for how to navigate these stressful situations.

Seeing the resilience and connection these listening sessions fostered, CPP committed itself to empowering parents with resources to tackle concerns about tech and mental health issues head-on. CPP developed responsive toolkits (*calpartnersproject.org/toolkits*) containing best practices, tips, and recommendations to help parents address the challenges of parenting during this tech heavy time. Our team consulted with experts including psychologists, pediatricians, educators and mental health professionals to tailor each toolkit with practical best practices.

Here’s what we found: Conversation and connection are critical ingredients to building healthy relationships. In order to raise healthy, whole, and resilient kids, partners need to be aligned on the rules and expectations in their home. By showing a united front and incorporating their children’s input as they age,

negotiations around tech and media consumption will be easier to address. And as a result, kids will feel seen and heard, which will in turn lead to better outcomes overall.

There are three strategies in particular worth highlighting to help parents get there:

First, create a family contract around tech use. In one listening session, I heard from a mom who spoke about a disagreement she had with her husband about whether their son was allowed to play video games. Prior to the pandemic, her son was not allowed to play at all, but to cope with the limitations of the pandemic, her husband purchased some video



Tips to reach an agreement on games and devices:

Family rules need to be clear, consistent, and predictable. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, family rules help children understand what behaviors are expected. For these to work well, “everyone needs to know, understand, and follow the rules” within a family. If parents do not follow the rules or have different rules, it will be confusing to the children. Kids learn best when the rules and expectations are clear and consistent across parents.

Collaborate on a plan to show a united front. According to an interview with Child Psychologist Susan Wilkens, kids do best when parents reach an understanding about rules ahead of time. If a parent knows that some areas may cause friction, try to discuss and resolve these issues privately, outside of the presence of the child. As a child grows, incorporating their input into a media/tech plan is helpful and more likely to be successful.

Have compassion for each other. During such a stressful couple of years, we need compassion for our partners and for ourselves, advises Wilkens. When approaching disagreements, start by validating your partner’s love and concern. Acknowledging their feelings and care for your child first will make negotiations around areas of conflict easier to address.



games. Before the pandemic took hold, two thirds of parents said parenting is harder than it was 20 years ago, and many cite technology or social media use as the driving forces behind this belief. It's no surprise that these disagreements about technology and social media use would be compounded by the pandemic. That's why it is more important than ever to get on the same page about your family's tech use.

Second, we heard from caregivers all across the state who are struggling with how to best manage their children's devices. In addition to open and age-appropriate conversations with your children, four issues to consider include: content restrictions, privacy features, time limits, and in-app purchases. Understanding these terms is key. Content settings, including parental filters, can restrict access to websites you deem inappropriate. Privacy settings determine the type of information shared with internet companies and their clients. Time limits allow users to restrict the duration of use or the time of day a

device is used. And, in-app purchasing preferences, including authentication requirements, can limit purchases in online games.

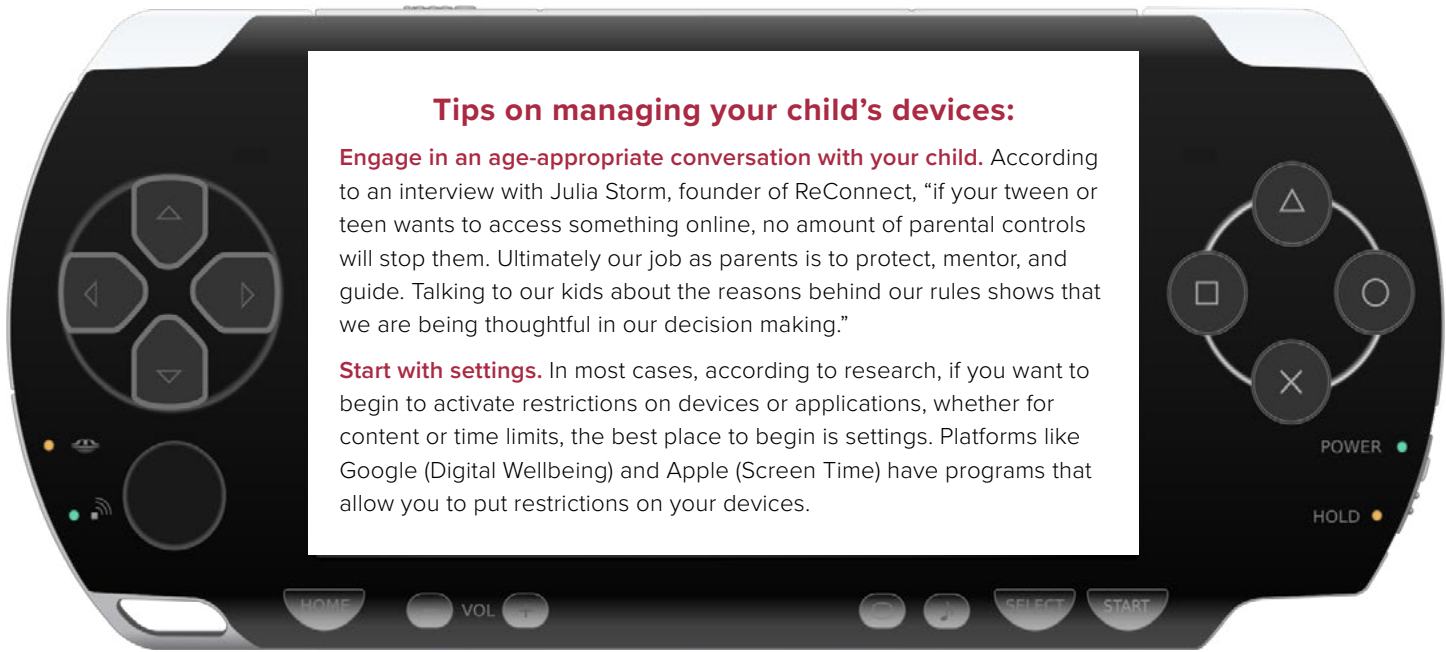
Finally, we heard time and again how when it comes to gaming, the intensity and difficulty of limiting use was a particular challenge for parents. A mom of a 12-year-old boy in Oakland told us, "It became so much gaming and that is all he wants to do. We fight constantly when we ask him to stop playing." Another mom, from southern California, shared, "For my teenager, he spends so much time gaming...he does all of his social activity gaming." Given gaming is a social outlet, finding a balance that allows for this socialization is key—as long as it's limited (no more than an hour a day), the kid is engaged in sufficient outdoor exercise, and when possible, time in person with friends.

In many cases, time spent on technology is not Problematic Interactive Media Use (PIMU). However, if your child's gaming activities or social media use are causing an inability to function and presenting as a compulsion of a repeated non-productive behavior that your child can't or isn't willing to stop—or if you are noticing your child is withdrawing from their normal personality or are experiencing more sadness or depression, bring this concern to your trusted

pediatrician. In most cases you might compare gaming or social media consumption to binge-eating. We need food, but a balanced diet of a variety of nutritious options is best. Abstinence doesn't need to be the goal; instead, make time for other interests and celebrate their engagement in other activities.

Of course, these tips alone won't solve all our concerns, and we can't put this whole responsibility on individual parents. Technology companies must take responsibility for their actions and listen to parents, educators, coaches, and young adults to improve their technology to improve young people's health and wellbeing. That is why as First Partner I'm committed to elevating the voices of parents, and making sure that the companies who call California home understand that we want and expect more from them for our children.

Jennifer Siebel Newsom is the First Partner of California, a filmmaker, and a champion of various issues related to gender equity and raising healthy, whole children.



Tips on managing your child's devices:

Engage in an age-appropriate conversation with your child. According to an interview with Julia Storm, founder of ReConnect, "if your tween or teen wants to access something online, no amount of parental controls will stop them. Ultimately our job as parents is to protect, mentor, and guide. Talking to our kids about the reasons behind our rules shows that we are being thoughtful in our decision making."

Start with settings. In most cases, according to research, if you want to begin to activate restrictions on devices or applications, whether for content or time limits, the best place to begin is settings. Platforms like Google (Digital Wellbeing) and Apple (Screen Time) have programs that allow you to put restrictions on your devices.

Tips on finding balance with gaming from Child Psychiatrist Dr. Michael Tsappis of the Clinic for Interactive Media and Internet Disorders and the Digital Wellness Lab:

Set clear expectations in collaboration with your child.

Have family conversations about the appropriate parameters for gaming. Be careful not to limit windows for gaming to small periods of time. That could increase tension and stress for kids. Instead of very limited, specific times, decide how you will adjust based on individual family circumstances. One mom shared with CPP that she allows her teenage son to have one hour of gaming for every hour of physical activity. This arrangement motivates her son to exercise, and the terms of the agreement are clear.

Write down the family plan for gaming, have it available for reference, and update regularly.

It is helpful to refer to a Family Media Plan agreement you created together. By looking at the agreement, you can debate about the agreement, instead of the particulars of the situation.

Offer a diverse set of opportunities for social interactions that don't involve gaming.

Youth may not be aware of how much time they spend gaming. Create a pie chart together showing how they use the hours of their day. Instead of judging time spent gaming, help them brainstorm how to add other activities.

Consider whether an expert could help.

Hitting the Books (Again)

If your inner student calls, consider a few key questions first.

by Jessica Williams



Returning to school as an adult and full-time parent to earn a master's degree, professional degree, or certificate may seem impossible and unmanageable. *When, exactly, am I going to study?* However, to pursue a career change, hitting the books may be necessary. We talked to several women who decided to go back to school for various reasons. Ultimately, we gleaned some very important questions to ask yourself if you are considering continuing your education while raising little ones.

Is going back to school necessary?

If you are contemplating a career change, determining whether going back to school

is necessary is the first question you must ask, followed by *what kind of education is needed?* A master's degree? A certificate? Something else? Finally, you'll want to consider whether a remote, an in-person, or a low-residency program will best fit your lifestyle.

Many colleges and universities offer online, asynchronous graduate programs, meaning you can work through the structured program, for the most part, at times most convenient for you, like after the kids are in bed. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in fall 2018, about 31 percent of post-baccalaureate students (those in master's and doctoral programs, including professional doctorates such as law, medicine, and

dentistry) were enrolled exclusively in distance education courses. The pandemic has further accelerated this growth and mainstreamed distance education.

Other graduate programs may be low-residency, requiring you to be on campus for certain weeks or weekends each semester. "Erin," mother of two (ages 4 and 7), applied to a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in creative writing in spring 2019. She was admitted to several low-residency programs and ultimately chose a particular institution's program precisely because it allowed her to bring her kids, if necessary, to the residency component. "This program was super-welcoming," says Erin. "They would help me make it work." Although the program is now fully remote due to COVID,



Erin stresses the importance of speaking with program directors and asking questions as a parent. "There are programs out there that will work with you and support you."

If you are considering an in-person program or attending full-time, many institutions offer college-affiliated family housing. The Campus Family Housing Database, through the Wellesley Centers for Women, provides a searchable database of institutions offering college-affiliated family housing.

Certificate programs are typically shorter than master's programs and provide very specialized education and training in job-related skills. Online providers such as edX and Coursera offer a wide array of massive open online courses (MOOC) and professional certificates in a multitude of areas, such as data science and risk management. Community colleges like City College of San Francisco and College of Marin, in addition to offering associate's degree programs, offer certificate programs in specialized areas such as floristry and real estate. City College of San Francisco and College of Marin also offer childcare at certain campuses for eligible families.

Short informational interviews with professionals in your anticipated field can be invaluable, not only to determine whether additional education is necessary but also to find out which programs are

highly regarded and which ones should probably be avoided. Additionally, they can help you find programs that may or may not require standardized exams such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) for admission (not all graduate programs do). This is where those LinkedIn and Facebook contacts are incredibly helpful. So don't be shy. Reach out. You will likely be pleasantly surprised at how willing others are to help you find your way.

What is my motivation?

Karen, mother of three (ages 6, 5, and 2), realized that she wanted to transition to a new career when the pandemic started. After being a stay-at-home mom for five years, she enrolled in a certificate program in nutrition coaching through Precision Nutrition. "I knew I wanted to help other moms with their health, and I explored several different options until I decided on my certificate program." Karen completed the Precision Nutrition Level 1 Certificate to

"So don't be shy. Reach out. You will likely be pleasantly surprised at how willing others are to help you find your way."

strengthen her knowledge of the behavioral and scientific aspects of nutrition, weight loss, and health. "This certificate was a perfect fit for me as I had studied

psychology and biology in college, although that was many years ago!"

While Karen chose to go back to school to start her own nutrition coaching business, a career change may not be your only motivator. Sylvia, mother of a 1-year-old, decided in March 2020 to pursue an online master's degree at Johns Hopkins University as a prerequisite to earning her doctorate. For her, going back to school and earning a Ph.D. was helpful to obtain more credibility in her field.

"I had heard a lot of classes were going remote because of the pandemic and got curious to see if there were remote PhDs available," says Sylvia, noting that in her field of scientific equipment, a doctorate in hard science is highly valued. "I found out by Googling that there was a remote doctorate program at Johns Hopkins in physics, so I applied for their master's program because the doctorate program requires a master's degree."

For Erin, going back to school to earn her MFA had always been a dream. "In my life, I wanted to write at least one novel." Erin realized she could not write it on her own without the help of mentors and other writers. After her mother passed away, she decided to apply to her low-residency program. "My mom died, and it made me think about things. It made me very reflective," says Erin. "What do I want my life to be?"

Do I have time?

In her 2018 column for *The Hechinger Report*, Claire Wladis, Ph.D., wrote about her study that examined time constraints of undergraduate student-parents, which was published in *The Journal of Higher Education*. To no mother's surprise, the study found that, after paid work, housework, and childcare, "students with preschool-aged children had only about 10 hours per day left over. . . to fit in sleeping, eating, leisure activities and schoolwork."

Certainly, furthering your education is a time commitment. One of the most difficult parts about pursuing an additional degree for many mothers is the conflict between being available for their kids and doing their classwork. "I sometimes feel like if I

didn't choose to do this program, I'd have more time for my kids," says Erin.

Karen agrees that finding time to study was definitely the most difficult part about going back to school. "At the time, I was the primary caregiver for my three kids, who were mostly at home due to COVID. Luckily, the program was 100 percent virtual and self-paced, which meant that I could fit in learning and studying during the cracks of my day and at night." Karen adds that she "got very good at getting creative with my time and asking for help," and acknowledges her partner, who was very supportive of her going back to school and would watch the kids a lot on the weekends so she could study.

Can I do this?

Self-doubt can inhibit many pursuits. Training your mind to barrel through self-doubt and finding a support network are keys to starting any program (and to finishing one).

"I graduated in 2007," says Sylvia, "so it had been over a decade since I had taken classes, and I was particularly worried about whether my math skills were up to par and anxious about taking tests again." Additionally, for those pursuing degrees part-time, the amount of time until completion can be demoralizing—at first. At the beginning, earning a master's degree "seemed like it would take forever," Sylvia says, since she was taking one class per trimester and ten classes were required. "That's 3.3 years! Now that I'm halfway through it, it doesn't feel so bad." The trick—like with anything—is *not stopping*.

Support systems can help hold you accountable. Your academic advisor can help you navigate your courses, including helping you manage your time by suggesting which courses to pair with others if you plan on taking more than one course at a time. Advisors can also be your go-to for general questions about the program or school (What is a capstone exactly? How do I set up an internship?). Making an effort to get to know your academic advisor, who is usually assigned to you at the beginning of the program, can help you feel connected to your program—especially if the program is remote—and help you succeed.

Other students in your program can also offer support. Erin, whose low-residency



MFA turned all-remote because of the pandemic, proactively sought a group of other students to form a writing group. The group of four now meets once a month over Zoom. Erin says a support network of people pursuing the same thing helps her persevere when she's frustrated or needs advice. Connecting with other students in her program was also one of the most important aspects of pursuing her degree.

How can I afford this?

With the average cost of a master's degree hovering around \$66,000, according to the Education Data Initiative, it pays to compare and weigh options. This cost will differ according to the type of degree awarded as well as whether the degree-granting institution is private or public. If you are considering a low-residency program, take into account expenses like childcare and travel and lodging. The cost of obtaining a certificate will likely be significantly less than a graduate degree.

Federal student aid is available for graduate programs (check out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, FAFSA), and certain certificate programs are eligible for federal student aid under the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) published each year by the

U.S. Department of Education. Additionally, you may be able to obtain graduate school funding through various organizations, such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Working towards your degree on a part-time basis may be another, more palatable way to handle the cost.

Is it worth it?

Only you can decide whether returning to school is worthwhile. That said, every woman we spoke with unequivocally believed that the time, effort, money, and sacrifice to further her education was worth it.

"There will always be reasons to postpone or excuses to not go through with it, but you can and will make it work," says Karen, acknowledging it's very easy as moms to put our own needs on the back burner, but that she was so glad that she pushed herself. "I felt that I set a really good example for my kids."

The women also acknowledged they could not have advanced their education without supportive partners and family members, who helped with childcare. For Erin, her husband was instrumental in helping her pursue her master's. "He's taken the kids, even away for a weekend when I had to work. He's gone above and beyond. He also has a lot of artistic pursuits, so he understands how important it is to me." While publishing a novel has always been her dream, Erin also believes that taking the time to pursue her interests also makes her a better parent. "We are actually better parents when we are doing what we love."

So while going back to school may seem impossible, it can be done. "If your gut is telling you to go back to school," says Karen, "then just do it."

For references, please contact editor@ggm.org.

Jessica is a graduate student in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Penn State University. Her program is completely online through its World Campus. She started the program, part-time, in May 2020 when her daughter was in kindergarten and is now halfway through. She plans to pursue a career in higher education student affairs after earning her M.Ed. She earned her J.D. at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.



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The Perfectly Scheduled Child

Learn how to embrace downtime and to resist overbooking your child’s daily activities.

By Suzanne Barnecut

Photographs by Lindsay Lovier Photography and Becky Scott

From her hotel window, Becky Scott and her daughter Emma watch as a man twirls fire batons on Waikiki beach. They’re not on vacation. Rather, they’ve traveled to paradise from their home in Belmont, California for several days of training that will culminate in a gymnastics meet over the weekend. Back at home, Becky’s husband and son Ryan, will attend a meet in Palo Alto. “We’re in divide and conquer mode,” she said.

At age 10, Emma trains 23 hours a week during the school year. Ryan, age 7, also a rising gymnast, trains six hours each week. Their family story is not one of being overscheduled, per se, but of being tightly scheduled—as evidenced by the complex carpooling matrix that covers pick-ups and drop-offs six days a week. “It takes a village,” Scott said. “There’s a lot of cooperation between the parents at this intense, competitive level. You try and make every

other parents’ life the way you want yours to be. The parents get really close, as well as the kids.”

The Scott family may be an exception. Emma is a level eight gymnast and part of a program called TOPs, which is a talent and search program for young gymnasts who may go on to compete at the national level. She began gymnastics as a toddler, along with swimming and music classes. “It was important to us that our kids were water safe, and we wanted to make sure that Emma and the nanny weren’t just at home all the time,” Scott said.

As Emma got older and tried different activities, however, it became clear that she was a gifted athlete. In addition to swimming and gymnastics, she played soccer and took karate lessons. Even now, she squeezes in musical theater once a week. With every sport, coaches approached to suggest that Emma play competitively. “We didn’t push competitive sports on our kids,” Scott said. “We just want them to be happy and healthy, but my daughter has found her passion.”

Their approach to extracurriculars was what Scott referred to as the spaghetti method: “Throw the spaghetti at the wall and see what sticks.” Her son has also tried swimming, soccer, chess, and baseball, and now studies Mandarin in addition to gymnastics.

For the Scott family, the spaghetti method worked. Their children are thriving, and yet they hardly could have foreseen the road (or roads, as the case may be) they’d one day travel, years after signing up for toddler gymnastics.

A look back in time

If we go far enough back in time, we know that children accompanied their parents at young ages in hunting and gathering. During the Industrial Revolution, children were exploited for cheap labor, and on homesteads across the Dust Bowl, everyone had to earn their keep. The work was difficult, but there was something that even the youngest among them could do. Today that’s still true. Children living below the poverty line (as depicted, say, in *Frontline’s* “Poor Kids”) turn over their hard-earned babysitting, lawn mowing, or can-collecting efforts to help fill the family coffers.

But today in San Francisco most of us don’t allow our children to work. Still, we may work our children somewhat hard—at playing, at sports, at building language, music, and fine motor skills.

This is a definite shift from the Baby Boomer generation, who tend to wax poetic about upbringings that were almost completely unstructured and unsupervised. Gen-Xers, reputed latch-key kids, were also awash in unsupervised downtime (the silver lining of which, according to a 1986 study by the National Council of Family Relations, created more self-reliant kids than peers who were always supervised). So it was some time between 1980 and 2000, perhaps, when things began to change.

Early in the new millenium, a number of books cautioning parents against the dangers of over-scheduling suddenly emerged (e.g., *The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap*, *The*

really about achieving balance between enrichment activities and downtime.

Striking the right balance

Today we know that the right amount of activity is going to be different for every child.

“It’s important to read the individual child’s temperament and ‘engine’ so to speak,” says San Francisco-based Psychologist Stephen Lugar (drstephenlugar.com). “Some high energy kids really do benefit from early team sports. Sports and engaged athletic activities like martial arts can give kids an outlet for their physical energy, build self-esteem, and encourage pro-social behaviors.” On the flip side, he said, there are quieter children who need more individual encouragement and who don’t like being in a group pressure situation.

“I have certainly seen the trend toward parents feeling like kids need multiple

“Today we know that the right amount of activity is going to be different for every child.”

Pressured Child, and *Pressured Parents, Stressed-Out Kids*). More than likely, more dual-income families, rising safety concerns, increasingly competitive schools, and the advent of “screen time” all play a role in the ratcheting up of kids’ enrichment activities and achievement levels. Not to mention the generational pendulum, always in motion. And the phenomenon that gave rise to these books has as much to do with the psychology of the parent as with the well-being of the child. Parents in the late ’90s and early 2000s were feeling pressured to exact more control, compete with the Joneses, get into the best schools, and otherwise not ruin their children’s lives.

Today, perspectives are softening—or becoming as well-rounded as our children. In 2013, Bruce Feiler, author of *The Secrets of Happy Families*, followed up with the authors of the aforementioned books in a piece for *The New York Times*, to see how their views held up. According to Feiler, Alvin Rosenfeld, M.D., co-author of *The Over-Scheduled Child*, “distanced himself from the notion that extracurricular activities are bad.” Instead he explained that it’s

extracurricular activities in a week,” Lugar admitted, but he said the sense of urgency usually comes up in later middle school, as parents start looking toward high school and college. “This is the time I really try to encourage parents to think about their child’s individual temperament and thresholds.” He cautioned that if a child is overwhelmed by a combination of activities, they are not likely to excel in any of them. “I like to help parents think about the quality of engagement over quantity,” he said.

What about toddlers? In addition to temperament, it’s also about striking the right balance between activity and child-care arrangements. Children in full-time daycare or preschool, for example, may not benefit from additional stimulation, whereas structured classes can offer socialization for children (and moms) who are home during the day.

Parissa Sayar, a stay-at-home mother of two, said, “I wasn’t into paying for structured activities right from the start. When my kids were little, it was too difficult and stressful to try to get anywhere on time without losing my cool.” But now that her

children are 5 and 7 years old, the family follows this rule: no after school activities until first grade.

Her firstborn, she noted, is high-energy but introverted, and needs quiet, unstructured time at home after school. “Our reasoning was that kids have a lot of work to do adjusting to kindergarten and it’s best not to overwhelm them with anything else on top of it. I always stressed to my first born that his main job was to go to school and that he didn’t have to focus on anything else until he was older. This idea made him feel relieved.”

Where does downtime fit in?

Jessica Hegedus, Psy.D., who practices individual, couples, and family therapy in Laurel Heights (*modernfamilysf.com*), stressed the importance of downtime. “People have built these resistances to struggle,” Hegedus said, “but it’s good for kids to learn how to ask themselves, ‘What do I need right now?’”—instead of automatically reaching for the phone or the remote. “Oftentimes I see parents who are really well-intentioned, and children who want to connect with their parents, and they just miss each other,” Hegedus said. “The kids

don’t have the words to communicate what they’re feeling, and the parents feel hurt. The issue of overscheduling comes up all the time. I see both kids and parents overworking, and there’s no time to check in.”

She says balance is the magic word. Structured activities can be great, but downtime is when kids learn that, “Yes, sometimes life is boring, but you can turn it around and make it interesting.” She cautioned, however, that some kids on the autism spectrum need less unstructured time and more structure.

Downtime means time without screens or TV, when kids can be bored and deal with their frustrations, feelings, and can stretch their imagination. Key to this downtime, however, is parent interaction. When things get too routine, Hegedus explained, there’s often no checking in to see how kids are managing activities, and even downtime benefits from check-ins. Ask your kids what it’s like feeling bored, she said.

Even toddlers can be encouraged to play on their own, nearby. “Let kids as young as 2 or 3 know that they can go out and try things and then come back to you,” Hegedus advised. “Narrate what they’re doing, and what you’re doing, and encourage them to keep playing. It’s just about having more frequent contact and letting them know they’re safe.”

Rio Dluzak creates downtime for her three kids by having a once-a-week technology-free day. She encourages her kids to come up with their own creative

activity using things around the house. She’s taken a middle path of participating in two formal activities a week until kindergarten, and then holding off on any extracurriculars throughout that first year of school. Her 10- and 7-year-old children are active in the San Francisco Girls’ and Boys’ Chorus, respectively, and she anticipates her youngest, age 4, will join too—but not for at least another year. After kindergarten, each child balances two activities per week during the school year, if they seem to be managing well, and can do more over the summer. She also allows her children to pause activities when they’re feeling overwhelmed or unsure that they want to continue.

How much is too much?

If you’re not sure you’ve struck the right balance for your child, Hegedus shared some warning signs that may indicate your child is not managing or adjusting well:

- Obsessive worries that the child can’t control
- Difficulty falling asleep, or waking up more often during the night
- Major changes in appetite, up or down
- Ongoing crankiness or severe temper tantrums
- Becomes withdrawn
- Makes extreme statements, or is overly negative or pessimistic

In general, some worry and complaining is normal, but when the worries become repetitive, even after assurance, or the complaining ratchets up after the child has had time to adjust to the activity, it’s definitely time to check in with the coach or teacher.

It’s also important to remember that busy schedules affect parents too. As Dluzak put it, “We can only do what we can do.”

Suzanne Barnecut is a Bay Area native, and has lived in San Francisco since 2001. Most of the time, she can be found at the park or busting some moves at the living room dance parties she hosts with her 5-year-old daughter. You can read more of her writing at suzannebarnecut.com.



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Black History Month & Women’s History Month



In celebration of Black History Month (February) and Women’s History Month (March) here are just a few of the Black women making strides big and small every day.

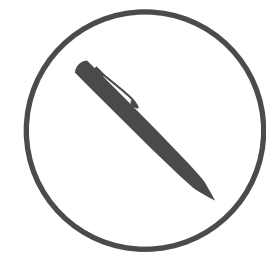


Mayor London Breed

San Francisco’s Breed was born and raised in the city. While some may find her policies controversial, she was one of the first mayors in the United States to be proactive in enacting a city-wide lockdown to prevent COVID cases.

Honey Mahogany

Honey Mahogany is a political activist and former drag performer. Born and raised in San Francisco, Mahogany was instrumental in forming the Compton’s Transgender Cultural District that includes six blocks southwest of the Tenderloin. In 2021, she was elected Chair of San Francisco’s Democratic County Central Committee.



Amanda Gorman

Amanda Gorman was the youngest Poet Laureate at a presidential inauguration. Born and raised in Los Angeles, she is blazing her own trail with her poetry and writing. Gorman’s newest creation is a children’s book, *Change Sings: A Children’s Anthem*. In this story “a young girl leads a cast of characters on a

musical journey, they learn that they have the power to make changes—big or small—in the world, in their communities, and most importantly, in themselves.”

Nikole Hannah-Jones

Award-winning investigative journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones is the creator of *The New York Times 1619 Project*. Her articles focus on civil rights and racial justice. Hannah-Jones’ current book is for children, titled *The 1619 Project: Born On The Water*. “A young student receives a family tree assignment in school, but she can only trace back three generations. Grandma gathers the whole family, and the student learns that 400 years ago, in 1619, their ancestors were stolen and brought to America by white slave traders. But before that, they had a home, a land, a language. She learns how the people said to be born on the water survived.”



Tanya Holland

East Coast born and raised but now long-time Oakland resident, Tanya Holland is a chef, restaurateur, and author. She owned the recently closed Brown Sugar Kitchen in the East Bay and has been on cooking competition television series “Top Chef”.

Ayesha Curry

TV personality, entrepreneur, and cookbook author Ayesha Curry has a collaboration with chef and restaurateur Michael Mina called International Smoke, which now has locations in San Francisco, San Diego, and Las Vegas. Curry is mother of three and wife to basketball star Stephen Curry. In 2019, they launched the Eat.Learn.Play. Foundation. At Eat.Learn.Play. they are “committed to unlocking the amazing potential of every child by fighting to end childhood hunger, ensuring students have access to a quality education and providing safe places for all children to play and be active.”



MEMBER SUPPORT

Getting to a Clutter-Free Mind

The new year is often a time for purging and reorganizing. Finding new homes for once-loved toys and cleaning up after the last guest leaves are just a few of the chores that rise to the surface with the onset of springtime. However, it’s important to keep your mind on the list of spaces to clear as well. Clearing the clutter from your brain can lead to a reduction in stress, increased productivity, and overall well-being. Here are a few ways to start:

- Get on a social media diet: Install a time-limit app, unfollow or unsubscribe from “friends” or brands that clog up your feeds with negative, false, or unnecessary information.
- Set your priorities: What matters most to you? Be strict about your time and the demands that fall outside of these priorities.
- Write it down: Keep a journal. Keep a notepad next to your bed or even your shower—seriously! Get it out of your mind. Act on it, defer it, or forget it!
- Practice mindfulness: We know—meditation isn’t for everyone. But even taking the minutes you use to brush your teeth or wash your dishes to pause and reflect can help you slow your pace in a positive way.
- Let it go: Elsa was on to something. Recognizing the negative feelings that crop up is the first step toward freedom. Deciding to let them fly away takes practice.

If you’re feeling extra-stressed this new year, please don’t hesitate to reach out to member.support@gmg.org.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Our Social Media committee stays busy primarily by promoting and sharing photos of events, which in 2021 were mostly virtual. But, we were excited for the few that happened IRL. We have over 1,800 Instagram followers and are followed by over 7,000 people on Facebook. Thank you to all who continue to remain engaged with GGMG!

We hope the world shifts back to normal and would love to add more volunteers to our committee as well as recruit a Chair of Social Media. If you are interested in social media or public relations and want to get more involved in GGMG, please reach out to socialmedia@gmg.org.

PARTNERSHIPS

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

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

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

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

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

We would love to hear what content you find most appealing. Event information? Informative articles? Things to make you laugh in these strange times? Feel free to send us a note to let us know. Please like/follow us on all forms of social media ([@gmg_sf](https://www.instagram.com/gmg_sf)) and re-post/share to your heart’s content. And if you attend a virtual or IRL event, post your pictures with the hashtag [#gmg_sf](https://www.instagram.com/gmg_sf). You might just get reposted/shared yourself!

CAREER & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

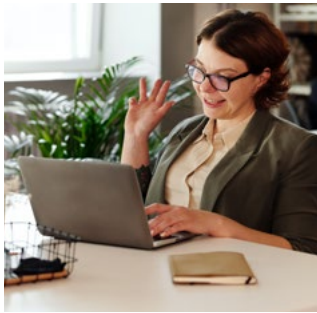
Monthly Virtual Networking

During this virtual event led by mom and career coach Nic Frick, we will use breakout rooms and guided whole group conversation starters to create real connections.

If time allows, you will have time to ask the group for further networking opportunities and connections.

This is for you if you:

- Are trying to find a new job
- Want to expand and strengthen your network and connect with other moms
- Want to break into a new industry
- Took a break and want to return to the workforce



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This event from the Career & Entrepreneurship Committee will help you meet new moms with ease in a delightful, unique way. Say bye-bye to awkwardness, and hello to deeper professional and personal relationships. Everyone is welcome regardless of current or past employment status!

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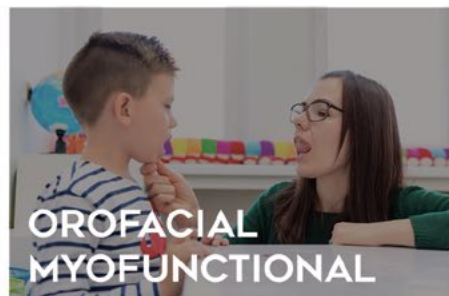
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My Journey Into Full-time Motherhood

By Jessica Perry

I was "traditionally" employed from the moment I started my marketing position until 11 years later, after having my first daughter. Starting my first day as a stay-at-home mom was a bit like jumping off a cliff. I never intended to have kids, until my biological clock started ticking on my 30th birthday, so once I had my first daughter, stepping away from the corporate workforce and into full-time motherhood was a giant leap into the unknown. When I left for maternity leave I fully intended to return.

I am a Type A personality. My work inbox is always perfectly organized. Project management is my superpower. When I was in an office, I thrived on constant interaction with colleagues. I relished the yearly review because I received concrete feedback on my accomplishments that year. As a stay-at-home mom, my yearly review now comes in the form of vocal opinions from my kids on everything from meals to fashion choices. And the general state of our home organization leaves something to be desired.

As someone who had never stayed home with children before, I had the vision that most working women have of what my future mom life would be like: a break from working all day, cloth diapers, reading empowering books to my daughter, making homemade organic baby food, lunch dates with friends while the baby quietly cooed on the sidelines, and time to finally organize the house, which had been ignored for a decade. What I discovered is that being a stay-at-home mom is a job that you can never clock out from. Your day almost never goes as planned and you have to roll with it. Stay-at-home momming is more than one job—it's many simultaneously: project manager, cruise director, business manager, personal chef, teacher, driver, and cleaning lady among many others. One of the best pieces of advice I got from a close friend in the beginning: "Embrace the chaos." This is a mantra that I have repeated to myself every single day for the last eight years.

Cloth diapers quickly gave way to disposables as we learned that the virtuous cloth ones quickly stunk up the bedroom and quietly festered, taunting us with their odorific eco-friendliness. While I did make some mashed avocados and steamed carrots, most of my carefully prepared food went the way of a Jackson Pollock painting—smeared all over my

daughter, my kitchen, and sometimes, behind my ear and (occasionally) on my butt. The house, once host to raucous 20-something parties, was hijacked by kid stuff everywhere, most notably the notorious rogue LEGO. Occasionally our baby walker contraption would wake us up from coveted sleeping hours, ominously screaming the ABCs in not only Spanish, but also French.

I made friends with a truly phenomenal group of women and we lifted each other up through the baby and toddler years and remain close to this day. Those early years were a blur of eating, feeding, cleaning, planning the adventures of the day, more feeding, and then collapsing at night. "Me time" became a distant memory and wouldn't return for years.

Nevertheless, as unglamorous as it has all been, staying home with my kids allowed me the good fortune of being present for the important moments in both of my daughters' young lives until they started school. I was there when both of my daughters took their first steps; when my older daughter graduated from her "poopin' corner" behind the cat tree to the grown-up toilet; the countless hours that my daughters and their friends spent playing Magnatiles, eating mac and cheese, and playing dress-up; the hundreds of times both of my kids fell asleep in the back seat of the

car after one of our adventures. As exhausting as being cruise director of this minor chaos can be, the thousands of little moments are worth more to me than any project review during my "traditional" working years.

I think the most that any stay-at-home mom can hope for is that, by spending so much time with your kids, the best parts of you will rub off on them and carry them through their lives. After almost a decade of devoting myself entirely to them, I know that I will carry the best parts of them with me in my next life phase. As I dip my toes back into intellectual and professional pursuits, if I can greet each coming day with the kindness, joy, and enthusiasm that my kids do, I will have already succeeded.

Jessica Perry is a stay-at-home mom of two daughters, editor, and writer in Marin County. She looks forward to dipping her toes back into work life in 2022.



"[A]s unglamorous as it has all been, staying home with my kids allowed me the good fortune of being present for important moments of both of my daughters' young lives until they started school."



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statement of purpose:

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



**At the core of a Marin Horizon
education is the development of each
student's unique and confident voice.**

Our intentionally small, welcoming, down-to-earth
community and close student-teacher relationships create the
foundation for our intellectually challenging curriculum.

We invite you to visit our school to learn more about our:

- Supportive and joyful learning environment where students are encouraged to take risks, think critically, and become creative problem-solvers
- Outdoor education program that reinforces the social-emotional learning, independence, and leadership fostered in our classrooms
- Long-standing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Kind, passionate, articulate, and community-minded students

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