

FEB/MAR 2018



GGMG | GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine

Past Present Future



OUTGOING REALTOR ISO FUN FAMILIES to hang out with on Saturdays & Sundays from 2:00-4:00pm

ABOUT ME: I'm a self-professed data geek and just a wee bit OCD. As a straight shooter who protects her clients' money like a pit bull, I'm not afraid to advise you to walk away from a house, or point out its flaws. I take my job very seriously, but I love to have fun while I'm doing it. I love breaking down the often complicated process of home buying and selling into clear steps, and calculating risk for each decision. I've been told that I'm "the best explainer". 8 of my 10 years as a Realtor in San Francisco have been conducted with my "mom goggles" on. I'm looking for long term relationships, not one night stands. I'm open to polyamory if you have friends who want to buy a multi-unit with you.

ABOUT YOU: You're an awesome mom who needs a new home for your growing family. You are careful and make solid investment decisions. You love Excel spreadsheets, bulleted lists and online project management systems. You enjoy asking stupid questions (that aren't actually stupid) and receiving clear, thoughtful answers. You like it when people tell you what you need to know, because you might not even know what to ask. You dream of someone who will show you the math behind their price suggestions; someone who enjoys ripping through a disclosure package just daring it to have an inconsistency or unclear answer so they can clarify it; someone to delegate all of your worrying to, because you know that they are capable, competent, and they have your back without a shred of doubt.

LIKES:

- Measuring things
- Climbing on the roof
- Furry animals

DISLIKES:

- Monday offer dates
- Crooked wall art
- Crawl spaces

NICKNAMES:

- Queen of Comps
- Disclosure Decimator
- Mom

FAVORITE SAYINGS:

- You only get what you inspect, not what you expect.
- There are no stupid questions.
- Trust but verify.
- Make it happen!



SHERRI'S 2017 SALES STATISTICS:

- 56% of clients were GGMG families
- 74% of clients had young children
- 28% were off-market transactions
- 55% of buyers and 84% of sellers were first-timers
- 45% of buyers had their 1st offer accepted
- 70% of buyers were in contract within 3 months
- Prices ranged from \$850,000 - \$6,995,000

AGENT RANKINGS:

- #1 Team Companywide at Zephyr - 2017
- Top 1% of all Realtors in San Francisco - 2017
- Top 10 Zephyr Agent in 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017
- Top Producer since 2009
- A total of 55 past & present GGMG families served!



Whether you are venturing into the market for the first time, or you are a real estate veteran, Sherri has the proven expertise and enthusiasm to guide you to a solid investment decision. Not sure where to get started? No worries—contact Sherri today!

Sherri Howe

REALTOR® & GGMG Mom

a.k.a askhowe — look for me on the message boards!

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www.ggmg.org

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For questions or comments regarding all other aspects of GGMG, including how to advertise an event to our membership, please contact feedback@ggmg.org.

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Letter from the Editor: Time Traveling

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is an editor, photographer, and mom to three rambunctious children who have no problem staying present in the moment. Sometimes she wishes they'd think slightly ahead.

As this issue closes, I'm on a family getaway, an experience that, in the past six years, has become less a "vacation" and more a "relocation, with children." In addition to keeping my cocktail consumption within medically advisable limits and my body slathered in SPF 50 at all times, one neverending vacation struggle is my attempt to stay in the moment, when every

cell in my body aches to fast forward. Forward to a time when travel will be easier. When I won't need to talk my toddler through jet lag-induced 3 a.m. travel wake-ups. When I won't need to fear bringing three unruly children into a resort restaurant. When I won't need to barricade the rental house doors for fear my kids will wake earlier than I will and somehow wander into the pool. My eyes are always trained on the horizon, just over which is a place where travel is actually fun and relaxing again, not a mid-flight nightmare in which I realize the iPad battery is drained, and we still have two hours left over the Pacific. Three more years, I tell myself as I lug three car seats out of baggage claim. In three years they will all be in BubbleBums, and it'll be smooth sailing. I try my best to appreciate the small moments—my eldest child's excitement at seeing a volcano up close and personal for the first time—but so easily fall into thinking, *I can't wait until my kids are*

actually old enough to hike down to the crater's edge. In a battle between the present and the future, the current moment rarely stands a fighting chance.

My eyes are always trained on the horizon, just over which is a place where travel is actually fun and relaxing again...

The writers in this issue take us on a tour through time. On page 16, Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss taps into our collective nostalgia for the toys of our youth in an exploration of how our playthings have changed as cultural norms have evolved. Jami Grich grounds us in the present on page 20 with a guide to the benefits of mindfulness and tips on how to tune out the barrage of stimuli consuming us and stay fully present. On page 24, Catherine Symon demystifies a much-maligned stage of every woman's future with a practical guide through the ins and outs of menopause.

As the Magazine Committee looks to the future, we are excited to bring you new magazine features and topics to explore in 2018 as well as new collaborations with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. We are also growing our GGMG blog, City Blocks, which expands on magazine topics and presents fresh articles and giveaways, so make sure to check ggmg.org/blog.

Housekeeping

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

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

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Skiing with no snow, a new blue car, debilitating (adult) ear infections, holiday and birthdays, cleaning/purging old stuff, the going-back-to-work blues, empty offices and winter camp, butter, writing my first book, lots of baking and 2-year-old attitude, much-needed 10-day trip to Europe, falling in love, serial viral infections, water slides, the biggest rat EVER.

COMING NEXT: April/May: Do It Yourself (DIY)

CONTEST: Congratulations to **Marjorie**, winner of free Botox from 77 Plastic Surgery.

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

Letter from the Board: A Fond Farewell and Thanks

By Cathy Tran

I first heard about GGMG in 2011 when I was pregnant with my oldest child, who is now 6. I joined while I was pregnant and would peruse the forums for advice on preparing for my new baby.

Then my new baby arrived, and I was thrust into motherhood in what felt like a trial by fire. I had a colicky baby who also suffered from acid reflux. I had issues with breastfeeding and ended up becoming an exclusive pumper. And worst of all, I just didn't feel like I was bonding with my baby. I did not enjoy being a mom, and I missed my old life. I posted my feelings anonymously on the forums, and I got the most wonderful outpouring of support and encouragement from the other moms. I wasn't alone in my feelings; in fact, my feelings were totally normal. Suddenly, I had a community around me to help and support me in my journey.

GGMG gave me so much in those early days of being a parent, and I wanted to give back and help support other moms just like

...if we counted all the virtual and real-life hugs between GGMG members, the tally would be astronomical

I had been supported. Eight months after having my first baby, I became a GGMG volunteer, helping with new member coffees. Now, five years later, I'm finishing up my third and final year on the board, and I can't help but look back on all the ways GGMG has helped me become a better parent and person.

GGMG gave me a village in which to raise my children, both online and in the playgroup I joined six years ago. I have made some of my dearest friends through GGMG, and I have seen the

incredible impact the organization has on the outside community and also on members who reach out in times of need. I have seen countless words of encouragement and commiseration offered through GGMG; if we counted all the virtual and real-life hugs between GGMG members, the tally would be astronomical. Becoming a mom is like joining a secret tribe, a place where only we know how fiercely one can love her child, where we know what it feels like to have your heart walking around outside your body 24/7. GGMG didn't create the tribe, but for the last 21 years, it has helped women find other members and celebrate their tribe. I can never thank GGMG enough for everything it has given me.

My time on the board has come to an end, but I am leaving you in the more-than-capable hands of your new Chair, Sasha Fahimi, and new Vice Chair, Karen Brein. They, along with the rest of the board, are incredible women who will help steer GGMG into the future and do great things.

Thanks, GGMG.



Cathy is mom to two boys, Charlie and James, and wife to a supportive husband, Peter. She is the co-host of the parenting podcast The MomVent. She has been volunteering with GGMG since 2012 and would like to thank all the people who made her GGMG experience so wonderful.

Cover Outtakes



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

Cover Photo by Petra Cross Photography
Cover models: Bryce (22 months), Debbie, Sammie

Go Play Inside!

Once the winter rain comes, check out some of these kid-friendly indoor play spaces, drop-in classes, and museums.

By Christine Chen

Imagination Playhouse

Includes an extremely clean indoor climbing structure with two slides and a plastic ball pit for kids ages 2 to 10. Separate play area for younger kids with trains and other toys. Ideal for toddlers and preschoolers.

WHEN: Weekdays, 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; weekends vary

WHERE: 5628 Geary St.

COST: \$12 per visit; 5, 10, 15 day passes for \$50, \$100, \$195; monthly membership \$110

www.imaginationplayhousesf.com

Peekadoodle Kidsclub

Indoor playspace for kids under 5. Highlights include a mini Golden Gate Bridge, child-sized cable car, castle, slide, and train table.

WHEN: Weekdays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WHERE: 900 North Point St., Suite F100

COST: Free GGGM access to playspace monthly first Saturday 9 a.m. to noon; \$25 GGGM discounted rate for day passes otherwise; Weekly GGGM play date Wednesday 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. with discounted drop-in rate of \$20.

www.peekadoodle.com/san-francisco



House of Air

Indoor trampoline park with a space dedicated to younger jumpers. Older kids (7 and up) enjoy regular access to the park.

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Jump Session for kids 3 to 6)

WHERE: 926 Mason St.

COST: \$18 for 60-minute session; \$2 for socks

www.houseofair.com/san-francisco

Kinder Fun Club at the JCCSF

Drop-in classes every day of the week. KinderGym is open play; other classes are more structured.

WHEN: Varies, check schedule

WHERE: 3200 California St.

COST: \$16 per class (\$13 for JCC members); \$150 for 10 classes within a 3-month period (\$120 for JCCSF members)

www.jccsf.org/youth-family/kinder-fun-klub



The Exploratorium

With more than 650 hands-on exhibits and the fabulous SeaGlass Restaurant, kids and adults can be entertained (and learn something) for hours on end.

WHEN: Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

WHERE: Pier 15 (Embarcadero at Green Street)

COST: Adults \$29.95; Child (ages 4 to 12) \$19.95; Child (ages 3 and under) FREE

www.exploratorium.edu

San Francisco Gymnastics

Little Bugs is an open-format drop-in class for toddlers ages 1 to 3 1/2. SF Gymnastics offers structured activities or explorations in a safe environment with parental participation. Classes also available for children ages 3 to 12.

WHEN: Varies, check schedule

WHERE: 1405 Fillmore St.

COST: Little Bugs \$25 per class (\$22 for members)

www.sanfranciscogymnastics.com

California Academy of Sciences

Entertainment for kids and adults at the Steinhart Aquarium, Morrison Planetarium, Osher Rainforest, Discovery Tidepool, and at the penguin feeding. For children five and under, Curiosity Grove offers a safe playspace to explore.

WHEN: Mondays through Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sundays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

WHERE: 55 Music Concourse Dr.

COST: Adults \$35.95; Youth (ages 12 to 17) \$30.95; Students (ages 18+ with ID) \$30.95; Child (ages 4 to 11) \$25.95; Child (ages 3 and under) and Academy members FREE

www.calacademy.org

Bay Area Discovery Museum

While some exhibits are outdoors, the Tot Spot indoor play space, Bay Hall's large train table and fishing ship, and various drop-in programs (Art Project, FabLab, Creativity Kit, Toddler Kit) will easily keep kids from 6 months to 10 years entertained.

WHEN: Varies, check schedule

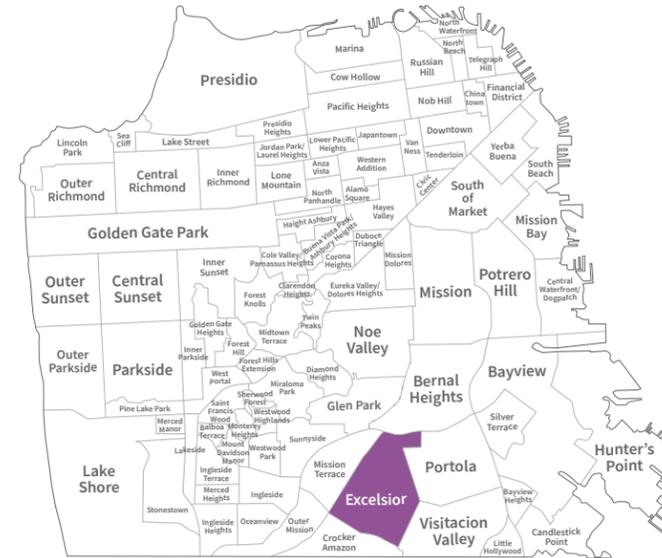
WHERE: 557 McReynolds Rd., Sausalito

COST: Adults \$14.95; Child (ages 1 to 17) \$14.95; Baby (6 months to 11 months) \$13.95

www.bayareadiscoverymuseum.org



Christine has analyzed and advised consumer companies for a career. She has a 4-year-old son and 2-year-old daughter, who both need to burn off energy so they will nap. She realizes she is lucky that they still actually nap.



Li'l Kid, Big City: Excelsior

By Megan Bushnell

You might not know that the Excelsior District is home to the untamed and underused majesty of **John McLaren Park**. Indeed, many SF residents have barely even heard of it, although it is the second largest green space in the city. Check out the newly renovated bike paths throughout the park, meander the expanse of over 7 miles of trails, feed the ducks at McNab Lake (it's allowed; see signage for specifics), or simply play on one of its two playgrounds.

Of course, there is also food to be had in the Excelsior, including above-average pub food at **Dark Horse Inn** (942 Geneva Ave.) and some of the cheapest good eats in town at **Broken Record** (1166 Geneva Ave.). If you are in the mood for pupusas, head to the Salvadorian restaurant **Familiar** (4499 Mission St.) and once fortified, make sure to visit the Excelsior location of **Mission Science Workshop** (4458 Mission St.) across the street. The MSW bilingual community science center provides hands-on enrichment activities for kids, including Tinker Time on Monday afternoons during the school year. ❖

Megan enjoys finding hidden pockets of nature in the city and credits the Philosopher's Way loop in John McLaren Park for keeping her sane.

Winter Wonderland

By Lynn Perkins

Rainy winter days in San Francisco mean snow days in the Sierras! Whether you're looking for a ski weekend away or a day trip to introduce your little one to the snow, here are a few options.



Leland High Sierra Snowplay (snowplay.com) is three hours away from San Francisco near Sonoma. For families with little sledders, this snow play area has a smaller mountain and kiddie hill area. Unlike many ticketed sledding areas, Leland Snowplay allows for double sled riding on the Kiddie Hill. This is a plus for families with little ones who may not be old enough to ride on their own.

Interested in a weekend in Tahoe without large crowds? Head to the **Tahoe Donner** area (www.tahoeonner.com). Indulge in sledding, downhill skiing, cross country skiing, and many other family-friendly amenities. **Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Center**, with miles of groomed trails, rents chariot sleds to pull one or two children. What's more, the Tahoe Donner snow play area is ideal for building snowmen, sledding, or tubing. The **TD Eats food truck** provides lunch items, snacks, and drinks nearby. Family movie night on Fridays and a variety of restaurants in nearby Truckee provide easy evening options for families. **KidZone Museum** (www.kidzonemuseum.org) in Truckee has play structures, an art studio, and a baby play area for indoor options.

For a less commercial snow play area, the California State Parks offer many snow play locations, including **Lake Alpine** and **Spicer Sno-Parks** near Arnold, CA off Hwy 4, about three hours from SF.



Arrive early since parking spaces fill up. Stop at **Aria Bakery** (458 Main St. B) or **Firewood Café** (420 Main St.) in Murphys to fuel up.

And don't forget to check traffic delays and confirm road conditions before heading to the snow, by calling CalTrans at 1.800.427.7623. ❖

Lynn is co-founder of UrbanSitter. She enjoys chasing her sons down the slopes at Squaw Valley on winter weekends.

Ask the Expert

Estate Planning

With Jennifer Jaynes, J.D., LL.M.



Jennifer Jaynes, J.D., LL.M., is a Certified Specialist in Estate, Trust & Probate Law by the California State Bar and is the founder of The Law Office of Jennifer Jaynes (www.jenniferjaynes.com).

GGMG: What does an estate plan cover?

JJ: An estate plan is meant to protect you, your family, and your

assets in the event of your incapacity or death, which is a matter of “when,” not “if.” When either of those circumstances occur, you will want to ensure that your wishes are carried out. Therefore, you need to provide specific instructions regarding whom you want to manage your assets in the event of your disability or death, what, and, more importantly, when individuals will receive your assets in the event of your death. A comprehensive estate plan commonly includes the

following documents: a will with guardianship provisions when there are minor children; a living trust; a

durable power of attorney for financial management and personal affairs; an advance health care directive; a HIPAA release; and a review ensuring that title to assets and beneficiary designations are correct and up to date. Every family has a different situation for which there are different solutions. Some families only require a will in addition to powers of attorney, but more commonly, a family will require a living trust.

GGMG: What are some of the most common mistakes families make regarding estate planning?

JJ: Too many people do not plan. Many individuals hesitate to prepare an estate plan because they believe it is too complicated, they don't have enough assets to do an estate plan, and/or they are fearful of the costs of hiring an attorney. Whether you have a large or small estate, everyone needs an estate plan to ensure they are protected in the event of death or disability. It is even more important to prepare an estate plan when you have a smaller estate because your estate will not have the assets to cover legal costs and fees associated with the California probate court process. Another common mistake occurs when individuals who do move forward with estate planning try to do it themselves, and/or forget to properly title their assets into their trusts or designate beneficiaries. Once you have decided to move forward with estate planning for your family, it is important to ensure it is done properly by hiring legal experts to walk you through the process.

GGMG: How often should a family update an estate plan?

JJ: You should plan to review and/or update your estate plan approximately every three to five years. Additionally, you should plan to review your estate plan if your financial situation changes dramatically, such as from inheritance, sale of a business, purchase of a business, retirement, etc.; or if circumstances of your life change, such as births, weddings, deaths, divorce, etc. The goal is to contemplate various scenarios when drafting your plan initially so the documents are flexible and account for various or unforeseen scenarios to the extent possible. That way, you do not have to change your estate plan as frequently as you might think.

GGMG: What's your opinion regarding do-it-yourself wills or trusts, such as those available on the Internet?

JJ: It is common for individuals to believe their estate is simple. In reality, estate planning is a very personal and complex process. It is important to work with an experienced legal advisor who will

draft specifically for the family and account for that family's wants and desires to ensure they are followed. Online documents are forms you fill

in that do not specifically address the needs of the individual family. You pay an attorney to provide advice and counsel that online forms do not offer.

GGMG: What should a family look for in an estate planner?

JJ: When searching for an estate planning attorney, it is important to look for an attorney who will walk you through every step of the process to ensure that the plan works as efficiently as possible for you moving forward. Some questions to ask might be: 1) is the attorney's primary focus on estate planning? 2) how many years of experience does the attorney have? 3) do you feel comfortable with the attorney? and 4) does the attorney charge a flat fee or an hourly rate for estate planning services? Whomever you choose to work with, your relationship with the attorney is of the utmost importance. You must feel comfortable enough with the attorney to share personal information that could affect your plan since the attorney cannot plan for, or around, things she/he doesn't know.

GGMG: How much should someone expect to spend?

JJ: The cost of the estate plan varies depending on the size of the estate and what estate planning tools are being utilized. However, many estate planning attorneys work on a flat rate for a comprehensive estate plan. An individual can expect to spend anywhere from \$2,500-\$3,500 for a relatively simple, yet comprehensive estate planning package. ❖

...estate planning is a very personal and complex process

GGMG AT WORK

Community Outreach Drive

Make a Difference in the Lives of Vulnerable Children and Their Families



We are all responsible for the well-being of children. Whether working directly with children, their families or caregivers, communities, or systems, the goal of **Safe and Sound*** is to create the greatest positive outcomes for children. No one can do this alone; preventing child abuse is a communal responsibility.

A monetary gift to **Safe and Sound** helps provide services to families like parenting classes, therapy, and case management. Your contributions will work to build comprehensive programming that strengthens families. When parents are knowledgeable about parenting, have someone to talk to when stressed (i.e., the TALK Line), and can provide basic needs for their family, they are empowered and resilient, which ultimately reduces the risk of and prevents child abuse.

Gifts can be made at www.give.everydayhero.com/us/ggmg. Thank you in advance for your generosity and helping GGMG contribute to this important cause.

**previously known as San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center*

Contest

Finally Tame the Toys and Control the Chaos

You know you need to do something about the plethora of toys and books, but how do you know where to begin? Two key Nest Happy systems will help you eliminate excess and create an environment for true learning. Discover how systems increase the lifetime of your toys and books, how to make de-cluttering and simplifying easier and more sustainable over time, how the right kinds of toys and books can aid in your child's development, and how to increase the attention span of your children.

This month, one lucky winner will receive a bundle of Nest Happy Services* (valued at \$450), including:

- Lifetime access to the online course “Tame the Toys,” Nest Happy's signature toy rotation system.
- Lifetime access to the online course “The Happy Book Nook,” Nest Happy's step-by-step system for children's books.
- One 2-hour, in-home session for personalized implementation of the Happy Book Nook, Tame the Toys system, or an overall assessment/optimization of your living space.
- Two 30-minute phone or video conference sessions for ultimate support.

Nest Happy (www.nesthappysf.com) is a San Francisco-based company started by GGMG's own Sarah Hembree. All GGMG members can snag a FREE cheatsheet “10 Easy Ways to Get Your Family Organized” at www.tinyurl.com/nesthappyoffer.

*Services must be redeemed by September 1, 2018, are subject to availability, are non-transferable, non-refundable, and may not be combined with other offers.

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH THE SUBJECT LINE “NESTHAPPY” TO CONTEST@GGMG.ORG by FEBRUARY 28, 2018.



nest happy

DADLANDS

Parenting for the Future

By Saul Griffith

As I sat with my 8-year-old son at bedtime last night, he did what he always does and asked me a profoundly deep question. This is much to his mother's chagrin, who believes children's sleep should be administered with military curfew. Huxley asked me about climate change and whether he would be alive when it happens. Unlike his questions about what exists beyond the expanding edge of the universe, or his reflections on the true nature of infinity, this one is actually in my wheelhouse—I've spent most of my adult life working on clean energy and climate change solutions. Even with a very solid background, it is a difficult topic to broach. We talked about how in his lifetime the sea level would rise about 4 feet—his height—and how that would completely change every beach he has been to and inundate many cities he has visited. I trailed off and was evasive because the consequence of our climate negligence is actually a pretty horrible story.



I thought back to his class unit on climate change this year—it was nihilist at best and didn't embrace the children as agents of change and the future as full of possibility. There is a genuine lack of good narratives in which we successfully manage climate change. I feel like I'm still backpedaling that topic with my kid and helping him understand that we will get the future that we collectively create.

The future won't look like the past. The past didn't look like the past before it. School as we know it is less than 200 years

...the really big changes coming are going to be the political changes we will make to organize ourselves on a crowded planet.

old. Pensions were an invention of the 20th century. The home loan is less than a century old, and the American Dream is constantly changing.

I think people spend a lot of time worrying about the future, and especially about technology, yet the really big changes coming are going to be the political changes we will make to organize ourselves on a crowded planet. The robots could easily liberate us to work a three-day workweek instead of five. But getting to that future is about our political, cultural, and social

organization, even more than it is about robotics technology. We basically have enough technology and we certainly know enough to build a carbon-stabilized, clean-energy world, but we haven't figured out how to organize it politically, nor how to finance it, and we certainly haven't figured out how to change our culture enough to embrace it.

All of the vibrant cultures that surround the automobile—hot-rodding, drag-racing, car-camping, motorhome parks—are all much less than a century old, yet we think of them as cultural fait-accompli. I'm suggesting that we need to prepare our children to live on the edge of an entirely new culture—a culture that is theirs. We will help them get to it, but they will invent an electric car culture that will be unrecognizable to us. We try to fit electric cars into the sleek, slick, Super Bowl-ad car future; they will reject that and hopefully make an electrified kandy-colored tangerine-flake streamline baby.

I invent things for a living. I work with machines and robots all day and with scores of engineers. Fellow parents are always asking me what programming language their kids should learn. I don't rush to teach my kids Raspberry Pi or Python, but our kids do need to understand robots, and should know how to hack them, and most of all, how to disable them and turn them off. Our kids need to understand energy, where it comes from, and how we harness it and how we use it. If they don't understand those things, they will sit on the sidelines of the coming century.

More than both of those things, however, they need to know how to be political, social, and cultural animals. Our world needs them to be the generation that re-organizes our relationships with "age-old" institutions—a new relationship with the environment, a new relationship with cities, a new relationship with computers and machines and robots. They are going to live in a time of radical change. We did, our parents did, and our grandparents did. They will get the world for which they agitate. Raise them to be radicals, teach them history, and make them understand the human project is just that: a project.

So what am I going to talk to Huxley about tonight? How to be a scientist, an engineer, an activist, an agitator, a politician, and a lover. A lover of people, of our planet, of our humanity. ❖

Saul Griffith runs Otherlab, a smallish R&D firm that develops new technologies in clean energy and robotics. He is, in turn, run ragged by smallish children aged 4 and 8.

MEMBER PROFILE: Pratima Gupta

By Tara Hardesty Photograph by Petra Cross Photography

Lives in Lower Haight • Two children, ages 5 and 9 months • Obstetrician/gynecologist and abortion provider • Volunteer medical director, St. James Infirmary (an occupational health and safety clinic for sex workers and their families) • Vice Chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party

BIGGEST SURPRISE ABOUT BEING A MOM? Even though I care for pregnant and parenting women every day, there were so many surprises when I became a mom. All of a sudden when you become a mom, people all over are willing to look up from their smart phones and help. The parent community has an instant and unique bond from these shared experiences. The other big surprise was the mommy guilt and judgment. I have experienced other moms turning their backs to me when I pulled out a packaged snack. I have the utmost respect for someone who makes their own snacks, but I do not have that bandwidth and was surprised by the reaction of some of the other moms. It has made me more aware to never judge another parent, for we have no idea about their situation.

BIGGEST STRUGGLE AS A MOM? The biggest struggle as a mom is childcare equity, especially if you have a male partner. Even though we live in a progressive city, him taking the kids to the park counts as being "such a good dad." Society still views parenting as being on the shoulders of women. I am always careful to say he is "parenting" and not "babysitting" when he has the children and I am working/playing.

BEST MOMENT AS A MOM? I ran for a position as an elected official in 2016 and, against all odds, am now the vice chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party. One of the best moments as a mom was campaigning with my son and explaining to him that he was the reason I was running for office.

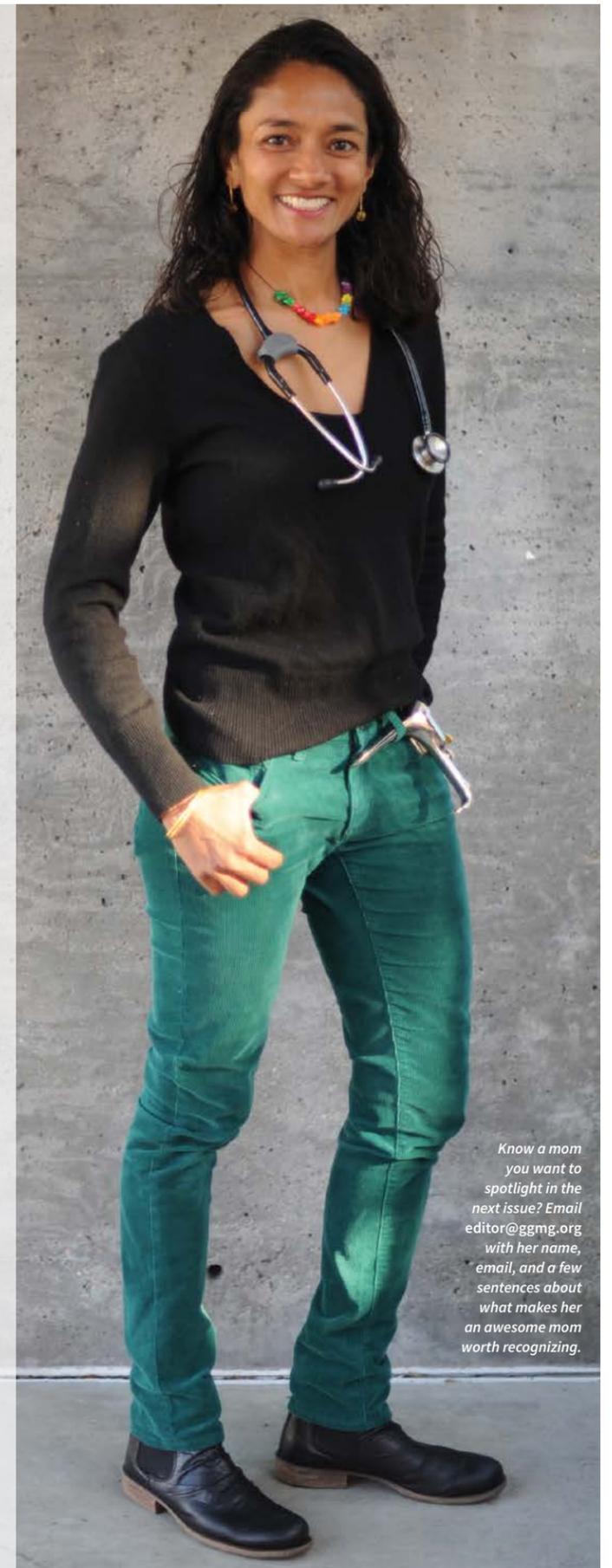
A GREAT DECISION... As a doctor, I debated having my son in the delivery room for the birth of my daughter, but we decided to trust him and support his curiosity. It was amazing, and I have zero regrets about him being there. It was a very special moment, and I think his presence has contributed to the "special language" he shares with his "baby doll" (as he calls his baby sister).

HOW DO YOU TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF? Exercise keeps me centered, clearheaded, and grounded. I don't have technology, so there is no temptation to be distracted. I realized that I am always a bit tired, but 45 minutes of exercising makes me feel more awake and invigorated than 45 more minutes of sleep.

HOW WAS IT TO BE ON THE OTHER SIDE, PREGNANT AS AN OBSTETRICIAN? I admit I probably wasn't the best patient. I didn't get a lot of prenatal care, but I think the experience has made me a better doctor, and I can empathize better. For example, the challenges of breastfeeding: it's like trying to attach a floppy baby to a melon. It is tricky and no one teaches you the tricks to latching in medical school.

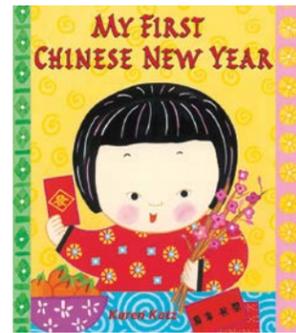
THREE WORDS/PHRASES TO DESCRIBE MOTHERHOOD? Inspirational, all-consuming, and life-altering. ❖

Tara is a mom of two boys, a marketing professional who specializes in commercial real estate ventures, and a freelance writer. She blogs at TheDailyWrites.com.



Know a mom you want to spotlight in the next issue? Email editor@gmg.org with her name, email, and a few sentences about what makes her an awesome mom worth recognizing.

In 2018, Chinese New Year is February 16; get ready with this selection of books celebrating the Bay Area's Asian heritage and Asian cultures further afield. Whether your little ones love red lanterns, ramen lunches, or dragon stories, they will enjoy being inspired to travel the world via these written words and illustrations.



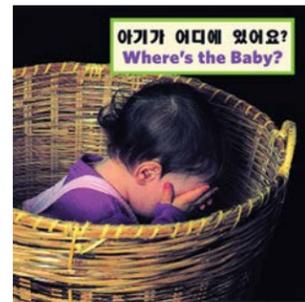
My First Chinese New Year

Written & illustrated by Karen Katz

Before you head out to a Dragon Dance at your local library, make sure to grab this book to bone up on traditions, foods, and crafts associated with the holiday. Simple and short and

perfect for little hands, *My First Chinese New Year* is a fun introduction to a world-famous Bay Area celebration.

Ages: 0 to 3 years



Where's the Baby? (Korean and English Edition)

Written by Cheryl Christian, illustrated by Laura Dwight

This simple bilingual book is illustrated with photographs of babies and uses both English and Korean text to describe

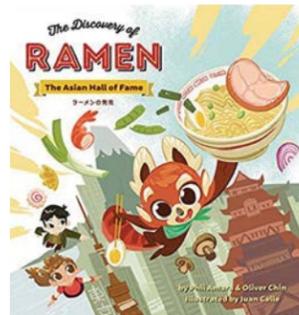
each picture. Using lift-the-flaps, babies can hear the words and find the baby on each page. The small format and real-life pictures will make it a favorite in multilingual households.

Ages: 0 to 3 years

The Discovery of Ramen: The Asian Hall of Fame

Written by Phil Amara & Oliver Chin, illustrated by Juan Calle

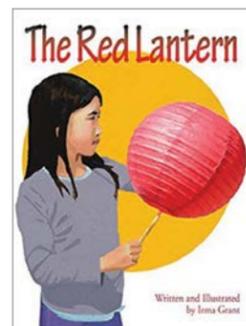
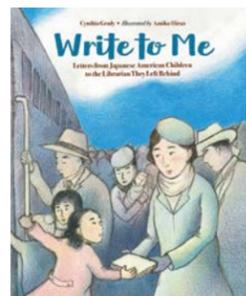
A field trip teaches two young children the origin of ramen, Japanese pulled noodles made of wheat and seasoned with umami broth and toppings. Thanks to a talking animal, they travel back in time 300 years to see how ramen has evolved over the centuries. Even if you're not hungry, this book will probably prompt a trip to a nearby ramen shop and will most certainly incite curiosity in kids, even if they've never tasted the noodle delight. *Ages: 2 to 5 years*



Write to Me: Letters from Japanese American Children to the Librarian They Left Behind

Written by Cynthia Grady, illustrated by Amiko Hirao

From 1942 to 1945, families of Japanese descent were interned in the United States. A San Diego librarian sent books to interned children and asked them for letters back. This extraordinary correspondence gave rise to this book, a work of memory and love sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum. More than a history lesson, this story is about the power of the written word and human relationships in difficult times. *Ages: 4 to 8 years*



The Red Lantern

Written and illustrated by Irma Grant

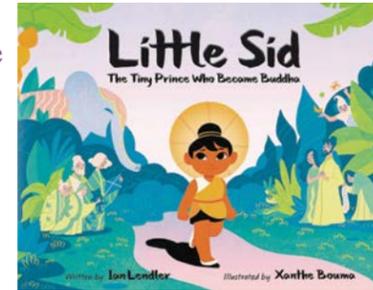
The Red Lantern tells the story of Annie, a young girl who helps her grandfather at his shop in Chinatown. After meeting the Jade Emperor's daughter, Annie learns about the origins of the lantern festival, one of the celebrations of the Chinese New Year. Can Annie help the emperor's daughter solve three lantern riddles before the first firecrackers? *Ages: 3 to 8 years*

Little Sid: The Tiny Prince Who Became Buddha

Written by Ian Lendler, illustrated by Xanthe Bouma

Written by a Bay Area dad (whose wife was a GGMG member!), this book tells the story of Buddha interwoven with Buddhist fables. While many families have heard about Buddha, few know how Buddhism started, and this small book introduces young readers to Buddhism in an accessible manner with bright illustrations. Young ones will come away with a deeper appreciation for happy and sad events and perhaps the desire to become more mindful in daily life.

Ages: 4 to 8 years

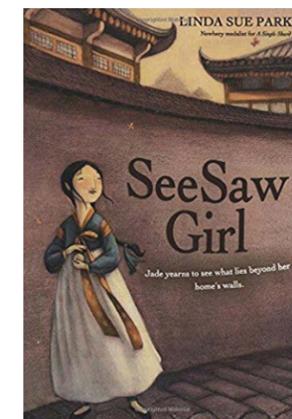
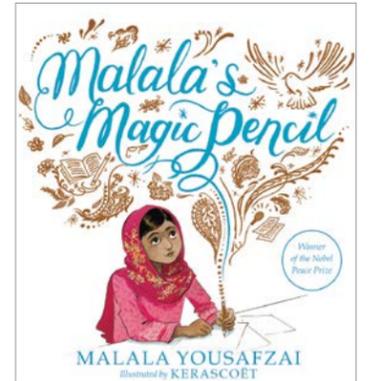


Malala's Magic Pencil

Written by Malala Yousafzai, illustrated by Kerascoët

Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai inspires young children to find the magic around them in this *New York Times* bestseller. In her autobiography, Malala tells the reader where she grew up in a small village in Pakistan, what hardships and dangers she faced as a young girl, and how she overcame tragedy with sheer determination.

Ages: 5 to 9 years



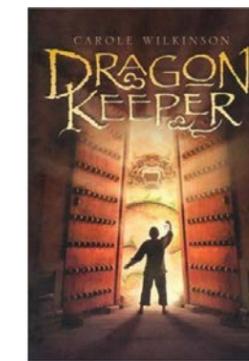
SeeSaw Girl

Written by Linda Sue Park, illustrated by Mou-Sien Tseng & Jean Tseng

Life in 17th century Korea is not easy for a girl, even if she grows up in a wealthy family. Jade

Blossom is 12 years old but cannot go beyond the inner court of her family's home. All her life has been about learning to manage the household of her future husband, but she has other ideas. Yearning for education and travel, she does what no other girl her age has done. Well-researched, this book will fascinate kids who want to learn about other cultures.

Ages: 7 to 10 years



Dragon Keeper #1

By Carole Wilkinson

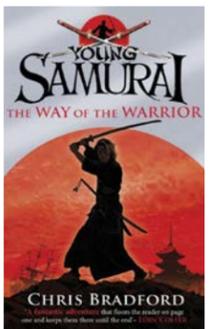
In the time of the Han dynasty in ancient China, Ping, a young slave girl, discovers that she's the only person who can save the last dragon. Accused of a crime she did not commit, Ping is forced to flee and take the dragon to the ocean. Along the way, Ping learns numbers and writing from the dragon and meets the emperor. Action-packed, the story follows the journey of an uneducated slave girl to young adulthood. This book is a great read for reluctant readers and dragon lovers. *Ages: 8 to 12 years*

The Way of the Warrior (Young Samurai #1)

By Chris Bradford

In August 1611, 12-year-old Jack Fletcher is shipwrecked off the coast of Japan. After being attacked by pirates, he's rescued by a legendary samurai. Immersed in feudal Japan, the story follows Jack's samurai apprenticeship in Tokyo as he learns to survive in a world where he is the only outsider. This book will delight young fans of ancient Japan and martial arts.

Ages: 11 to 15 years



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

From Womb to World

Beyond the Baby Book

By Shaheen Bilgrami

These days there are many ways to record your baby's exciting milestones. But the early days of motherhood can be very challenging, so make your plan as easy to implement as you possibly can. Don't expect to do it alone. Make the people around you—your partner, friends, and family—aware of your plan and get them to help you!

For the birth

Mobilize birth partners to gather information and to take photos. Some things you might want to record:

- Birth details—weight, height, time of birth, who was present
- First visitors, cards, photos of gifts
- Keepsakes—hospital tags, birth announcements, newspaper from birthday, bassinet tag from hospital
- Photos of baby's hands and feet. It's fun to have something positioned beside baby for size comparison
- First baby hat, outfit/going-home clothes

In the early days

For posed photos, you may want captions. You can use purchased 'onesie stickers' on which baby's ages are printed, milestone cards, or wooden alphabet blocks. For more specific customization, write fun details on a chalkboard or whiteboard positioned next to baby. Some notable firsts:

- First day/night at home
- First bath
- First smile
- Baby's loves...A list of things that baby seems to respond to, such as songs, pets, or specific people
- Photos taken on the same day of every month for the first year
- Some moms find it easier to record important information and events through writing letters to their baby

If you want an actual hard-cover

Most baby books have designated spaces to write baby's weight, height, and other details, as well as space to stick or store photos and mementos. The main disadvantage of this type of baby record is that it is fairly inflexible, but it can be an easy way to document this time period when your brain is barely functional. A more flexible version of the traditional baby book is a blank scrapbook in which you can write notes and stick photographs. Stick large envelopes in the front and back covers of the book in which to store ultrasound photos, hospital tags, etc.

Or think inside the box

It may be worth investing in a keepsake box instead of, or in addition to, a baby book. There are a number of them available

with drawers, cubbies, and boxes to store specific baby-related items, or you can just use a fancy shoebox, with individual items in labelled bags or envelopes.

Apps to the rescue

A photo book app, such as Social Print Studio or Blurb is a handy tool for the tech-savvy. If you post all your baby's firsts on social media, something like the Social Book app can turn your selected social media posts into a book with the touch of a button.

Baby book apps like Tiny Beans and Moment Garden allow you to share photos and memories with friends and family and give you the ability to turn the memories you record into a physical



book. It's worth shopping around to find an app that suits your needs and your aesthetic. If you're planning to track other baby information electronically and you want to keep things simple, there are a number of "all inclusive" baby apps. For instance, the Sprout Baby app will track feedings, diaper changes, sleep, and development as well as record those all-important milestones and photos. You can then convert the "baby book moments" into an eBook. ❖

Shaheen Bilgrami is a freelance writer and editor and the mom of a feisty kindergartener. She wishes that she had been more organized when she was trying to preserve her own baby's firsts. Contact her through her website, www.shaheenbilgrami.com.

New Arrivals



- Carol G. **Baby Henry Sagan**
 Jenny S. **Baby Vesper Olivia**
 Allison R. **Baby Carson Delgado**
 Aarti G. **Baby Sophie**
 Diane F. **Baby Christian "Kit" Parke**

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

To announce your new arrival in the magazine and for a chance to win a Babyganics gift set, fill out the form at <http://tinyurl/ggmgNewArrivals>.



Volunteer of the Month (and Year!)



Congratulations to **Lily Brotherton**, our volunteer of the month! Lily is a volunteer for the Kids Activities Committee and has been working with GGMG since 2016. She is a family caregiver and teaches mom-and-me fitness classes and personal training sessions. She and husband Steve are parents to James (3.5 years) and Grace (4 months).

LILY, WE WANT TO KNOW YOUR FAVORITE...Pastime: Golfing around the city (home course: Fleming 9 hole); **Book:** anything my neighborhood book club selects; **Film:** *Rear Window*; **Restaurant:** Foreign Cinema; **Destination:** Big Sur; **Parenting Advice:** Take a deep breath and find joy in the little things.

This year's *Caitlin Mullinix Volunteer of the Year Award* was awarded to **Lani Schriebstein**! Lani has been a volunteer with GGMG since February 2014 and has done amazing work for our community. Currently she is volunteering on three (yes, three!) committees: Magazine (art director), Community Outreach (co-chair), and Website (volunteer). She is self-employed as a visual designer. She and husband Vladimir Gusiatsnikov are parents to Beatrice (4).

LANI, WE WANT TO KNOW: Something about you that might surprise people if they knew it: I trained for and completed two half-marathons (one was in Maui!). **City slicker or outdoor enthusiast:** I'm a city slicker with a great appreciation for nature. **Place in the world you would most like to visit:** Tokyo, Japan.



Lily and Lani will enjoy gift cards to International Orange Spa (2044 Fillmore St.). Book yourself a massage today at www.internationalorange.com.

Barbies, Bricks, and Bonding: How Beloved Toys from Our Past Have Evolved

Witnessing the evolution of two iconic toy brands of our youth

By Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss

Photographs by Anna Psalmond Photography



A year ago on Christmas Eve, my 4-year-old daughter Lilly dominated our Yankee Swap when she walked up to her great uncle Edgar and swiped a prized, 800-plus piece LEGO Holiday Shop set right from under his nose. We all cheered at her decisiveness as my uncle sat there speechless. When we brought the set out this most recent holiday season, Lilly spent several hours with her daddy in methodical silence, slowly piecing this victory together while carols played in the background. To be clear, my husband and I are not the most hands-on parents when it comes to the world of play. But there was something magical happening

during this impromptu LEGO bonding: genuine, in-the-moment play for my daughter and her dad, one of whom was tackling a new challenge while the other relived a childhood pastime.

Manufacturers such as LEGO know exactly which toys today's parents were playing with a few decades ago and how to capitalize on that nostalgia. While some companies are using the retro angle to resell the same branding, packaging, and toys that sold well in the past (e.g., Fisher-Price's classic collection), others have evolved over time, responding to various consumer and societal trends. Toys like Barbie have expanded product lines in an attempt to extend a

beloved brand to meet new consumer needs. Let's look inside both of these popular toys of our youth and how they've evolved through the years.

Barbie spin, Barbie spin-off

Barbie was first introduced in 1959, the brainchild of Mattel co-founder Ruth Handler. The physical doll itself was inspired by a German doll known as Bild Lilli and was used as an adult gag gift at bachelor parties (this might explain some of Barbie's more enhanced, adult-like physical features). Of course, this story makes no appearance on the Barbie History website. Instead, the company quotes Ruth: "My whole philosophy of Barbie was that through the doll, the little girl could be anything she wanted to be. Barbie always represented the fact that a woman has choices." Barbie came onto the market post-war, just as America was loosening its view of women as housewives and moving toward the more rebellious 1960s.

Though Barbie was once considered to promote career and educational choice for women, some moms who grew up with these dolls now view them with skepticism. Rebecca Walsh, founder of Early Childhood Matters, reflected on her own experiences: "I was really into Barbie as a kid, but now I refuse to buy my own children Barbies. It's just so disturbing now to think about it, the effects on body image. I remember learning when I was little about the proportions of Barbie being so unrealistic she would fall over. I don't want to introduce my daughter to that."

Another local mother has mixed feelings on the doll. "My son was introduced to Barbie through the Netflix show, which is actually pretty well-written," said Bridget Cinquegrano, mom to two sons. "In this case, Barbie is more of a choose-your-own-adventure, with clothing, shopping, etc. as well as role play. My only qualm is the unrealistic physique of women that Barbie portrays, but I love knowing they have a new line with more inclusive models." Only last year did Mattel finally cave to ongoing criticism of Barbie's unrealistic body imagery and introduce three new body types, including "petite," "tall," and "curvy" to its line.



For those not satisfied with the latest offerings from Mattel's Barbie line, a few inspired entrepreneurs and parents have created alternatives to respond to the doll's demographic and cultural shortcomings. The Queens of Africa Dolls feature dolls that reflect various African countries, donning modern-day African clothing, Afrocentric hairstyles, with companion educational books about confidence and cultural pride. The Fulla doll was launched in 2003 to provide children of Muslim backgrounds little dolls that modeled traditional Muslim values, including a hijab, prayer mat, and beads in each set. Sonia Singh of Tasmania created a viral Internet sensation with her Tumblr blog documenting her "makeunders" of secondhand Barbies, Bratz, and other similarly mature-looking dolls by using a chemical process to remove their makeup, repaint more innocent eyes, tone down the hairstyles and don handmade, more childlike clothing created by her mother. They are known lovingly as her "Tree Change Dolls," and Sonia has declined to

mass-produce them and instead chooses to focus on the messaging and the process.

Let go and LEGO

There is a famous letter that once accompanied the basic 1974 LEGO bricks box set as a reminder to parents. "To Parents. The urge to create is equally strong in all children. Boys and girls. It's the imagination that counts. Not skill. You build whatever comes into your head, the way you want it. A bed or a truck. A doll's house or a spaceship. A lot of boys like dolls houses. They're more human than spaceships. A lot of girls prefer spaceships. They're more exciting than dolls houses. The most important thing is to put the right material in their hands and let them create whatever appeals to them."

Many of us grew up with a giant bin of red, yellow, blue, and green bricks of various sizes; the rest was left to our imaginations. "We just had a bunch of bricks, no kits or anything," reflected Jennifer Bettendorff, a designer at an ed tech software company and mom to Owen and Teo, ages 7 and 5. "My sister and I

would build structures of all kinds. There was one little LEGO car with wheels that came out, which we would fight over!”

LEGO bricks (the name is an abbreviation of the Danish words “leg godt,” meaning “play well”) first came on the toy scene in 1949 and consisted of simple four- and eight-stud brick-shaped pieces in four colors. They were sold in basic open creativity sets known as LEGO Classic and became a hit internationally. It wasn’t until the early ’90s that LEGO began partnering with other brands like Star Wars and Winnie the Pooh to manufacture pre-made sets with instructions to build specific items.

Bettendorff is ambivalent about the fact that LEGO bricks are now packaged and marketed as sets to create very specific scenes, such as those from movies like *Moana* and *Batman*. “They are meant to be built step-by-step based on specific instructions,” says Bettendorff. “What I see with Owen is he’s very into going through them one by one and then keeping them intact for a bit before getting creative. Coming from a design background, I get reassured when I see my kids modifying and then creating their own things.”

The LEGO Friends line includes bricks in pink and pastel colors with scenes that are presumably meant to appeal more to girls, such as an ice cream truck or an amusement

park. This line has drawn some of the same skeptical reactions from Bay Area moms who scoffed at the mention of Barbie. “The whole branding thing is sad to me, that [LEGO] felt they had to brand their product just for girls, with a different color palate and everything,” said Bettendorff.

Early Childhood Matters’ Walsh, however, offered a different way of viewing the LEGO Friends line as possibly advantageous for girls. “We were three girls in my family and my parents never bought [LEGO bricks] for us. One of my friends in college was pre-med and a genius. She played with LEGO all the time as a kid. I was so jealous of her. I felt like her brain was different than mine,” says Walsh, adding that research shows playing with toys marketed to the opposite gender has tremendous benefits on brain development. “That’s the only thing where gender-based marketing may benefit girls,” she says. “You take a toy that has only been marketed towards boys and now they are focused more on marketing to girls, giving them more opportunities and more access to something they might not have accessed before.”

Time covered the launch of LEGO Friends, citing pushback from various special interest groups claiming this new product reinforced stereotypes and promoted unhealthy self-image in girls. The company responded

that its new toy line shouldn’t be interpreted as the company’s only offering to girls, acknowledging that many girls were already playing with LEGO products in many different colored hues and themes. It contended the line was simply an additional theme option, and echoing Walsh’s arguments, it was intended to reach even more girls than LEGO had previously.

...there was something magical happening during this impromptu LEGO bonding: genuine, in-the-moment play for my daughter and her dad, one of whom was tackling a new challenge while the other relived a childhood pastime.

LEGO bricks of all colors and themes have made their way into our home and into my child’s heart. She adores building the specified set and then often comes up with her own creations afterwards, some of them involving (gulp) glue and string. Barbies, however, have not found their way into the pink and purple toy bins that cover her bedroom shelves. My hesitation about these dolls is heavily influenced by the cleavage-heaving, heels-wearing Barbie of my own youth. Maybe I should purchase an African Queen doll or a Fulla doll instead for Lilly’s birthday. Perhaps echoing my husband’s natural curiosity and appreciation for reliving his LEGO days, Lilly and I can have our own “makeunder” adventure by visiting a secondhand store to buy used Bratz and Barbie dolls in need of a different look. A greener, more wholesome, culturally proud, and diverse toy inspiring my child? A fun mother-daughter activity that piques my own interest, too? Yes to both, please. ❖

Jennifer is a school leader, speaker, writer, and mom to two adorable children. When not painfully stepping on LEGO bricks, you can find her at jenniferkuhrbutterfoss.com.





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The Power of Presence

Living in the present can bring peace and greater happiness

By Jami Grich Photographs by Aviva Roller Photography

An achievable panacea

Full presence is challenging for adults but comes naturally to children. The present takes up their full attention while the future and the past seem unimportant, intangible, and irrelevant. This explains why, as a child, summers seem to last forever and why the joy of a lollipop is so intense. Adults, on the other hand, can get swept up in regrets or resentments from the past, fears or hopes about the future, or distractions in the day to day. But being fully present—that is, living in the one singular moment—is a skill we can learn, and being present can yield great rewards. According to philosophers and researchers, therapists and neuroscientists, Buddhists and secular scholars alike, staying in the present offers the possibility of nothing short of a panacea.

How thoughts and feelings affect presence

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., founder of the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and author of *Full Catastrophe Living*, teaches a simple but profound lesson: that most of our problems stem not from the problems or

circumstances themselves but from the way we react, often unconsciously, to them. In other words, our thoughts and feelings about a problem and how we handle those thoughts and feelings are the real issue. For example, if you were fired from your job and you thought, “it’s not fair, I don’t deserve this, it’s terrible, I’ll never get another job,” your feelings of injustice, anger, hopelessness, and worthlessness are the actual problem. It’s easy to see this once we realize how an opposite reaction can generate feelings of happiness: “Oh, wow, what an opportunity! Now I can pursue my dream career! How exciting!”

The corollary to this is that our ability to alter our circumstances (i.e., fix our “problems”) depends not on changing those circumstances or problems but on learning how to stop our unconscious reactivity. This is sometimes referred to as emotional intelligence, or the ability to identify your own and others’ feelings so you can interpret and

Put another way, the practice of meditation, or increasing mindfulness, is simply a practice of reducing mindlessness.

manage them effectively. This idea has been known by Buddhists and philosophers for centuries, but for many of us, this is radical news. If we grew up surrounded by adults and/or a culture in which blame, self-pity, helplessness, and needing others to fix us was the norm, then we need to shift our beliefs to achieve inner peace.

Learning to master our thoughts and feelings

In decades past, it was believed by scholars that people had a happiness set-point, or average level of happiness that we tend to return to. Now, entirely new fields of study, including affective neuroscience and contemplative neuroscience, are yielding gobs of information about just how pliable we humans are and just how possible it is to increase our happiness. And scientists keep confirming that successfully navigating the river of our feelings is key to mental health and happiness.

So how exactly are we supposed to master our thoughts and feelings? They seem to have a powerful, riptide-like ability to sweep us away into the past or the future. This force can be so powerful that we may sometimes feel unable to control it. But we can control it, and one way is through meditation.

Meditation is simply practicing the process of noticing and not reacting to the stream of thoughts that go through your mind. It’s simply cultivating mindfulness, like going to the gym to build the muscle of mindfulness. And while the idea of meditating may seem daunting, meditation does not require any special training, or sitting still in an uncomfortable position, or even carving lots of time out of your schedule, and there is no

way to meditate badly. You can meditate while you’re riding the bus to work. Or in the shower. You can meditate anywhere, any time.

Put another way, the practice of meditation is simply a practice of reducing mindlessness. You know that experience of going somewhere and not remembering how you got there? That’s mindlessness. You know

how you can just go through the motions of making dinner? Also mindlessness. If meditation feels intimidating, forget that scary word and just practice being less mindless.

Ellen Langer, Ph.D., a Harvard social psychologist and author of *Mindfulness*, has been studying the topic for decades. She says most of us live mindlessly virtually all the time, and research reliably shows that the consequences are enormous. Langer defines mindfulness as actively noticing things you wouldn’t ordinarily notice, like noticing 10 things about a loved one that you haven’t noticed before. According to her research, your world will become more vibrant and you’ll experience greater health, happiness, and competence with mindfulness. She believes that “virtually all of our problems—personal, interpersonal, professional, and societal—either directly or indirectly stem from mindlessness.”

But it’s so hard!

Simple steps or not, we all find it challenging to stay in the present. Our thoughts and feelings sweep through us and knock us off our feet. Why? Many of us have developed bad coping habits when we encounter uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. For instance, we distract ourselves with electronic devices. Or we suppress our feelings with substances. Or we cover up our more vulnerable feelings in favor of “secondary emotions” like anger. Even positive thinking (*I’m fine or It’ll get better*) can backfire if those thoughts are just surface level.

What we don’t often do but should is sit with our uncomfortable thoughts and feelings, let them inform us, and move

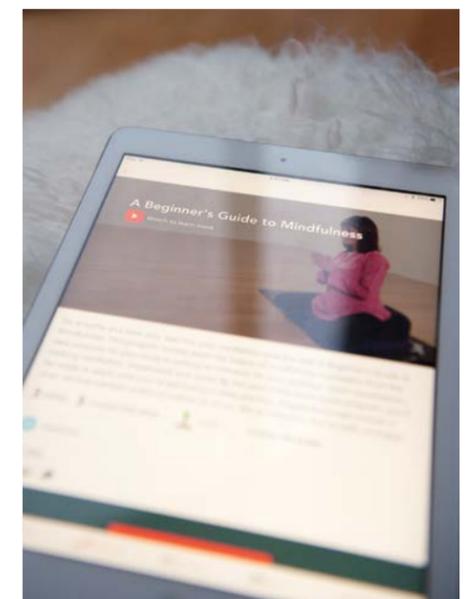
through them. What does that mean exactly? It means allowing feelings to be there for some time and be experienced fully so they can be digested or processed. Journaling about those feelings, sitting by yourself in a beautiful outdoor spot, or talking with a friend who is able to tolerate your feelings and help you get in touch with your deeper feelings rather than problem-solve or tell you platitudes, are ways to digest and process those feelings.

When we experience our feelings fully, we can gain valuable insights about ourselves. Anxiety, for example, is often triggered by a negative thought or a sensation in the body that has a scary thought attached to it. Once we identify the thought (e.g., *My heart is racing, I’m having a heart attack!*), we can work to assess whether that thought is true and come to know what steps to take to address it (*Oh, maybe it’s just because I’m nervous about this interview...*).

When we think about it this way, all of our feelings can be helpful clues to our path to greater peace and happiness. It’s easy to assume that happy people are always happy, but the truth is that truly happy people experience all of their feelings and don’t judge them or push them away.

Learn to ride the waves

If it feels overwhelming to sit with your thoughts or feelings, it’s important to remember feelings come in waves—they





don't just escalate until they swallow you up. Learning how to ride those waves and not catastrophize will help you embrace those feelings.

If it still feels overwhelming, start small. Start by noticing good things. Notice a moment in your day when you feel good. Notice something your child does well. Notice a part of your body that feels fine. Changing what you focus on can lead to radical shifts over time. Notice your dreams; they're also giving you information. Notice gut feelings. Once you can tell the difference between your gut feeling and, say, anxiety or fear (by developing your emotional intelligence), you can trust it. Developing this trust in yourself is incredibly empowering.

It's also terrifying to become more present if being true to yourself will mean making big changes, like leaving your job or your partner. Be compassionate and gentle with yourself if this is the case. Sometimes self-change needs to precede big life changes. Take it one step at

a time. Incremental small change + time = radical change.

Just do it!

The process of becoming more present is simple but not necessarily easy. Like most important changes we can make, it takes commitment, and there's no shortcut. Writer and Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard said, "Everyone knows that it takes time and perseverance to master an art, a sport, a language, or any other discipline. Why should it not be the same with training the mind?"

Our world today can be overwhelming. Some of us feel a strong pull to try to "fix" what's broken in our world, and there is much that appears broken. But simply being more present within ourselves can change the world for the better outside ourselves. ❖

Jami is a psychologist, Buddhist, and recovering mindless person. She practices presence in the sky when skydiving, at the dinner table with her family, and with her Muse headband at night.

OTHER WAYS TO CULTIVATE MINDFULNESS

In his classic book *Peace is Every Step*, Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh offers dozens of simple ways for adults and children alike to cultivate mindfulness. Here are a few, along with other ways to cultivate mindfulness:

- **Practice conscious breathing** anywhere, any time, by thinking as you breathe, "Breathing in I calm my body, breathing out I smile."
- **Set a gentle sounding alarm** on your phone to sound several times a day to remind you to pause and enjoy something: the tree outside your office window, the sound of your children playing, or simply your breath.
- **Eat food mindfully.** Take the time to think about all it took for that food to get to your plate, notice its smell and texture, and savor each bite.
- **Create a place in your home** to go to for mindfulness when you're feeling stressed, anxious, or angry. Instead of arguing with your partner or snapping at your children, take a moment to go to your mindful spot, ring a bell (an indicator to the rest of your family that you're making the choice to be mindful and nonverbally inviting them to join you), breathe, and sit with your feelings.
- **Cultivate gratitude.** Multitudes of research has shown the positive effect of gratitude on well-being.
- **Download an app:** Mood Meter was conceived by researchers at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence to help people increase emotional intelligence, and iChill is an app based on a type of therapy called Somatic Experiencing that helps people learn to heal emotional dysregulation.
- **Try this exercise** with your partner or child in a difficult moment: before having a vulnerable or challenging conversation, just sit together for a few moments in silence, looking at each other with loving eyes, holding hands, and connecting with your compassion. This allows your brain and body to calm down and helps keep you both from going into fight or flight.
- **Use a meditation aid**, such as the Muse, a brain sensing headband that gives you feedback about how calm your brain is.

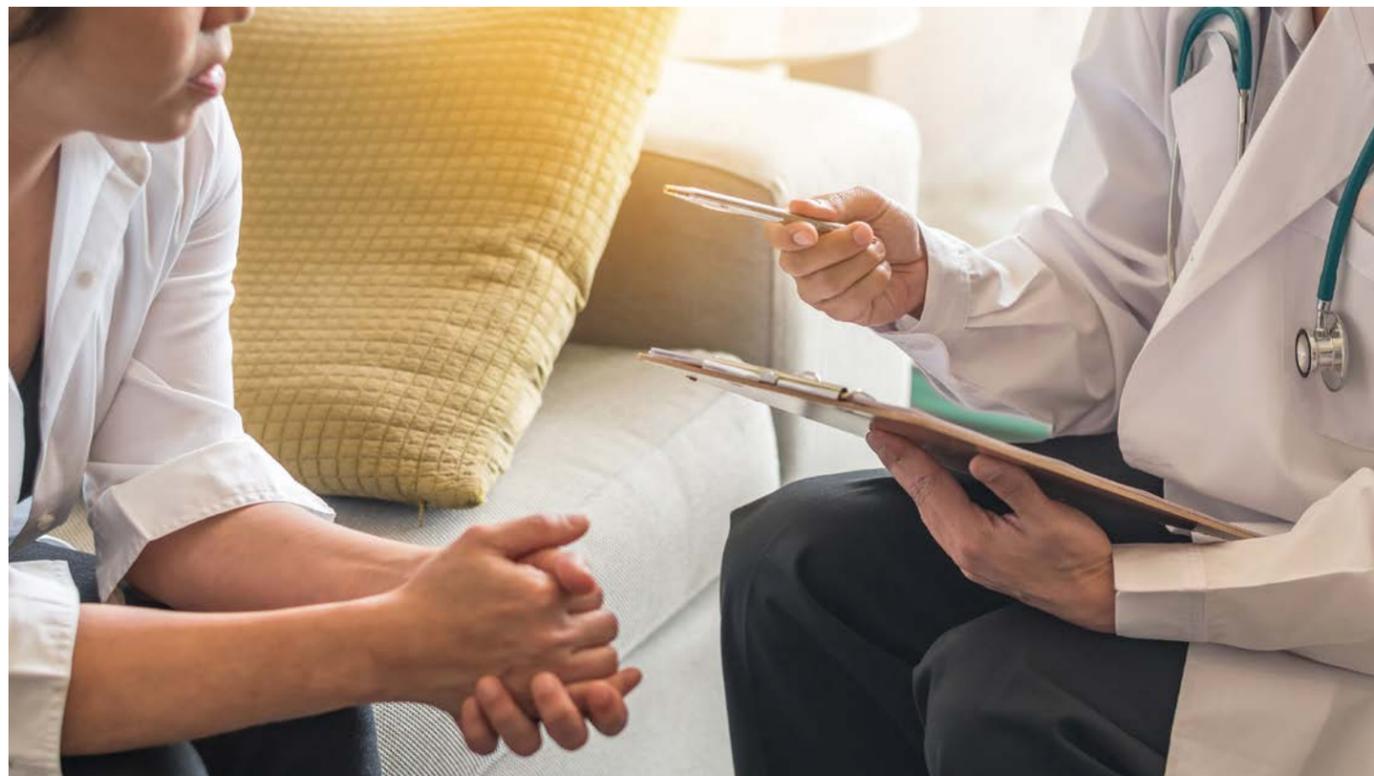


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Menopause 101

Some of its symptoms may be unpleasant, but menopause doesn't have to be something to fear. Embrace life's stages.

By Catherine Symon

It's coming. Whether you're already thinking about "The Change" or it's the furthest thing from your mind, menopause is coming.

Menopause ushers in significant changes to a woman's body. But in our youth-centric society, there aren't too many (honest and open) conversations happening about menopause. So many of us, through unintentional ignorance, denial, or being consumed with raising children—or all of the above—will be caught by surprise when menopause lands on our doorstep. You don't need to be.

The menopausal years represent almost half of a woman's life span. It's during this time that many women live the most productive and satisfying years of their careers and personal lives. Understanding what menopause entails and how to manage the symptoms can greatly improve your

quality of life in the menopausal decades(!). It's time to get prepared for your second act.

What is menopause?

Menopause is when a woman has gone 12 months since her last menstrual period. It marks the end of her reproductive life. On average, women in the United States reach menopause around age 51, but there is a wide range of normal, spanning the mid 40s to late 50s. Currently, there are no accurate methods for predicting a woman's menopause age. But there does seem to be a strong genetic component, so your menopause age will probably be similar to your mother's.

A small percentage of women with a family history of earlier menopause or who smoke will reach menopause at a younger age ("early" if before age 45, and "premature" if before age 40). Menopause can also be brought about by treatment with

chemotherapy, pelvic radiation, or surgical removal of the ovaries (oophorectomy).

The key contributor to the symptoms of menopause and the resulting changes in your body is the decline in the amount of estrogen your body generates. Estrogen, a hormone primarily produced by the ovaries (but also produced by the adrenal glands and fatty tissues), travels through the bloodstream to stimulate activity in the uterus, breasts, bone, heart, liver, and other areas of the body. Estrogen contributes to a wide variety of functions during a woman's life including development of female sex characteristics, thickening of the uterus in anticipation of pregnancy, and prevention of bone loss. (Males produce estrogen as part of the sperm maturation process, among other things, but at much lower levels than females.)

For most of her reproductive life, a woman's ovaries will produce estrogen in a

What is a hot flash?

Your body operates optimally in a fairly narrow temperature band; in persistently cold or hot conditions body processes start to get sluggish and eventually shut down. Maintaining your core body temperature is the responsibility of the hypothalamus, an area of the brain that also regulates thirst, hunger, mood, and the release of numerous hormones. Below a specific lower temperature your hypothalamus will tell your body to shiver so it can warm up, and above a specific upper temperature it will send the signal to sweat in order to cool off. The range between these shivering and sweating temperatures is called the "thermoneutral zone"—your body's comfort zone. These shivering and sweating set points are different for every person and also fluctuate during the day with your circadian rhythm. For reasons that are not yet clear, the thermoneutral zone narrows during our perimenopausal and postmenopausal years. So a temperature condition that used to be squarely in your body's comfort zone now sits above your sweat set point and a hot flash kicks in. The hypothalamus sends an emergency message to dilate the blood vessels near your skin to release heat (so your skin looks flushed) and crank up the sweat mechanism to cool you off. Hot flashes are sometimes followed by chills as the body cools down below the new shivering set point.

fairly regular cycle that peaks and dips twice during each 28-day period. In combination with several other hormones, estrogen regulates the monthly menstrual cycle. When a woman reaches her early- or mid-40s, she enters what is known as perimenopause, the phase leading up to menopause that lasts for an average of 7 to 10 years. During perimenopause, estrogen production declines and the ovaries' estrogen release becomes irregular. Monthly periods change in duration and flow, and the timing between periods becomes longer or shorter with these fluctuations. Eventually, they stop altogether. A woman is post-menopausal 12 months after her last period has occurred. It is worth noting

On average, women live with hot flashes for 4 to 6 years, but some women continue to have hot flashes into their 70s.

here that even if your monthly periods are irregular or seem to have stopped, you may still ovulate occasionally. So if you don't

desire pregnancy, remember to use some form of birth control until you are confident you have reached menopause.

Typically, menopause is diagnosed based on age, family history, and symptoms. But a doctor may measure the levels of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and estradiol (E2, a form of estrogen produced during the reproductive years) in the blood to rule out other conditions.

What are the symptoms of menopause?

Because estrogen stimulates many different tissues in the body, there are a variety of symptoms associated with declining estrogen levels. The most common symptoms include hot flashes, vaginal dryness, shifts in body composition, trouble sleeping, irritability, and mental foginess.

Hot flashes (the clinical term is vasomotor symptoms) are the most common bothersome symptom, but not all women have them, and those that do experience them with different intensities. Women who smoke, are African-American, or who went through sudden menopause due to medical treatment or surgery tend to have more severe hot flashes than other women. On

average, women live with hot flashes for 4 to 6 years, but some women continue to have hot flashes into their 70s.

Estrogen stimulates blood vessel production in the vagina, which keeps the vaginal walls flexible and lubricated. With decreasing estrogen levels, the vaginal walls get thinner and dryer. The vagina can also get narrower and shorter, particularly in the absence of sexual intercourse. (In other words, use it or lose it!) This can cause discomfort in general and is a significant cause of pain during sex.

Many women gain weight after menopause, though weight gain is tied more to a decrease in physical activity that comes with age. Low estrogen levels, however, do affect your body composition by shifting where you gain weight; while most younger women put on weight in their hips and thighs, peri- and post-menopausal women start to gain weight in their abdomen.

Trouble with sleep is also very common, particularly for those who experience night sweats (hot flashes at night). Perimenopausal women may also wake up very early, decreasing the number of hours of sleep they get each night. This sleep deprivation can contribute to irritability and mental foginess, something many of us who have raised or are currently raising small children can relate to.

What other changes are associated with menopause?

In addition to the symptoms you may experience, declining estrogen levels can increase your risk of developing certain diseases and conditions.

You may already know that your body produces different kinds of cholesterol: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). Generally, high levels of HDL and low levels of LDL are associated with good cardiovascular health. The presence of estrogen seems to increase HDL levels. As you near menopause and estrogen decreases, your HDL may decrease while your LDL drops, thereby increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease. The abdominal weight gain associated with aging and menopause also increases your risk for cardiovascular disease and may contribute to diabetes.

Postmenopausal women are also susceptible to osteoporosis (brittle bones) or osteopenia (a precursor to osteoporosis). Throughout life your bones are constantly being broken down (resorption) and built up again (deposition) in tiny increments as part of the natural cycle of bone maintenance. Estrogen decreases bone resorption to keep bones strong. Following menopause, resorption outpaces deposition and osteoporosis develops.

Managing the symptoms of menopause

Lifestyle changes

Not surprisingly, diet and exercise are important factors in peri- and post-menopausal health. Including soy products in your diet may diminish symptoms because they contain phytoestrogens, plant-based, estrogen-like substances. Foods that are rich in calcium and vitamin D are also important for bone health.

Regular exercise can help you maintain or lose weight, sleep better, feel less irritable, and decrease your risk of heart disease. It can also contribute to bone development and maintenance. If you don't already have a regular exercise routine, try to establish one.

If you smoke, stop.

Non-hormonal treatments

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and clinical hypnosis have been found to reduce hot flashes. The selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) class of prescription antidepressants has also been shown to reduce hot flashes.

Hormonal treatments

Hormone Therapy (HT, formerly called Hormone Replacement Therapy) works by supplementing the hormones that are declining in your body. Estrogen is a standard component of HT and it can be taken by mouth, through a vaginal cream or flexible vaginal ring, or via a skin (transdermal) patch. Estrogen stimulates the growth of the lining of the uterus (the endometrium), so women who have a uterus should take progesterone along with the estrogen to lower the risk of endometrial cancer. (Progesterone keeps the growth of the endometrium in check.)

HT does not affect the timing of menopause but can be very effective for countering symptoms and reducing risks. HT is not right for everyone; even women who are good candidates for HT need to weigh a variety of risks that change based on age and stage of menopause. For example, HT during perimenopause minimizes hot flashes and decreases your risk of heart disease while it

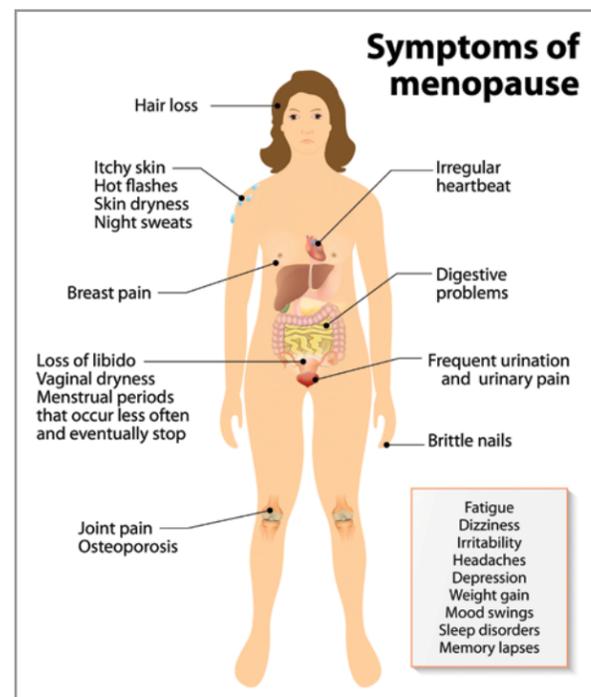
increases your risk of stroke. On the other hand, HT after age 65 decreases the risk of diabetes and osteoporosis but increases the risk of heart disease. HT at any age increases the risk of breast cancer and is not recommended for women who have had breast cancer because the stimulatory effects of estrogen could cause a recurrence.

If your peri- and post-menopausal symptoms are troublesome enough to interfere with your life, ask your healthcare provider if HT is a viable option for you. Together you can determine which treatment makes sense based on your family history, your personal health profile, and your appetite for risk. Remember that knowledge about HT continues to evolve, so stay informed, and keep the conversation going with your healthcare provider.

You're not alone

If you're feeling overwhelmed, take comfort in the fact that you are far from alone. As you read this, 43 percent of the female population in the United States is either peri- or post-menopausal. There may be a lot to learn, but you're in good company. Welcome to the second act. ❖

Catherine is a medical writer. For her, the line between child-rearing brain fog and perimenopausal brain fog has gotten very, very blurry.



Where to get more information on menopause

North American Menopause Society (NAMS) (menopause.org)
NAMS is a nonprofit, evidence-based medical society focused on the health of peri- and post-menopausal women. The website offers free consumer-friendly summaries of research and NAMS position statements, menstrual trackers, blog, video interviews, and book reviews. NAMS also publishes a *Menopause Guidebook* (\$10).

The Wisdom of Menopause by Christiane Northrup, M.D.
A comprehensive and bestselling guide to physical and emotional health during the menopausal years.

The Mayo Clinic's The Menopause Solution by Stephanie S. Faubion, M.D.
Shorter and more direct than Northrup's guide, Faubion's book highlights practical solutions to managing menopause.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, North American Menopause Society (NAMS), Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Women's Health Initiative (WHI), WomensHealth.gov, US Census, *Nature Reviews Disease Primers*, US Food and Drug Administration, Mayo Clinic

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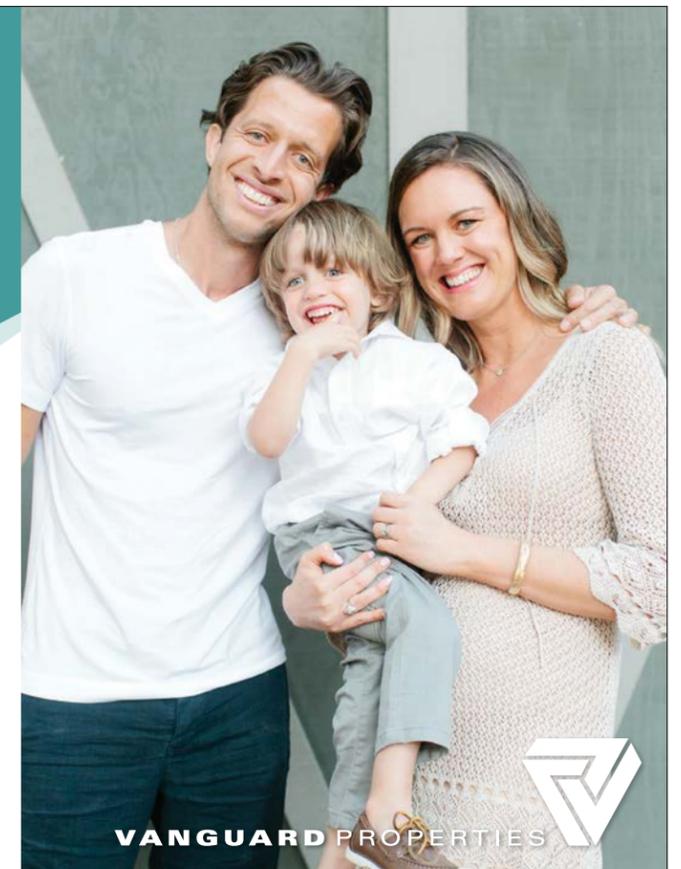


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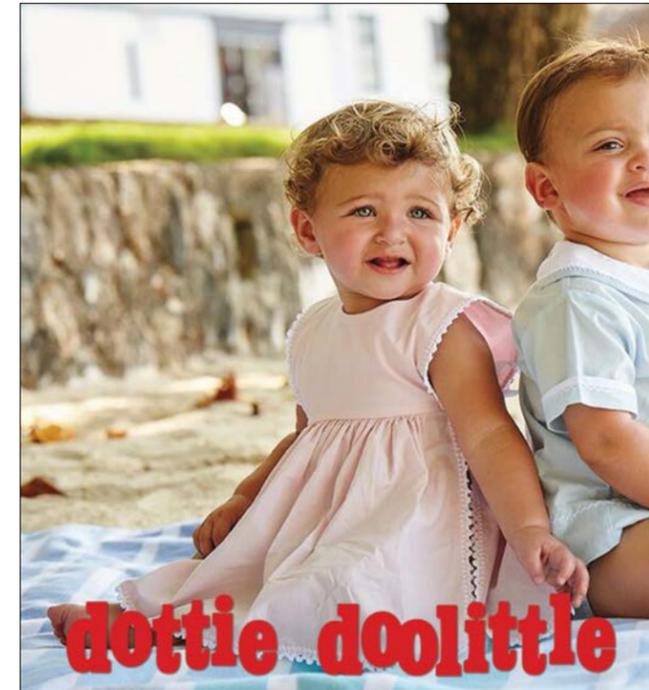
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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Family ArtBash Sundays at The Contemporary Jewish Museum— Theme: Literacy

Join us for a day-long festival, accessible for all families, filled with art, stories, and fun! The theme will be celebrating literacy in partnership with San Francisco Public Libraries. GGMG will have a table at the event with a craft for kids and giveaways. Admission is free for two adults when attending with a child.

The CJM is committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all family audiences. This event is presented in partnership with Support for Families with Children with Disabilities and Blick Art Materials.

Looking forward to seeing many of you there!

DATE: Sunday, March 18
TIME: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
PLACE: 736 Mission St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.gmg.org/calendar/event/247514/2018/03/18

CAREERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

How to Have More Confidence at Work and as a Mom

Do you wish you felt more confident in your career or in your life outside of work? Whether you're currently working, thinking about returning to the workforce, or debating about whether or not to be a stay-at-home mom, this workshop will help you learn tools to manage self-doubt and fear and feel more confident in your own choices in your career and as a mom. Join three life coaches (Julie Houghton, Liz Applegate, and Paula Jenkins) for this free webinar! You are welcome to join us via phone or online and details for how to dial in will be sent to those who RSVP.

DATE: Friday, February 23
TIME: Noon to 1 p.m.
PLACE: Online webinar, please RSVP for details
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: www.gmg.org/calendar/event/259608/2018/02/23

Relax with Rainbow Meditation in the Financial District

As moms we know how overloaded our days can be from our work duties to family time at home. We are dedicated in both ways, but our self-care often gets neglected. We all need some quiet relaxing time in this hectic world. Think about taking an hour out of your busy workday to join us for a guided Rainbow Meditation originating in Depth Hypnosis. Feel fully supported and grounded, breaking the stress and absorbing peacefulness and tranquility of the present moment. This meditation will be led by Marija Djordjevic CDHP, and will be followed by a light snack. Limited to 10 moms, so sign up before tickets sell out!

DATE: Tuesday, February 27
TIME: 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.
PLACE: 465 California St.
COST: \$5

REGISTRATION: www.gmg.org



PLAYGROUPS

Prenatal Yoga at It's Yoga Kids

Calling all pregnant moms! Come meet other moms-to-be in this relaxing prenatal yoga class taught by Michelle Wing. Michelle will lead a 90-minute yoga session specifically tailored for pregnant women. Snacks will be provided after class for you to enjoy while mingling with other expectant mothers.

DATE: Sunday, February 4
TIME: 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
PLACE: 569 Ruger St.
COST: \$5

REGISTRATION: www.gmg.org/calendar/event/260467/2018/02/04



PARENT EDUCATION

Developmental milestones with Dr. Jin Lee, BabyNoggin CEO

The CDC reports 1 in 4 children under age 5 has developmental issues, which results in 1 million kids every year entering school with an undiagnosed disability. Parents must empower themselves with the correct tools and information to make sure their kids reach important milestones. Join Oxford-trained child psychologist and CEO of BabyNoggin Dr. Jin Lee in this informative session on child development. She will give parents tips, review goals, and provide tools for all parents to use.

Although this event is tailored to benefit toddlers and infants age 0-3, all are welcome! For more information visit www.babynoggin.com

DATE: Monday, February 12
TIME: 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: <https://www.gmg.org/calendar/event/263120/2018/02/12>

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS: NEIGHBORHOOD 7

If you live south of Potrero Hill or east of The Sunset, then Neighborhood Meetups 7 (NM7) is your neighborhood meetup group! We have members in Bayview, Bernal Heights, Candlestick Park, Crocker-Amazon, Glen Park, Excelsior, Mission Terrace, Ingleside, Oceanview, Outer Mission, Portola, Sunnyside, and beyond. Of course, any and all GGMG moms are welcome to attend our events!

The NM7 group hosts activities for moms and kids of all ages throughout the year. On Wednesday mornings you can find us at Sunnyside Playground, and we host many weekend family play dates at members' houses or at parks in the area. We also plan a monthly Moms' Night Out at a restaurant in one of our many neighborhoods. All our events are posted on the NM7 calendar at gmg.org, and you must join NM7 to see the events.

Our fabulous ambassadors, who are responsible for hosting and organizing our multitude of play

dates and Moms' Nights Out, include Amy Parke (Raymond & Louise), Jennifer Fish (Sierra), and Miho Yamaoka (Rachael & Francesca).

We are looking for a neighborhood director and for additional ambassadors to add to our team. Please reach out to yanina.markova@gmail.com if organizing fun events and meeting moms in your area sounds like something you would like to do!

Please RSVP for one of our upcoming events – we hope to meet you soon!



Neighborhood 7

Bernal Heights, Glen Park, Excelsior, Outer Mission, Mission Terrace, Ingleside, Sunnyside, Westwood, Visitacion Valley, Bayview, Portola, Crocker-Amazon, and surrounding neighborhoods.



Committee Spotlight: Member Support

Describe the personality of your committee.

While diverse, the Member Support Committee loves to help people, and doing so makes us happy. We all joined the team to find a place to play fairy godmother.

What types of activities or projects do you undertake?

Member Support reaches out to members undergoing tough times, like having a family member with medical problems, losing a job, or experiencing marital difficulties. We also keep a list of member-recommended resources, such as therapists. And our committee has run support groups for women with mood disorders and single moms.

How do you know when you are making a difference?

We love it when members email appreciation, even many months later. Or when they start helping others as well, in a cascading effect.

Who are your current volunteers?

Victoria Carradero, Stephanie Glier, Vicky Keston, Misa Perron-Burdick, Ceci Poggi, Gitanjali Rawat, and Rachel Watson.

What's next for Member Support?

In 2018, Member Support needs to replace volunteers who needed to move on to other projects. We have openings to support members posting on the forums, to vet the resource lists, and to run support groups. We'd love to see more members get involved in supporting their fellow moms by joining our group. Email member.support@ggmg.org.

"It is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest potential for doing good, both for oneself and others." –The Dalai Lama



A Fresh Start

Sometimes it feels like much is out of our control, from a family member's illness and children who don't listen to the sometimes toxic political environment. While we can't control everything, GGMG Member Support proposes a New Year's resolution to do our best to make a difference in areas that matter. Whether on the political, environmental, or local scene, you can make a difference as one person.

We challenge you this year to be that one person who tips the scale. One mom reaching out to a member who is overwhelmed could make a difference in her day. One person supporting a local shop could

change their viability. One volunteer at a school or nonprofit can help that program to make inroads. Absolutely, one person can have a huge effect. And the more of these people we have, the stronger our community becomes.

By helping others, the Dalai Lama reminds us that we help ourselves. We stop feeling helpless, and we start feeling good about ourselves. In our efforts to make a difference, we start to feel in control and we often bring others along in a domino effect. Please join Member Support in 2018 in making an impact in your community and your life.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee Events Past and Future

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee kicked off the new year by cosponsoring the Community Outreach Committee's Movie Night for the Homeless Prenatal Program on January 24. It was an amazing event, and our volunteers were thrilled to give every child a bilingual copy of *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox, a poetic book that strikes at the essential sameness of all people no matter how different they appear from the outside.

On Sunday, March 18, our committee will partner with the Contemporary Jewish Museum during its literacy-themed ArtBash event (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.). And on Monday, March 19, Dr. Allison Briscoe-Smith will return for Part 2 of "How To Talk To Kids About Race" at 7 p.m. RSVP for these and other exciting events via www.ggmg.org or on Facebook and join us!



Questions/comments/want to join our team? Give us a shout anytime at diversity@ggmg.org.

Resolve to Give Back!

With the winter holidays wrapped up and the new year underway, now is a great time to consider volunteering with GGMG. There are more than 40 open positions across multiple committees, so there is definitely an opportunity that fits your schedule and interests.

This organization would not be what it is today without the talented women who work so hard to make it a success. Join the team to not only give back but also to make new friends and have fun!

For more information on GGMG's open volunteer positions, please contact the Recruiting Committee at volunteer@ggmg.org.

Behind the Scenes of GGMG Operations

Last year, the Operations Committee focused on hosting our nine monthly meetings more cost-efficiently and conveniently for volunteers. In 2018, we are reducing our calendar meetings to six in order to make it more convenient for our volunteers. Meetings in 2018 will be held at the JCC on **March 19, May 7, July 9, September 4, and November 5**. Mark your calendars!

In 2017, the Operations Committee planned two events to show our appreciation for GGMG's fabulous volunteers: a dinner in May at Dosa and one in November at Le Colonial. Generous donors and GGMG community partners made both dinners enormous successes, providing raffle prizes and stuffed goody bags for all attendees. Want in on the fun? Join GGMG as a volunteer! Contact volunteer@ggmg.org for information on open positions within the organization.

Are You Taking Advantage of Your GGMG Membership?

Whether you are a new member or a longtime veteran, the Membership Committee wants to thank you for your loyalty to GGMG. Remember to take advantage of ALL your membership benefits!

For the amazing list of partner perks offered by JCCSF, Peekadoodle, Recess, and UrbanSitter, visit www.gmg.org/partnerships.html. Additionally, download the entire list of local business discounts on [gmg.org](http://www.gmg.org).

Use GGMG to meet other moms and families face-to-face and turn online connections into real-life friendships. Seven Neighborhood Meetup subgroups hold events regularly all over the city; join your nearest neighborhood subgroup on [gmg.org](http://www.gmg.org) to receive more information about what's going on near you! For expectant moms and mothers of infants, GGMG playgroups can be a lifesaver. You can find your Due Date Subgroup by going to www.gmg.org/groups.

Our rockstar Community and Member Support Committees facilitate donation drives and support members in need. Know another mom—even yourself—who could use a little help? Reach out to membersupport@gmg.org; that's what they are here for!

Thank you for being part of THE BEST mom community in the city. Questions? Email membership@gmg.org.



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Learn more and join at BayAreaDiscoveryMuseum.org/membership

I ♥ Mom

Looking Back with a New Perspective

By Jessica Franklin

My mom was an attachment parent before that was a thing. I slept in her bed. She carried me everywhere. She once told me, in all seriousness, that strollers are a mild form of child abuse. We were always on the go together—checking out new places, attending festivals, carnivals, exhibits. If there's a special event in the Bay Area, I've probably been to it—before I was 5. Even though she has a master's degree and taught college-level math, she stopped working to stay home with her kids. She was an avid member of La Leche League (LLL). At that time, breastfeeding was somewhat out of fashion, but she was a fierce advocate of it and still reminisces about how much she looked forward to the monthly LLL meetings.

My mom was also strict. She was a firm believer in the word “no.” While my feelings were incredibly understood, my wishes were rarely fulfilled: “I understand how much you must really want that. It must be so frustrating not to be able to have it! But no.”

While my peers were growing up eating Chef Boyardee and Pop Rocks and gleefully watching cartoon characters die a violent death every Saturday morning, my mom served mostly vegetables—sugar was forbidden—and I didn't watch television until I was a preteen.

Once I was old enough to make some of my own decisions—or at least savvy enough to be able to hide some of my decisions from my parents—I rebelled. (Moderately. I was still the child of hippie parents, raised on social consciousness and tofu on Telegraph Avenue.) I wanted sugar, and lots of it. I ate entire bags of candy between the bus stop and my house. And I wanted television, all the time. I watched a steady stream of late '80s sitcoms.

In considering my own parenting, I was confident I would do things differently. I never planned to stay home with my kids. The idea of spending all day with two demanding humans who couldn't hold up their end of the conversation wasn't appealing to me (and we couldn't afford it anyway). I'm not the most patient person and felt my kids would actually benefit from spending time with adults who had chosen little people as a career. As for breastfeeding, I wasn't particularly worked up about it: if I could, I would, and if I couldn't, thank goodness for formula! I had no interest in LLL or its militant beliefs. I planned to rely heavily on strollers in getting out and about. I also didn't expect to be out and about that much... keeping the kids on a firm schedule, with naps always at home (with me or a nanny), was important for our

sanity. I remembered vividly how much all that empathizing drove me crazy (if you really UNDERSTOOD how I feel, Mom, you'd let me HAVE IT!), so I figured I'd come up with a better response. And moderation! I hoped my kids wouldn't ever find themselves wanting to binge but instead would learn to make sensible choices about food, television, and other “treats” and be able to enjoy everything in moderation.



But as most parents know, the best-laid plans are... just plans. Reality hits hard, and good intentions don't get you through the day. Turns out my kids aren't great at moderation, and while I have never banned anything, it has been easier to avoid some things altogether (like screen time on

...now I can see some of my mom's choices in a different light.

school days) than to try to negotiate their not-so-sensible limits. And the ninth time they demand something totally irrational (“I really wish I could go to Target and buy something new every day!”) I find myself repeating, “I'm sure you do. I understand your feelings. But no.”

And now I can see some of my mom's choices in a different light. It turns out we were always on the go because I (like some other children I know) was not a good sleeper, and being outside, on the go, was the only way to keep me quiet and to keep my mom from losing her mind. She was a fierce supporter of LLL not because she was rabid about breastfeeding (well, maybe partly because of that), but because it was her GGGM. Back then, there were no discussion forums, or moms groups, or Facebook. There was no easy way to plan coffee and playground meetups. She was lonely, stuck at home with two kids and a mostly absent partner, and LLL provided one of the few places where she knew she could reliably find a gathering of other sympathetic mothers.

Ultimately, she raised two balanced, happy, thoughtful people, mostly by herself, without the Internet or the network of support I'm so lucky to have now. And she has a great relationship with her kids and now with her grandkids. It seems like her choices weren't that bad after all. If I have ended up parenting a lot more like her than I had planned, I should probably consider myself lucky. ❖

Jessica lives in San Francisco with her two 6-year-olds and her husband. She still has an unhealthy love of sugar and definitely blames her mom for that.



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