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# PERSPECTIVES

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LETTER FROM  
THE EDITOR:

C'est La Vie

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is a writer and editor living in Cole Valley with three children, two cats, and against all reason, hopefully soon a dog.

The pandemic curtailed travel for most of us who were fortunate enough to have the ability to pleasure-venture in pre-COVID days. As our exterior worlds shrunk, a different

“...post-COVID travel has been a poignant, bittersweet, and deeply meaningful opportunity to witness parts of myself I either lost touch with, or didn’t know existed.”

version of many of us coalesced, although in some cases our essential characters became more concentrated, even ossified. With our routines in place, it became easy to lose perspective. For me, post-COVID travel has been a poignant, bittersweet, and deeply meaningful opportunity to witness parts of myself I either lost touch with, or didn’t know existed.

My husband passed away right before the pandemic and shortly after our first big, exotic family trip, to London, in 2019. Besides some local California adventures with friends and a handful of long-distance trips to see my parents, I didn’t travel during much during the pandemic. But since the world has opened, I’ve taken two big international trips as a newly single

mom of three kids. I’ve seen the worst parts of myself take hold—threats to send complaining kids back stateside, angry, hurtful words to my most challenging child—but I’ve also discovered aspects of myself that either didn’t exist in my pre-COVID/pre-widowhood life, or that I’ve developed since I last dusted off my passport. I’m now more patient with travel snafus like delayed transportation and improperly translated meals. I’m more flexible with my plans. (I don’t need to plot out every day to try to stuff in enough activities to feel like I’ve gotten my money’s worth on expensive vacations). Although I’m not the infinitely patient, zen, and spontaneous traveler I’d like to be, I’m beginning to better understand that pleasurable moments can emerge organically, on their own timelines, without me needing to control or plan every part of the process. Equally important, I can do this on my own, not always happily, but always (so far) successfully, and with a confidence I didn’t imagine having, back when I was half of a parenting couple. I can move three children across the world on my own and feel confident in my ability to do so, even if I’m not always sticking to the plan. I still have a lot of problems with the woman I see in the mirror, but I like this side of her, and hope to see more.

Our writers this month nudge us out of our familiar viewpoints.

Christine Chen takes a twist on traditional back-to-school shopping with a sampling of products that may have a special appeal to neurodiverse children. Julie Houghton examines the growth mindset, sharing how we can ensure we are flexible, adaptable, and able to shift our perspectives to those that help us achieve, rather than hold us back. We are also republishing Jennifer Kuhr’s 2017 article on the perspectives of women who became mothers at widely varying ages. There are a nearly infinite number of viewpoints in this world, and we are excited to bring you just a few of them.

Sonya Abrams

HOUSEKEEPING

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**THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY:** Heatwaves without aircon; COVID and camping; releasing my book; entertaining, COVID, and international travel.

LETTER FROM  
THE BOARD:

Two Women, Two Vastly Different Perspectives

By Liz Nakamoto Singer



Liz has two kids and lives in Oakland. She recently returned to the workforce in the middle of the pandemic, because that seemed like a great choice at the time.

been the start of a joke: A Bay Area snowflake and a Trump supporter walk into a bar...but it wasn’t. It was just two women, packing up a kitchen, filling the hours of mindless work with idle chat.

Two women. Two mothers. Two Christians. We both grew up in rural areas. We’re both college educated. We both moved to California for career opportunities. On paper, we’re close to the same person, and conversation flowed freely and with a lot of laughter. And yet, from my perspective, this country is running headlong into its own destruction so fast that all I want to do is catch the first boat out of town. From her perspective, we’re finally getting things back to the way they’re supposed to be.

The difference between us is our life experiences—similar on paper but not in nature. My rural-American experiences of

I am moving to Europe and I will not miss the U.S. I know that’s an awful thing to say—to be clear, it’s a pretty awful thing to feel—but there it is. I will miss family and friends, of course. But the place itself? Not even a little bit.

Last week during my move preparation, I had a conversation with someone who was about as diametrically opposed to everything I believe to be true and right as could be. She was absolutely shocked that anyone would want to leave this wonderful country of ours. It could have

racism flabbergasted her—as a white kid in her mostly-white town, she didn’t see racism “in action.” College surrounded me with a zillion different kinds of people, a thousand new thoughts and perspectives. It surrounded her with other kids who looked and thought and sounded a lot like her. Marriage

“And so here we are, two people so similar in background. One running as fast as she can from this country out of fear and disgust. The other embracing this ‘new vision of the country’ with the highest of hopes.”

to a non-Christian divorcé certainly changed my perspective on marriage and the many ways a family can look. Hers—more of the Beaver Cleaver variety—only solidified her perception of “normal and right.”

And so here we are, two people so similar in background. One running as fast as she can from this country out of fear and disgust. The other embracing this “new vision of the country” with the highest of hopes. It’s all in how you look at it, I guess.

However you look at it, wonderful mamas of GGMG, I will be sending you hope and hugs from across the ocean. I know GGMG’s got your back, whatever may be on the horizon. I only hope I find a mom community as loving and vibrant as this one on the other side of the pond.

Liz Nakamoto Singer

COVER OUTTAKES



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

Cover photo by Mini Anna Photography  
Model: Bradley (7)

# The History of Glen Park

By Sonya Abrams



Glen Park is known as one of the most family-friendly neighborhoods in San Francisco. Many parents have sought refuge in the renovated playground, hiking trails, and child-friendly climbing rocks spread over the 70-acre Glen Canyon, the heart of the district. But how many of us know its history? It's fascinating and offers a fresh perspective on a well-known hamlet. Glen Park housed the first commercial dynamite plant in the United States in 1868, near the site of the current rec center. It was short-lived, however, as a year later, an explosion obliterated the plant and killed two people. In 1889, the Crocker Real Estate Company attempted to woo homebuyers by installing "a mini amusement park with an aviary, a mini zoo—bears, elephants and monkeys—a bowling alley, and, for extra thrills, hot air balloon rides, and an intrepid tightrope walker who performed on a wire stretched across the canyon," writes neighborhood councilmember Jeanne Alexander. The neighborhood drew more attention in 1898 when a 145-acre zoo and gardens opened, which attracted as many as 15,000 people a week. After the 1906 earthquake, displaced San Franciscans flooded the area in a frenzy to build houses, continuing its boom. In the '60s, the neighborhood fought off efforts to construct a major freeway, a decision that allowed it to grow as a robust community still flourishing today.

*Sonya is a local mom to three who, despite her Cole Valley zip code, loves spending weekend afternoons in Glen Canyon Park with friends snacking on chips and guac from Canyon Market.*

# Vertical Perspectives

By Sonya Abrams



San Francisco is a vertical city, and the reward for the exertion of climbing our peaks isn't only rock-hard calves but breathtaking views. When the summer fog parts, take a moment to get high and appreciate our lofty spaces from a fresh perspective.

Among the plethora of staircases dotting the city, the **Farnsworth Steps** off the beautifully cobblestoned Edgewood Ave. in Cole Valley are among the best, quiet and shaded, with a child-sized rope swing at the top.

**Golden Gate Heights Park** on 12th Ave. and Rockridge is one of the lesser-utilized spaces in town but recently rehabbed, with a new playground and sweeping views west.

A climb to the top of **Strawberry Hill** in Golden Gate Park's Stow Lake will reward your family with beautiful views up to the Marin Headlands and south towards the Sunset. If the weather proves uncooperative for an outdoor excursion, hop aboard the elevator to the **Hamon Observation Tower at the de Young Museum**, which is free and offers 360-degree views of the city and Marin County.

And for a treat, hike about a mile down the **Lands End** path and then hook a left to find the Lands End Labyrinth, on a precipice jutting out into the Bay, with unparalleled Golden Gate Bridge views. But keep your fingers crossed that it's still there; the labyrinth has been repeatedly destroyed by vandals over the years.

*Sonya is a Cole Valley mom of three and an avid hiker, spending many hours each week seeking out the best views in the Bay Area.*

# Sensory Processing Issues

By Colleen Morgan

As mothers, we experience firsthand how incredible the human mind and body are, rapidly adapting to the demands of pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood. Then we watch with joy (and sometimes disgust) as our child explores the world around them—seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting things for the first time. We take for granted that every day our brains process and integrate countless amounts of information using our seven senses to understand what's happening inside and outside our bodies.

## But what happens if a child experiences too much or not enough stimulation through their senses?

If a child's brain has difficulty processing and integrating internal and external sensory information, it may leave them feeling suddenly and intensely overwhelmed and confused. This is described as a sensory processing issue.

If a child is overwhelmed by their environment, they may respond by shutting down in the form of a meltdown, an inconsolable tantrum seemingly out of the child's control that will only stop when the child is exhausted. A shift from a quiet car to a bright, loud grocery store could trigger such a response.

Initiating a fight-or-flight response is another reaction to sensory overload. A child who bolts through preschool doors into a busy street, oblivious to the dangers, may be fleeing a stressful sensory environment. They may be desperately seeking a calm space to soothe their sensory system.

A child may also lash out or become aggressive because they are overwhelmed by their environment or is not allowed to receive the additional stimulation they require to feel calm and regulated.

## What are the signs?

A child experiencing sensory processing challenges may exhibit radical, intense shifts in mood. Generally, these difficulties are classified as hypersensitive or hyposensitive, although one child can experience both.

A hypersensitive or sensory-avoiding child is extremely reactive to sensory stimuli and can find it uncomfortable and overwhelming. Examples include:

- being unable to tolerate bright lights or loud noises
- screaming when hands or face get messy
- refusing to wear certain clothes because they are too tight or itchy
- being overly fearful of swings and playground equipment

A hyposensitive or sensory-seeking child seeks out additional sensory stimuli. Examples include:

- constantly touching, leaning into, or crashing into things or people

- an extremely high tolerance for pain
- seeking jumping and crashing games or sports
- not understanding their own strength

While the above lists are by no means exhaustive, they provide a small snapshot into how an everyday activity like getting dressed, brushing teeth, or sitting through a meal may upset a child struggling with sensory integration.

## How can we help?

A child with sensory processing difficulties may exhibit behaviors that are often perceived as an oversized reaction to a change in environment. These behaviors are often mislabeled as clumsy, picky, or hyperactive, and can be a barrier to daily living, learning, and making friends.

To help, we must first acknowledge that labeling children by their behaviors does more harm than good. When we do this, that label becomes part of their identity. *I'm oversensitive. I'm shy. I'm impulsive.* Instead, parents, caregivers, and teachers can identify the precursors or triggers to these behaviors and create strategies to support a child in everyday situations. For example, a child who is sensory-avoiding may benefit from short, quiet rest breaks throughout the day or dim lighting while playing and learning. A sensory-seeking child may feel more calm and regulated when completing homework while squeezing a squishy stress ball or listening to rock music on their headphones.

Often, an occupational therapist can provide sensory integration therapy, either in school or in private practice. This will teach a child—and crucially, that child's adults—how to manage their sensory input in various situations so they can feel more secure and focused to learn and play.

As a child's brain matures, their sensory processing struggles tend to improve, although they may not go away entirely. This improvement may reveal potential sensory superpowers because according to Dr. Gail Saltz, author of *The Power of Different*, "[T]he very things that can cause our lives to be difficult...often come with unique skills and aptitudes." With the correct support and accommodations, a child will learn strategies to cope—and thrive—with sensory processing issues.

*Colleen is a hypersensitive adult who naps as a coping strategy, avoids large gatherings, and wears cool sunglasses most of the time. She has a hyposensitive child who crashes into, jumps on, and touches everything.*





# I Love My Fat Body

By H.B. Terrell

My fraught relationship with my body began when Mrs. Angell decided to weigh each student and announce the names of the lightest and heaviest kids. Everyone thought it would be Jeremy, but I was the heaviest kid in kindergarten that year. I remember the wide-eyed, slack-jawed faces of my friends gasping when our teacher mouthed my name. This was the last day of school, and after the big announcement, we all marched over to Mrs. Angell’s backyard for a popsicle party. As I sat alone on the stoop, mine melted off the stick and fell onto the cement. I remember thinking, “I don’t deserve a popsicle. I’m fat.” I don’t know where that voice came from, but it has never left me.

I have known I am fat for 40 years. In high school, my bully never let me forget it. In college, I developed an eating disorder and lost 60 pounds in a few months but felt like I was passing for thin—knowing that the weight always came back. Well into my recovery, I discovered the community of fat activists who saved my sanity, if not my life. The readers and writers at Shapely Prose nurtured my rebellion: I began to

“I can look at my reflection in a mirror and think about how I feel in my clothing before I evaluate how I look in it.”

question assumptions I’d held and to interrogate the unexamined ideas of those around me. I was finally able to accept my nonconforming body, make peace with it, be defiant when faced with discrimination, and to internally decouple the word “fat” from its negative connotations so that it was an adjective, not an insult. All of this changed when I tried to become pregnant in my fourth decade. For five years, as I failed to get pregnant and then miscarried pregnancies, my body felt like an obstacle.

When I did eventually become pregnant, my body changed inside and out. I was amazed that I had grown a new organ. I loved my belly as it stretched and bloomed, and enjoyed the feeling of taking up space and not needing to apologize for it. I no longer felt the need to shrink myself to fit into bus seats



or to “highlight my assets” with clothing. Comfort was priority one. This was something more than acceptance. It was release.

Everything transformed again when my daughter was born. She craved my skin, my body. She needed it to survive. I found myself in a place of wonder and awe that my physical presence was so necessary to this small person I barely knew but already loved. Now that she is a toddler, she no longer needs my body in the way she used to, but she takes pleasure in long hugs and comparing our two round tummies. She snuggles into my fat body with a comfort that looks like bliss. I am soft, like a down-filled comforter. I am me, mommy.

My daughter has no knowledge that different bodies are valued differently in the wider world, instead, loving everything about

me. When I see my reflection in my daughter’s eyes, I want nothing more than to shield her from the judgments she will encounter in social circles. Whatever her size, I want my daughter to be kind to everybody, no matter what kind of body they inhabit. Since I can’t shield her from the shame and unkindness others may expose her to, I take great care to use language with intention, going so far as to let my voice rise happily when I read about the “big fat caterpillar” in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, to signal that this is a natural and joyous state for a creature about to transition to a “beautiful butterfly.”

I, too, feel that I have reached a natural and joyous state in my big fat body. In my adult life, I have weighed as little as 120 pounds, and as much as 230 pounds. I have come to rest in this place where I don’t care if an outfit highlights the roundness of my stomach or if flat shoes reveal my thick ankles. I can look at my reflection in a mirror and think about how I feel in my clothing before I evaluate how I look in it. I would rather wear something I can play in than something I can pose in, and it feels like relief. My body is round and soft and good for cuddles. It is also healthy and hearty and worthy of celebration for all it can do and has done to carry me through life and to create new life.

*H.B. holds an MLIS from San Jose State University, worked for 10 years in finance, another 10 years in libraries, and is currently a grant writer. She likes reading, science, and gentle walks in wild spaces. She has lived in San Francisco for the past 13 years, and lives with her spouse and daughter in the Excelsior.*

# Anna Gracia

Photo by Katya Mizrahi Photography

Anna is the author of the YA novel *Boys I Know*, a contemporary coming-of-age story about an Asian American teen navigating sex, love, and familial expectations in the predominantly white Midwest. It has been described as “Judy Blume’s *Forever* for the modern age” and tackles issues like racism, gender roles, and emergency contraceptives. You can find out more about her other upcoming novels at [anna-gracia.com](http://anna-gracia.com).

**Why was it important to you to write a teen book about sex and dating?**  
I think there’s this tendency in society to dismiss the concerns and interests of teenage girls, especially when it comes to anything deemed “dramatic.” The fact is, dating and sex is a huge part of a lot of teens’ lives and I wanted to write a story that accurately reflects those realities—things like broken condoms and boyfriends who aren’t necessarily supportive of a girl’s bodily autonomy.

**Are you worried about the controversy your book might create?**  
When I started this story, we were only arguing over whether Planned Parenthood should receive any tax dollars. Now, only a handful of years later, all reproductive access is on the brink of collapse and both healthcare and the right to privacy are being dismantled before our eyes. If we’re scared to talk about a *fictional* book, how on Earth can we be prepared to fight back against the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*? I’m not pretending to be a hero or anything; I just think speaking about the right to control our own bodies is literally the *least* each of us can do.

**Do you think books can replace sex education?**  
No! Especially not fiction, which doesn’t always showcase healthy choices. But books are definitely an important resource, especially for teens who don’t have access to anything else. Lots of parents are unwilling or unable to discuss these topics, and with the diminishing state of sex ed in schools, it’s critical that teens have safe spaces to explore these ideas. That’s why, as an author, I try my best to straddle the line between realistic and helpful, so that readers don’t feel preached to, but also aren’t inclined to mimic destructive behaviors.

**What would you tell parents who are hesitant to let their teens read your book?**  
I would ask them to question what exactly it is they’re afraid of. With all the other media their kids are likely consuming, between TV, movies, video games, and the internet, I want them to seriously evaluate the messaging that’s already being conveyed and whether a book that explores both the benefits and drawbacks of sex in relationships is all that more “dangerous” than those. I would also ask parents to evaluate honestly the amount of violence their kids consume in their media and whether they have equal reservations about it than they do with any kind of sexual content.

**Have you let your kids read it?**  
I don’t believe in telling kids they *can’t* read things because it only either fortifies their resolve to seek out the banned material or it discourages them from stretching beyond what they think they’re capable of reading. That being said, I don’t think my kids (still in elementary school) are currently old enough to understand or appreciate the themes in my book, but I leave that decision up to them as it sits on our shelf with all the other books. So far, they’ve held off.

**What are some other fictional books you’d recommend that explore sex in a healthy and helpful way for teens?**  
I love *Have A Little Faith in Me* by Sonia Hartl, that explores sex in relation to Christianity in a funny and relatable way. Also *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malindo Lo, which showcases queer love at the intersection of race and history.





# Abortion

With Dr. Pratima Gupta



Dr. Gupta is an obstetrician/gynecologist practicing in San Diego, California, and currently works at UCSD and Planned Parenthood, where she provides abortion care and comprehensive reproductive health. On the Board of Directors of Close the Gap California, which works towards getting more women elected to state office, she also serves as the legislative director of the California Democratic Party Women’s Caucus and is a graduate of the Emerge California training program. She previously served as the vice chair of the San Francisco Democratic County Central Committee and as the medical director of St. James Infirmary. In addition to chasing after two young children (ages 5 and 9), she is a triathlete.

We spoke with Dr. Pratima Gupta to get her perspective on the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*, and how to have difficult conversations with our littles about this topic. To read more of Dr. Gupta’s backstory and her own experience of having an abortion, please see resources at end.

**As an abortion provider, how are you doing currently?**  
Feeling angry, grieving, and a little defeated. Like many of you, I went through this range of emotions (and so many more

that are not appropriate to print in a family magazine) when I learned of the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*. We know this is about so much more than the right to an abortion. Now, more than anything, I feel resolved to fight for our future and for our children. I tried to process how to discuss this. How do I answer my kids’ questions? So. Many. Hard. Questions. Especially how to answer them in an accurate and age-appropriate way. But I also kept considering the many questions my children weren’t asking. After all, this decision is really about their ability to be their full, authentic selves in this world. Like everything in parenting, your approach is just that: YOURS. And like the decision whether to continue a pregnancy, that is best left between you and your family.

**As a mom and OB/GYN, how do you approach your children’s questions about abortion?**  
I believe my children deserve honesty and openness. I provide full scope sexual and reproductive health care including Pap smears, contraception, delivering babies, gynecologic surgery and providing abortion care. I have explained to my children that, at my work, I give people the best presents—life, power, and control.

Seeing how easily our children are influenced by the media and their friends, I would much prefer that they get the truth and accurate information from me, rather than some titillating tidbit from whatever show they are streaming. I would like to dispel the myths from their friends and educate them with medical evidence and facts. Now when I ask my children, “When someone is pregnant, who should decide if they stay pregnant?” Their answer is simple, “Obviously the person should decide.” This is my approach, but you may not be comfortable having such an open discussion—maybe it isn’t developmentally appropriate, maybe it is against your cultural traditions, or maybe you just don’t want to. And that is OKAY.

**When did you start talking to them about it?**  
When they learned to speak, we used anatomically correct language for body parts rather than childhood slang. I remember once getting a call from my daughter’s preschool that she has been playing with pink Play-Doh and said, “This looks like a vaginal!” I thanked the school for calling me and told them to tell her I was proud of her. It is vital to have early and frequent conversations with our children about how their bodies function and change over time. Also important is instilling the concept of keeping themselves safe, giving consent, and living by example. I have also incorporated the justice-oriented focus of my

physician advocacy efforts with the emphasis on fairness. This is a concept almost all children can relate to and prioritize. Discussions at our dinner table include, “Do you think it is fair that a person in Arizona cannot control their own body?”

**How do you respond if they ask whether life begins at conception?**  
Some people may hold the belief that life begins at conception; however I clarify that this is not a person. A person is breathing, communicating, and trusting me to take care of them. The person who deserves my focus and medical expertise is the pregnant one in my exam room who does or does not want to be pregnant.

**Why should we talk about this ruling with our children?**  
Showing up and protesting with your children demonstrate to them that we all have a responsibility to speak out and speak up. It is also a family bonding activity, if you will, as a shared experience to discuss your values and what is important to your child. Together you can discuss what you see, listen, and empower them with the life skill of turning fear and rage into collective action.

**Given the fraught political climate surrounding abortion, how did you decide to provide this medical procedure?**  
I see abortion care as part of comprehensive reproductive health care that I have incorporated into my OB/GYN practice. I did pursue a subspecialty in complex family planning so that I have an emphasis on community health, increasing access, and advocacy education/mentorship.

During my medical training, I was incensed to see abortion care being carved out and siloed in terms of insurance, malpractice coverage, and hospital privileges. Unfortunately, but not unsurprisingly, to this day, those who provide abortion care are looked down upon by society and our own medical colleagues.

**As a provider, what far-reaching implications for women’s health do you foresee happening with the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*?**  
The deliberate attack on historically disenfranchised individuals will continue—Black and brown folks, LGBTQ+ folks, young people, immigrants, low income folks. They took an unfair burden of the pandemic and, frankly, all health disparities, and they will continue to suffer now with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and whatever else is next with this decrease in access. I have seen lots of patients from outside of California travel here as a reproductive sanctuary where they can get abortion care without a mandatory waiting period and no parental consent.

However, these are the folks with resources who are savvy enough to book travel and have the funds to do so. These people are brave and are sometimes taking immense risk. I shudder to think about the countless others who are now forced into pregnancy and childbirth. And what if your fetus is affected with an anomaly, or you have been sexually assaulted, or break your bag of water at 16 weeks and get infected? The far-reaching implications and potential impact of abortion restrictions can be devastating. All people need timely access to safe reproductive health care options, and potentially life-saving procedures.

**What can concerned individuals do to help?**  
As you have likely heard before, elections have consequences. Therefore, if you are eligible, I encourage you to vote, help others

register to vote and get their ballots in. If you have the resources, consider a donation. Part of teaching our children to be good community members is instilling in them the value of giving. Some organizations I would recommend that are underfunded and get less attention are Sister Song, National Network of Abortion Funds, Abortion Care Network, and National Advocates for Pregnant Women. Independent abortion clinics do the vast majority of abortion care in this country and don’t get the same resources and attention at other sites. Check out [exposefakeclinics.com](http://exposefakeclinics.com) for their wish lists.

## Resources

- National Network of Abortion Funds
- Expose Fake Clinics
- Sister Song
- Abortion Care Network
- [parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/how-to-talk-about-reproductive-rights-in-terms-simple-enough-for-a-child-to-understand](https://parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/how-to-talk-about-reproductive-rights-in-terms-simple-enough-for-a-child-to-understand)
- [whatsanabortionbook.com](https://whatsanabortionbook.com)
- [www.romper.com/p/im-pregnant-im-a-mom-im-also-abortion-provider](https://www.romper.com/p/im-pregnant-im-a-mom-im-also-abortion-provider)
- [longestshortesttime.com/tag/doctors-as-patients](https://longestshortesttime.com/tag/doctors-as-patients)



NEW ARRIVALS



Kimberly Cody  
Katty Guillen

Baby Luke Gene  
Baby Bruin Strong

Congratulations to **Kimberly Cody**! She will be getting joyful moments captured by Anna Munandar from Mini Anna Photography. Anna specializes in capturing joy and every milestone in your family, from birth to college. See her work at [minianna.com](http://minianna.com).

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



Write for  
GGMG  
Magazine!

We are seeking talented writers to contribute to our bi-monthly publication. Write on topics of your choosing and join a wonderful team of moms committed to giving back to our community. If you're interested in learning more about writing for *GGMG Magazine* and the benefits volunteerism carries, please email [editor@ggmg.org](mailto:editor@ggmg.org).

Also seeking copy editors, designers, and photographers.

The San Francisco Bay Area has a multitude of women who have excelled in their careers and are making an impact on their local communities. Every issue, *GGMG Magazine* highlights one of these women and dives into the details of how they started out, what their organization is doing now, and how they'd like to move forward.

Dawn Hope

Interviewed by contributing writer Alissa Harrison

Dawn Hope is the proprietor of Living Room Plant Co. in Pacifica, specializing in houseplants, art, and workshops. Dawn is an inspirational catalyst to ignite learning, encouragement, and growth for the future. She invests in and gains insights from the next generation, which she has cleverly integrated into strategic decisions. They remain the backbone of her business, which opened at the start of the pandemic.

What was the inspiration behind starting your business?

I was at an age when my children were older and hungry to start a business, so I offered myself the same advice I gave my kids—I asked myself where I was showing up in life. And if we ask ourselves that, then we know where we will be most fulfilled. I have always shown up for plants.

I lean on my adult children. They are my cheerleaders and an invaluable part of my team. They really stepped up in a lot of ways. They get to see my vulnerability. I get to see their strengths. It's a wonderful family experience. It just started as a huge goal and we broke it down into tiny pieces. Within each piece of the process, we built confidence in ourselves.

How does employing high school students fit into your business strategy?

As a parent, we think we are going to be teaching tiny humans. It's humbling to realize we are the students. I recruit heavily from the local high school because I love employing young people. They keep me in a growth mindset. We figured out business strategies together. This business wouldn't be what it is if it were just my ideas.

Never ever underestimate how smart, productive, and creative young people can be. They helped build this business through a pandemic. I couldn't have done it without them. They bring so much life and many ideas. It's beautiful to feel that empowerment. I sometimes can't even house the gratitude.

At night when I go home, I think about these young people growing and learning and what they've brought to the table, especially during the pandemic. It's a very scary time and they showed up—for each other and for their community—in this tiny way with house plants.

What else would you like to explore?

Plant people are a special motley crew. I love plant nerds. I love meeting people with whom you may never connect except through the love of plants. Especially the specific type of plant. It comes down to connecting with people, growing, and learning.



Dawn and the pioneering Living Room Plant Co. family (L to R): Jun Stephens, Edward Braun, Taylor Hope, Dawn Hope, Nicholas Hope

I love offering workshops, educating, and connecting with people of all ages. We work a lot with schools as I was a substitute teacher for many years prior. I have connections with all the public schools in our area. We've done workshops and events, and we've highlighted and given shoutouts to local schools.

It's very fulfilling for young people to do things on their own. Get their hands dirty. Learn about something that they can take home and watch grow. It's not one and done. We like to say plants are the gift that keeps on living. It's a nice start to something you can then continue to learn from.

What are some vulnerabilities you've seen in your customers during the pandemic?

People come in bearing the world, stress, and trauma. We connect with our customers helping them find what makes them happy and brings them relief. They could take a bit of joy home with them. I love being able to pass on what I've learned, but selfishly, I love learning. I learn something from my customers every day because it's not something you can ever stop. We're learners until we leave this planet.

That's what gets me through the day. I love having this little shop during this very challenging time because I can provide a safe place where people walk into the door and feel safe. They're surrounded by plants and by human beings that care, are compassionate, and want to connect with them to help them find things that bring them peace and joy. It is so much more than just a plant shop.

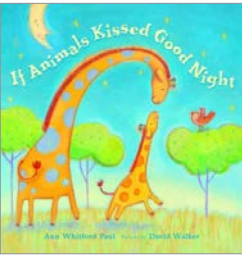
Alissa is mom of 3- and 5-year-old boys and is building out her portfolio, [AlissaHarrison.com](http://AlissaHarrison.com). Alissa enjoys connecting with other strong, empowering women who lead by example, expressing the passion, dedication, and courage to share their talents with their community, thereby helping others grow. Have a recommendation or would you like to be interviewed? Email her at [alissaggmgmag@gmail.com](mailto:alissaggmgmag@gmail.com).



# Identifying a Character’s Perspective Builds Empathy

By Laure Latham

Reading about characters with distinct viewpoints gives children an opportunity to identify the character’s perspective and live there for a while. Noticing a character’s perspective is a good first step in noticing our own as well as those of other people in our lives. As the saying goes, walking a mile in another person’s shoes builds understanding and empathy. Happy reading!



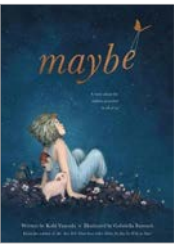
## If Animals Kissed Goodnight

Written by Ann Whitford Paul, illustrated by David Walker  
Even if they can’t say words yet, young children will enjoy the poetry and rhymes of this sweet book that shows situations where various animals kiss good night like we humans do. Beyond learning about social behaviors, little ones will also discover a number of animals, animal baby names, animal body parts, and animal sounds. The star of the book is the sloth and her cub, slowly...very slowly...kissing good night. **Ages: 0 to 2 years**



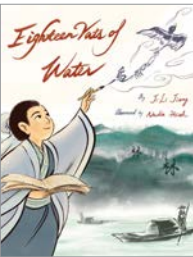
## The Day the Crayons Quit

Written by Drew Daywalt, illustrated by Oliver Jeffers  
A perfect illustration of looking at life from a different perspective, this story stars a box of crayons that quit. Tired of coloring bodies of water (blue), outlining (black) or being the true color of the sun (yellow and orange), the crayons want a change. The crayons’ letters to Duncan, the little boy who owns them, are hilarious and will make any preschooler seriously think about being more creative with crayons next time. **Ages: 3 to 5 years**



## Maybe: A Story About the Endless Potential in All of Us

Written by Kobi Yamada, illustrated by Gabriella Barouch  
Why are you here and what could you possibly do? Faced with the challenges of life and school, older kids may start wondering about their future. Should they strive to fit in? Be true to themselves? This book is a little gem of a story on everybody’s uniqueness and how children can learn to embrace who they are to achieve what they want in life. It’s also realistic in that it doesn’t sugarcoat everything, but for anybody who’s struggling, it delivers a wonderful message of hope. **Ages: 4 to 8 years**



## Eighteen Vats of Water

Written by Ji-Li Jiang, illustrated by Nadia Hsieh  
Xian strives to become a great calligrapher like his father, but this particular skill takes a lot of time to master and Xian gets impatient when he notices his slow progress. That’s when his father tells the story of a master calligrapher who practiced enough that he turned the water in eighteen vats completely black with ink (from rinsing his brush in the water). In our world where instant gratification is the norm, this story shines a different light on what it means to be patient and diligent. Bonus: this book was edited by Creston Books, an independent book publisher based in Oakland. **Ages: 7 to 11 years**

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

# Perspectives on Parenting

By Gail Cornwall

Three books feature three distinct perspectives on parenting: a grown child reflecting on a job poorly done, a clinical psychologist who assesses teens, and mothers who considered abortion.

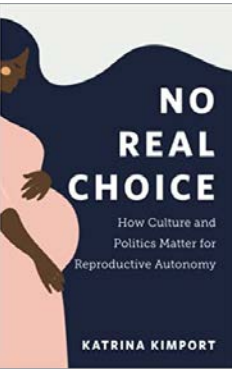


## Small Fry

My sister gave me Lisa Brennan-Jobs’ bombshell memoir about the author’s father, Steve Jobs, several Christmases ago, but it sat on my bedside table until recently. I didn’t anticipate it being, at its core, a book about parenting. Unflinching and eviscerating, *Small Fry* is replete with cautionary tales, a catalog of resentments illuminating “what not to do.” I identified with Brennan-Jobs as she weathered the ’80s and ’90s with parents who took to an extreme that era’s propensity to not put children first. Her mother says, “I lost my twenties,” and then, “I want my own friends, my own life,” and Brennan-Jobs remembers feeling, “My happiness had been pulled from the reserve of hers, a limited string we had to share.” Of her father, she writes, “We all made allowance for his eccentricities, the ways he attacked other people, because he was also brilliant, and sometimes kind and insightful. Now I felt he’d crush me if I let him. He would tell me how little I meant over and over until I believed it. What use was his genius to me?” She’s a talented writer, gifted enough to describe what it feels like to be at the mercy of a mercurial externalizer, the way air can change in an instant. Brennan-Jobs occasionally indulges in pettiness and only a handful of the book’s many characters are ultimately portrayed sympathetically. And yet, *Small Fry* rings true—deeply, horribly true.

## Anything But My Phone, Mom! Raising Emotionally Resilient Daughters in the Digital Age

Roni Cohen-Sandler writes with a degree of separation as a grandmother and psychologist who’s worked with hundreds of mothers and teens over the years. This is a good thing. Cohen-Sandler cuts through the scientific nuance with statements like, “when social media use goes up, emotional well-being goes down.” Part 1 frames the current moment in a way that most who pick up this book just won’t need; I didn’t love it. But then Cohen-Sandler gets to the nuts and bolts of “developing a close, trusting, and enduring mother-daughter connection.” (And, yes, the entire book is gendered in this way, which is a shame since caregivers of any gender who are parenting kids of any gender can learn quite a bit from *Anything But My Phone*.) There are big picture strategies like “mothering the daughter you have,” fostering fruitful conversations, and “doing less to achieve more” (“[b]eyond her comfort zone lies the fertile place where seeds of resiliency are planted”). And Cohen-Sandler offers lots of little suggestions for everyday scenarios (e.g., “I’d like us to discuss that when I figure out how to explain how I feel”). It’s rare that I read such a far-ranging book on parent and child development and find myself agreeing with most everything; my hope is that you’ll push through and end up doing the same.



## No Real Choice: How Culture and Politics Matter for Reproductive Autonomy

Katrina Kimport, a UCSF researcher who happens to be a parent at my kids’ school, interviewed 58 pregnant women between 2015 and 2017. Each of them lived in Louisiana or Maryland and had considered, but not obtained, an abortion. In searing and persuasive detail, Kimport demonstrates how structural barriers to abortion, previous negative experiences of healthcare, and antiabortion cultural narratives (such as “abortion as sexually irresponsible” and “abortion as killing”) make abortion “unchooseable” even where it’s legal and theoretically available. She explains “the patterns of race and class inequality underlying many of these constraints,” and then disaggregates monoliths like “Black” and “low-income” into individual women, giving voice to people and ideas that are underrepresented in the discourse around reproductive autonomy.

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





# The Power of Mindset

## Creating positive outcomes in your life with a growth mindset.

By Julie Houghton

If you've ever seen a child learning to crawl or walk (and if you're reading this, I know you have), you have witnessed a growth mindset in action. Though they can't articulate it, a young child is motivated to put in the effort and keep trying.

The term "growth mindset" was first introduced by Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck in 2006 in her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. According to Dweck, when people have a growth mindset, they tend to believe that success

comes from putting in the effort, working hard, and practicing until they master a task. These people are less likely to fear failure and just see it as a natural part of the learning process. Research has revealed that when you have a growth mindset it creates several positive outcomes, including a love of learning, willingness to embrace challenges, confidence in your abilities, and curiosity about trying new things.

In contrast, when people have a fixed mindset, they tend to believe that their

success is based on innate abilities and to view these as fixed traits. The problem with a fixed mindset is that it means we have a rigid view of what's possible for us and limits our willingness to try something new. A fixed mindset can produce both overconfidence as well as insecurity. It can create a disdain for hard work or practicing a skill, since people with a fixed mindset worry that having to work hard means they are revealing a lack of natural talent.

### You can change your mindset

Mindset is a continuum, and most people have a mix of both fixed and growth. People can also have a growth mindset in one part of their lives and a fixed mindset in another. In most areas of my life, I tend to be resilient and willing to persist in the face of obstacles, but I do still catch myself describing my soccer-loving kids as natural athletes in contrast to what I see as my total lack of athletic talent. I viewed myself as unathletic my whole life, which led me to generally opt-out of sports without even trying them (and without even noticing that I had written off this whole part of life for myself).

Mindset is also taught. I remember being amazed when my kids picked up Spanish so easily. This was in contrast to my childhood struggles to learn the language, which my dad explained to me at the time as evidence that our whole family was just bad at foreign languages—something my uncle (who had quite the ego) concluded after he'd failed Latin. If my uncle was bad at something, he assumed it was genetic and must apply to the whole family. (Like I said, a fixed mindset can result in both overconfidence as well as insecurity.) Clearly, this "our whole family is bad at languages" theory was proven true across generations until my kids came along; they had not gotten the memo. It was only as an adult that I learned kids naturally absorb new languages.

That is, unless they're told how bad they are bound to be at learning them.

The good news is, since mindset can be taught, that also means you can change it. If you have a fixed mindset, you can learn to adopt a growth one! The bad news is, it can also go the other way.

As part of her research, Dweck gave IQ

tests to fifth graders and then randomly assigned the type of feedback each received. Some of the students were told they had performed well and were praised for their *intelligence*, while others were also told they performed well but were praised for their *effort*. The nature of the praise they initially received (intelligence vs. effort) resulted in striking differences in the kids' later performance. When the



same students were then given opportunities to practice different types of questions, the ones praised for their effort overwhelmingly picked harder problems than the kids praised for being smart. Next, the kids were given a 7th grade IQ test, which they all failed (and were informed of such), but effort-praised students outperformed the intelligence-praised

did on the too-hard 7th grade IQ test. But there was also a fascinating result. The kids praised for being smart actually did worse this time around than they did when they first took the same 5th grade IQ test. Once they no longer believed they were smart, they weren't.

Not surprisingly, the same can be true of adults who are in a toxic work environment. If you work for a boss who continually

points out everything you do wrong, you are vulnerable to slipping into a fixed mindset even if you didn't come in with one. You can become scared of trying new things or going out on a limb due to the risk of failure, and you can become increasingly insecure. You can also find yourself more and more caught in the cycle of seeking external praise. Your confidence suffers and imposter syndrome (feeling like you aren't qualified to do the work you're being asked to do, despite evidence to the contrary) becomes more likely to creep in.

So how do you shift to more of a growth mindset

(or protect the areas where you already have one)? There are many concrete approaches you can take.

### Unhooking from praise and criticism

One of the first ways to move toward a growth mindset is to change your relationship with feedback. One of the primary

challenges with a fixed mindset is that it can make us dependent on external praise.

When people are praised for the outcome of their work rather than their effort, they become hooked on the need for praise and their confidence becomes entwined with it.

These days, many (but of course not all) schools make an effort to praise effort

**“Mindset is a continuum, and most people have a mix of both fixed and growth. People can also have a growth mindset in one part of their lives and a fixed mindset in another.”**

ones. Finally, Dweck readministered the same fifth-grade IQ test the children had all taken initially (and had all performed well on). The children who had been praised for effort again outperformed those who had been praised for intelligence, just like they





instead of outcome, based in large part on the mindset research conducted by Carol Dweck, but chances are you, like me, grew up with teachers and parents who praised the outcome. Most of us are living and working in environments where outcomes are what's most often rewarded, and in many academic and work settings as well as within some families, tough feedback is often the norm.

In her book *Playing Big*, Tara Mohr, founder of a global leadership program for women by the same name, introduces the concept of “unhooking” from praise and criticism. Mohr proposes that feedback doesn’t tell you anything about *you*. It tells you only about the person giving the feedback. As Mohr points out, if you pitch your business idea to a potential investor and they don’t want to invest, it does not tell you anything about your merit or the merit of your idea, only about what that investor values.

Mohr goes on to say that just because feedback does not tell us anything about ourselves, that doesn’t mean it should be dismissed. If an entrepreneur wants to find an investor, she needs to hear their feedback to know what will prompt them to invest. According to Mohr, “Feedback is not meant to give you self-esteem boosts or wounds. That’s not its place. Feedback is emotionally neutral information that tells you what resonates with your desired audience, what engages the people you want to engage, what influences the people you want to influence.”

That said, the other important thing to keep in mind is that it’s critical to filter feedback—discerning which feedback is important to learn from and incorporate and which isn’t. Mohr suggests asking yourself: “What feedback do I need to incorporate to be effective in reaching my aims? And what feedback really won’t impact my effectiveness and is ok to ignore?”

Finally, Mohr points out that most of the time, feedback from family, friends, mentors, and experts is actually feedback that we don’t need to be more effective. The feedback we should be seeking is from our intended audience—the people we are trying to influence or engage.

It’s also important to remember that even when the feedback comes from someone you need to influence or engage, you always get to choose which feedback to take and which to dismiss. If you work for a critical boss, that boss’s feedback is relevant since you work for them. But it’s important to check in with yourself to notice how you *feel* working for that person. If you generally feel crappy, that is likely a sign that it’s time to proactively adopt a growth mindset and be curious about what other job options might be out there for you.

**The importance of self-compassion**

Part of the problem with having a fixed mindset is also that it tends to go hand in hand with self-criticism. In addition to fixating on external feedback, people with

a fixed mindset often beat themselves up when they make a mistake or perceive a failure. To shift away from this negative internal chatter, the first step is to build awareness that it’s even happening. We are often on autopilot, listening to and reacting to the inner mean girl in our head without realizing we’re doing it.

As a first step, do a brain dump of all the things your inner critic says about your work, your parenting, your role as a partner, your body...you get the idea. Once you get it down on paper, you can start to strengthen your awareness of when your inner critic is speaking and build in a bit of space so you are not just taking what it says as the truth and reacting to it as such. For some people, it helps to take it a step further and imagine your inner critic as a character. What would it look like? What gender, if any, would it have? Where would your inner critic live? How would it dress? Building a character can help you separate your inner critic from yourself and can often even help you find some humor or absurdity in it, which can lessen its power.

Finally, imagine you had a close friend who was in the same situation as you. What would you say to this friend about this perceived flaw or failure that you are beating yourself up for? We almost always direct more kindness and understanding toward others than we do toward ourselves.

**Proactively recognize your ability to change**

One important finding in Dweck’s work was the fact that just becoming aware of the power of mindset was enough to allow someone to change it. So, if you notice yourself feeling stuck in a fixed mindset, you can proactively adopt a growth mindset when it comes to changing it. Rather than viewing a fixed mindset as a failure itself (which can start to feel very meta—you’ve failed by being too scared of failure), recognize what you’ve learned from those times when you feel stuck in it, and set your mind to shifting it, one step at a time.

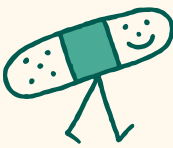
*Julie is a career and business coach with almost 10 years of experience helping women find careers and launch businesses that are in alignment with who they are. She’s a mom to two amazing kids and one very cute dachshund poodle mix. You can connect with her at juliehoughton.com or julie@juliehoughton.com.*

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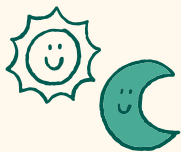
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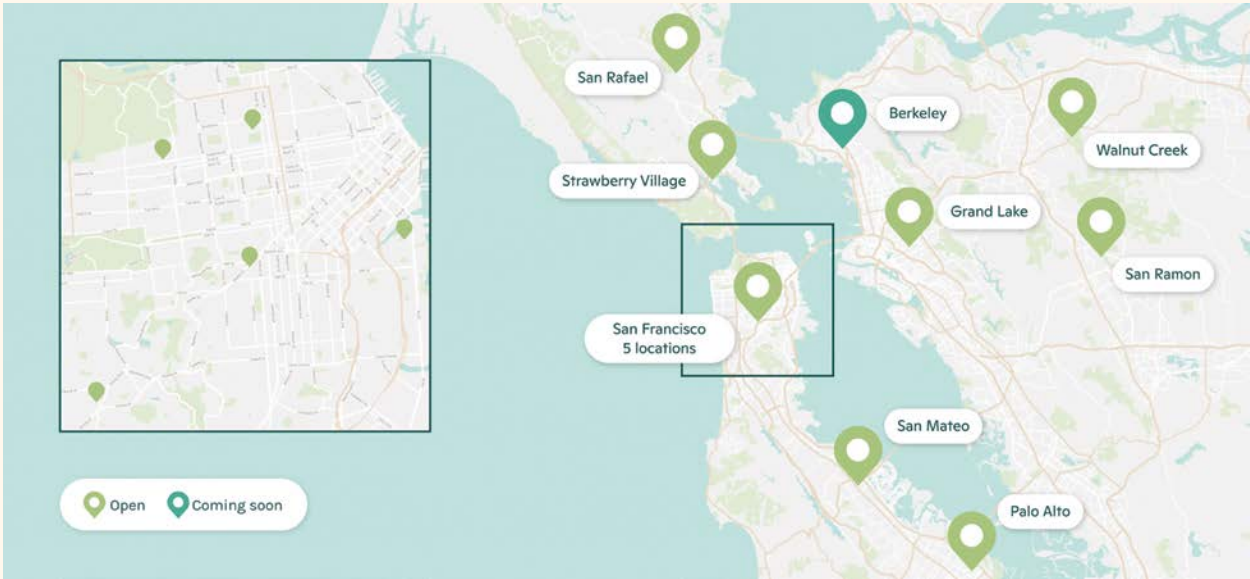
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# Women with a Plan

Women on opposite ends of motherhood age range extol the virtue of their choices.

By Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss

Photographs by Katya Mizrahi Photography

Originally published in the April/May 2017 Fertile Grounds issue.



For women who fall below the San Franciscan median age of 32 for first-time motherhood, it's common to hear that a pregnancy was unplanned, according to analysis by the Silicon Valley Institute of Regional Studies. For women above the median, many attribute their timing to not finding a suitable partner until later or difficulties in conceiving. But what about women with a plan whose chips all fell perfectly into place? Is there such a thing? What makes them consciously take the plunge into motherhood earlier than their peers? What makes them purposefully wait until much later? What is life like for them now, and how do they feel about the results of their decisions?

Most Bay Area women I talked to were confused as to what constitutes “younger than most” or “older than most” in our region. One woman who was 29 when pregnant with her first, and then 31 with her second, hoped that made her “young enough” for a potential interview. On the other hand, Melissa Black recounted the trials of trying to conceive at age 31, and determined after experiencing fertility issues that this timeframe was too late. So two women in San Francisco who got down to the business of having children at almost exactly the same age viewed themselves wildly differently: one identifying more with younger moms while the other's fertility struggles have convinced her that she is on the older end of the mom spectrum.

## Geriatric versus teen moms?

Even more fascinating than this apparent confusion about what was actually considered young or old in our city was a phrase that frequently popped up: teen mom. The phrase did not refer to actual teenage mothers or to the MTV reality series. In fact, most women alluded to hearing the phrase tossed around jokingly by fellow moms, their co-workers, or even their OB/GYNs to describe mothers between the ages of 20 and 35. Amanda, mother of two, said, “I had my kids at 25 and 29. So far I've been really happy with that decision, but I often [feel] like a teen mom in SF. People constantly think I'm the babysitter when I'm out with my kids.”

Jennifer Barnhart, mother of 3-year-old Aven, shared, “My friend had her first at 38

and was asked by her doctor how old she would be when she delivered. When she replied ‘38,’ the doctor responded, ‘Oh goody, a teenage pregnancy.’ The doctor had so many new moms over 40 in her practice that under 40 was considered ‘young.’” The nationwide average age for first pregnancy is just over 26, and for California as a whole it is closer to 28. But having a child here in SF before your mid-30s apparently qualifies you for teen mom status. Most moms in this city are very familiar with the unflattering term “geriatric pregnancy” (or more clinically, *elderly gravida*), which describes any woman who gets pregnant over the age of 35.

## Elsa's future mother

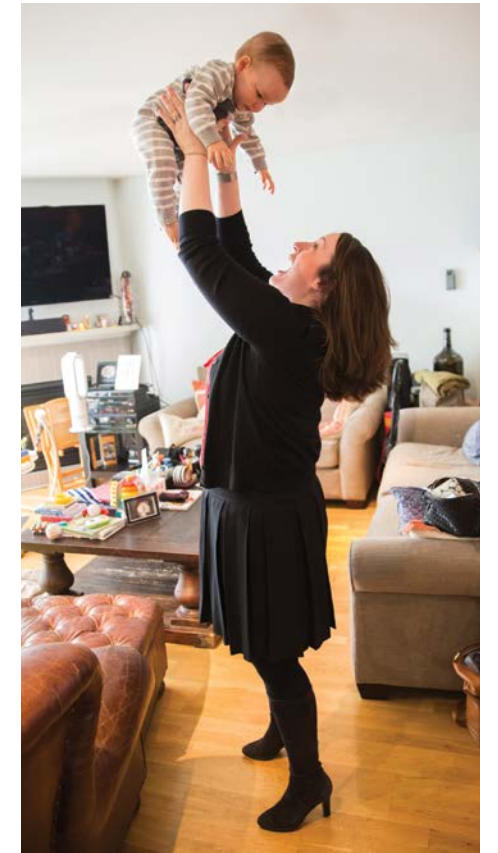
My quest to track down a mother who planned a pregnancy later than the average San Franciscan brought me to the Financial District hustle and bustle, and to 41-year-old Julie Arenas, medical malpractice defense attorney. “I did the whole lawyer thing” Julie explained, referring to late nights and the challenging path to make partner at her firm. “I didn't really date with purpose until my mid-30s.”

“When I began to date with purpose, the quest for a life partner started from day one. I didn't hold back on saying what I wanted: ‘I want kids. I want a house and marriage.’ [My now husband and I] talked about these things on our first date. In fact, we have been talking about this for our entire relationship. We still dated three years before marrying, but we were old enough to know we were going to get married.”

Julie explained in detail a host of fertility treatments with which she was familiar, a common price for waiting. She emphasized her point by looking me right in the eye and smirking a bit when describing the whole process as “delightful.” However, her face instantly softened when speaking about her 9-month-old son, Brandon, a bubbly bouncing boy who spends his days going to “Grandma Daycare” while she's at work.

“I'll have my second one when I'm 42” she stated matter-of-factly, as though she was informing me of her next appearance in court. And then the kicker, “My friends all refer to her as Elsa...because she's frozen.”

Amazing. Here was a fifth generation



San Franciscan who made partner at her law firm, had the financial means to engage in costly fertility treatments, had one beautiful boy, a girl (eventually) on the way, a loving husband, an involved grandmother, and undoubtedly other wonderful things in life. Julie added reflectively, “One of the benefits of having children later is that I think I'm more mature. I'm able to handle—no, *embrace*—the crazy. I watched and learned this from my friends who had children earlier and my sister who also had her first child at 40. She was just so much more calm and less anxious than my younger friends and I feel this is the same with me.”

I was sitting in the presence of genuine happiness at Starbucks. It was contagious. I left feeling energized and determined to go home to embrace my own version of crazy.

## Yoga, happy hour, and trampolines

On the first sunny day in what felt like forever, Jennifer Hammond, a 35-year-old teacher and school counseling graduate student, moved about the hardwood floors of her home in yoga pants and a



fitted t-shirt, stretched just enough to reveal her rock star abs. She offered me rose tea with her British accent, and we settled down in the warm sun while my daughter bobbed up and down with her two kids, Sofia and Xavier, ages 6 and 4, on a massive trampoline.

“My age to have kids was never a factor. I never thought, ‘Oh, I should be in my 30s or I should do it after I...no, it wasn’t like that. I was just really ready. At the age of 27 I had a good career well underway, I was comfortable and ready to settle down. I wanted to have a more family-friendly lifestyle. I had had enough of all of it.” I deduced that “it” was escapades involving fun but completely unsuitable male companions.

“I definitely told all of my friends I was ready to have kids before I even met [my husband] Will and no one could relate. When I admitted that, I actually felt really embarrassed. People were like, ‘You want to give up your life?’ but I didn’t feel that. Even though I was young, there wasn’t anything else I wanted to do. I had traveled, dated, seen different places, I had my teaching credential and that was enough.”

“Will was actually 40 years old when we met,” she told me. “He was resigned to simply never having kids of his own and was ready to donate his sperm to a lesbian couple.” How much more Bay Area could you get?

“I hope he doesn’t mind me sharing that,” she added, looking in his direction. Oblivious, the almost-sperm-donor

remained fixated on his laptop, headphones drowning out our chatter. He was busy searching for a Star Wars cake for their son’s birthday.

We discussed the blasé attitude they shared about remembering birth control and the almost instant pregnancy. “I moved in after three months to his place in the Sunset but still had my studio apartment in Cole Valley. My birth control was getting delivered to my old address. I kept forget-

**“One of the benefits of having children later is that I think I’m more mature. I’m able to handle—no *embrace*—the crazy.”**

ting to pick it up. He didn’t care. He knew.”

She told me about lovey dovey mornings in bed sharing their baby fantasies. “One day I told him I had the best boy’s name and he said ‘Me too.’ We agreed to share our names on the count of three and we both blurted out ‘1...2...3... Xavier!’ Of course, then we ended up pregnant with a girl...”

In addition to the pregnancy, she recounted the first time she introduced Will and their newborn daughter simultaneously to Jennifer’s grandmother in Europe, and planning a wedding around when little Sofia might be able to walk herself down the aisle in a teeny tiny white dress.

When I asked her to reflect on her life now with two elementary-aged children while her girlfriends were still going out and dating, she perked up. “What I love about motherhood at this age is I get the

best of both worlds. When I want to be young, I can be young. There are all these moms who make these jokes like ‘Well, that’s my one drink of the month’ or about spending the whole weekend doing laundry and passing out. And I’m like, ‘No, if I want to have some drinks and go out with my girlfriends, I just do it. I have the energy. And I can still get up early the next day and make those Halloween costumes or plant trees in my garden with my two

kids. I can duck in and out of each of those worlds whenever I want.” Obviously, her sleek physique indicated a world that also involved plenty of CorePower Yoga—in between tree planting, costumes, trampolines, and happy hour.

I never thought about the freedom that earlier motherhood actually affords women like Jennifer. She’s out of the fog of raising babies and toddlers, and now has the glow of a healthy, attractive, physically fit and most importantly, balanced, mama. I listened with admiration as she discussed buying and selling real estate, finishing up her master’s degree, and continuing to spend summers in France as a family. My mind wandered as I started to mentally juggle how I could fit more yoga into my life, and how much longer my husband could tolerate our mostly insane 18 month old boy before I needed to head home.

### Having it all

By and large, there truly is no perfect time to have children. Everyone’s needs and life circumstances are vast and varied, making the addition of children something that can rock our worlds in any number of ways. What I enjoyed most about my encounters with Julie and Jennifer was the confidence they each exuded about their choices about when and how to get pregnant. There is ongoing and somewhat vocal skepticism about whether or not women can “have it all”; at least for two women I know in the Bay Area, the answer seems to be a resounding yes.

*Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss is a 36-year-old school administrator who conceived at ages 31 and then 33, framing the San Franciscan median age of 32 for first-time mothers nicely. She began purposefully dating at age 25.*



# Joyful Play is on the Horizon

**FAITH**

Bay Area Discovery Museum

[BayAreaDiscoveryMuseum.org](http://BayAreaDiscoveryMuseum.org)



# Back to School Shopping: Sensory Fun for Everyone

Engaging their senses with fun school supplies can help keep kids focused on learning.

By Christine Chen

I have to confess, despite being the ultimate shopper, I had to do some research to come up with ideas for back-to-school shopping for the neurodiverse child. In the process, I learned something and found there are amazing products everywhere that all kids would love and benefit from, particularly as kids have all ranges of sensory processing and motor skills at various ages. All the fidget toys (Pop Its anyone?) that have become so trendy and sold everywhere actually have benefits for all kids, not just those with sensory processing challenges.

The most brilliant one I wish I had known about when my daughter started kindergarten last fall is **sticky notes**. Not just for bookmarks or fun for kids to stick everything with, but for putting over school bathroom toilet sensors! Many kids, like my daughter during kindergarten, are startled by the auto-flush. For me as an adult, auto-flush grosses me out when they go off before I am ready, splashing toilet water everywhere (including potentially me!). I will now never enter a public bathroom without sticky notes in my purse. My daughter is no longer scared, but I am thrilled to know this trick as she has inherited my fear of germs.



**Adaptable Clothing** is a term I had never heard of until I was on Target's website looking for things I don't need. I discovered an abundance of well-made dresses and tops with pockets (considered adaptive), and easy access to the tummy, important for those with feeding tubes. As for my daughter, she just loves pockets, and my complaint as an adult is that there are never pockets in dresses for my iPhone and keys. (Beware of the hoarding of glitter and other small arts and crafts items in the pockets that then end up in the laundry and everywhere else in the house for weeks.) The best adaptable clothing item I bought by accident is **Lands End's School Uniform Adaptive Long Sleeve Oxford Dress Shirt**, part of their Universal Collection. This inclusive line of adaptive clothing is designed for easy dressing. They look exactly like their best sellers, but with new innovative features ranging from the magic of magnets that replace buttons and zippers for tops, Velcro in lieu of snaps or buttons for bottoms, and of course, they are seamless and tagless. The best part is they are all machine washable and dryable and usually do not wrinkle if you take them out of the dryer right away. My 8-year-old son was beyond thrilled that the magnetic buttons perfectly line up and button themselves as even now, he still hates buttons. We use this as his special full-dress shirt as those are the days we can never seem to get out of the house on time, given the tie. If the shirt buttons itself, all the better. It is his favorite shirt and he now wishes all his shirts would button themselves like this. They also come in adult sizes for anyone who might want them.



**Chewable Jewelry and Fidget Toys:** Sending your fidgety child to school wearing a favorite chewable necklace or other jewelry or wearable fidget could help them get through the day and actually stay focused. Even schools with uniforms will be okay with these calming accessories. Sadly, **Stimtastic**, a toy, and jewelry company that promotes stimming and was started by a woman on the autism spectrum is on hiatus, but their comfortable, fashionable, and low-cost wearable and chewable fidget tools can still be found on various websites. **Munchables**, a Canadian company, has a great assortment of chewelry for all ages.



**Wobble Cushions:** For some kids—and adults—sitting still is difficult, and moving around on a hard chair is uncomfortable. Wobble cushions let kids sit and wiggle in a sensory-friendly way while improving their posture. This **CanDo Cushion** is affordable and sized right for kids.



**Scented Pencils and Erasers:** Engaging their senses with fun school supplies can help keep kids focused on learning. In addition to school supplies, Scentos (easily found on Amazon) also makes playdough, sand slime, and activity kits sure to be enjoyed by all who love a good scent.

**Bendy Pencils and Pens:** Fun to fidget with, practical in use.

**Writing Boards:** Slanted writing boards provide a stable surface that can help kids improve their handwriting and posture. Some boards include dry-erase and portable versions as well as clips to keep papers from slipping.



**Pencil Grips:** For kids, pens and pencils can sometimes be too thin, hard, or sharp to hold. Pencil and pen grips are fun to fidget with and great for helping with fine motor skills and proper pinching of pencils. These **JuneLsy Pencil Grips** are perfect for teaching kids the proper pencil pinch.



**Sensory Backpacks:** It is common knowledge that most young kids' backpacks are too big for them (and usually hold very little in practice). Both my kids' backpacks rarely carry more than a water bottle, mini-sunscreen, mask, and whatever papers they bring home. My son is a rising 3rd grader, and this is still the case (unless it's a sports day or too hot for a jacket). Sensory backpacks, however, are often weighted backpacks, compression packs, or have fidget tools, offering a powerful calming tool for children of many needs. Popular with all kids, of course, are the ones covered with Pop Its, which offer endless amusement while waiting in the pick-up line. You know it's become trendy when adorable ones can be found at Shein for \$11.50!

**Food and Drink Containers:** **CamelBak's Eddy+ Kids BPA Free Water Bottle with Straw** is easy to flip open and the ingenious design is not only leakproof but when closed and dropped, the straw miraculously doesn't touch the ground, despite it being exposed. Even when the straw is up, it usually doesn't land on the straw given the weight distribution of the lid. The straw and spout are also wide enough to be easy to clean. (Yes, the fear of germs is coming back into play here).

**Bentgo Kids Leak-Proof, 5-Compartment Bento-Style Kids Lunch Box** is BPA-free and dishwasher safe. Most importantly, it is easy to open though it can be heavy for toddlers.

My personal favorite is **Yumbox Bento Lunch Box Container for Kids** which is lighter and leakproof, with fun designs and spaces labeling the various food groups kids should be eating. My kids get a kick out of putting things in the right place. Sometimes I am reprimanded for putting fruit where the protein is supposed to be. However, when I point out there is no section for "Snack", the objections quickly stop.





DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Celebrating Artistic & Cultural Diversity in the City

San Francisco has long been famous for its art and music scene as well as its indie film festivals. Its multitude of events, from street festivals to theater fairs, reflect wide-ranging diversity. This summer is the perfect time to immerse ourselves in the many ways San Francisco celebrates cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity. Below are a number of events to check out between summer and fall.

Chinatown Autumn Moon Festival

**DATE/TIME:** August 27 to 28, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Grant Avenue (between California & Broadway)  
**COST:** Free

The Autumn Moon Festival was started in 1989 to bring support to Chinatown after the Loma Prieta earthquake. The festival is a celebration of the female principle, or yin, in Chinese celestial cosmology. In ancient times, women were the primary focus of this ritual, as the moon is considered feminine, as opposed to the masculine principle, yang. The event is typically scheduled at the time of the year when the moon is most bright. This year will feature a parade, live entertainment, arts and crafts, and a variety of food and drinks.

[moonfestival.org](http://moonfestival.org)

New Roots Theater Festival

**DATE:** October 14 to 16  
**LOCATION:** Brava Theater Center, 2781 24th Street  
Tickets go on sale in mid-August

This theater and arts festival, featuring eight projects and 20 performances over three days, provides a platform for new works by BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ artists. After a successful inauguration in 2021, this relatively new festival is guaranteed to be a yearly event! This year's festival will feature original projects by SF Bay Area Theater Company, and additional projects from Bay Area Legacy Companies (African Arts Academy, Crowded Fire Theater, Dimensions Dance Theater, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, SF Recovery Theatre) that celebrate Black and queer performers.

[sfbatco.org/nrtf-2022](http://sfbatco.org/nrtf-2022)



Nihonmachi Street Fair

**DATE/TIME:** August 6 and 7, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Japantown and Japan Center  
**COST:** Free

The Nihonmachi Street Fair is coming back after a hiatus due to COVID for its 48<sup>th</sup> annual celebration. Its mission is to “Engage and develop young Asian American leaders through the development of building a community that celebrates our culture and diversity.” In addition to its focus on featuring Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, the festival also supports small and local businesses. Spanning over two days, the fair showcases AAPI artisans,

live cultural and musical performances, Children’s World, Doggie World, and a car show.

[nihonmachistreetfair.org](http://nihonmachistreetfair.org)

San Francisco Latino Film Festival

**DATE:** September 15 to October 2  
**LOCATION:** Roxie Theater, 3117 16th Street  
Tickets will go on sale in mid-August

The San Francisco Latino Film Festival provides a platform for works from filmmakers from the U.S., Latin America, Spain, and Portugal, highlighting films made by and for Latinos. The event is presented by Cine+Más SF, an organization that offers year-round programming and special events centered on Latino arts—including the visual, performance, and literary arts.

[filmfreeway.com/SanFranciscoLatinoFilmFest](http://filmfreeway.com/SanFranciscoLatinoFilmFest)

Domestic Worker Victory Needs Community Support!

In December 2021, San Francisco’s domestic worker community, in partnership with domestic employer groups and allies, passed the Access to Paid Sick Leave for Domestic Workers Ordinance with unanimous support from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. This ordinance, just the second of its kind in the nation, establishes a portable benefits program for paid sick leave for domestic workers. This portable benefits program will help solve one of the barriers keeping domestic workers from accessing their right to paid sick leave, but it will need the support of domestic employers and allies for it to be successful.

A 2020 profile found that 70 percent of SF’s domestic workers, which include house cleaners, homecare workers, and nannies, do not earn enough to meet their basic living expenses, and 72 percent of SF’s domestic workers do not receive paid sick leave—even though they have a right to it. That means SF domestic workers are often forced to choose between earning money and taking time to rest when sick.



Domestic workers are asking employers and allies to sign the “Pledge to Provide Paid Sick Leave” and commit to providing paid sick leave now. Pledge signers are provided with a short guide on how to do so and will be among the first to learn about the new portable benefits program when it becomes available. If you are an employer or ally, sign the pledge here: [tinyurl.com/SFPaidSickLeave](http://tinyurl.com/SFPaidSickLeave)





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## NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

### GGMG Mommies + Babies Meetups—August 2022

Are you looking for your own mom village? Sign up to meet other moms!

If you have children under 12 months old or are expecting, we would like to invite you to a small, casual gathering where you will meet GGMG moms similar to you. Snacks and drinks will be provided while you and other new moms meet, connect, and take the first steps to plan a stroller walk, find a workout buddy, or plan a playdate for your little ones.

**Date:** Wednesday, August 24  
(Noe Valley group will meet Tuesday, August 23)  
**Time:** 5:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.  
**Place:** TBD, five locations in different parts of the city, will be emailed to participants close to the event date  
**Cost:** \$5

### Monthly Queer Family Hike

Join queer families for a COVID-safe walk/hike, which includes casual mingling/chatting, discussions on agreed-upon topics, and just sharing unique experiences and issues we have encountered as queer families. All queer families are welcome!

The safety requirements are:

- Socially distanced families
- Adults and kids (age 2+) able to wear masks the whole time

**Date:** TBD  
**Time:** TBD  
**Place:** TBD  
**Cost:** Free for Members  
**Registration:** Email Dy Nguyen for details ([dy.nguyen@gmail.com](mailto:dy.nguyen@gmail.com))

### Glen Park Coffee + Stroller Walk for Mommies (and Babies!)

Would you like to meet neighborhood moms, grab a coffee, and enjoy a stroller walk together? We're organizing this Coffee + Stroller Walk for you! We'll meet at a coffee shop before we go for an hour of fresh air, light exercise, and great conversation!

**Date:** Every Wednesday  
**Time:** 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.  
**Cost:** Free  
**Place:** Meet at Bosworth and Diamond side lot by Pono Skincare in Glen Park

### Little Oceanauts \$7 Playdate—Ingleside

Looking for an afternoon playdate this summer? Little Oceanauts in Ingleside is open again and is the perfect place for children to run off their energy before dinner time! Meet fellow GGMG moms and enjoy a fun afternoon together! Sign up now!

**Date:** Monday, July 18th and monthly on the third Monday  
**Time:** 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
**Place:** Little Oceanauts, 1917 Ocean Ave.  
**Cost:** GGMG members pay a special rate of \$7 per kid. Infants 6 months and under are free. Parents/caretakers are free. Must RSVP and PREPAY, limited spots available

### Mom's Happy Hour—Bernal Heights

Join us in the Bernal Heights neighborhood for a Mom's Happy Hour.

**Date:** Thursday, July 28 and monthly on the last Thursday of the month  
**Time:** 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
**Place:** TBD (Bernal Heights)  
**Cost:** Free

Register for events at [gmg.org/calendar](https://gmg.org/calendar) unless otherwise noted

## PARTNERSHIPS

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

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

Committee duties in Friends:

- Input new offers by local businesses (Friends) looking to provide substantial (20 percent or more) discounts to GGMG members
- Maintain our relationships with our current Friends

- Seek out potential new Friends who provide services useful to our members
- Negotiate new business discounts
- Update members on new discounts

Committee duties in Partners:

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

Open Roles:

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



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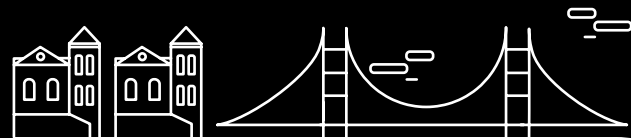
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# My Lunch Is Embarrassing

By Yuliya Patsay

As any immigrant child (or child of immigrants) will tell you—the fastest way to spot someone that's "fresh off the boat" (or plane, or what have you) is by what they bring to school for lunch. I guess you could say I lucked out in this regard, as I was never "smelly lunch girl," but I was her second cousin—"weird lunch girl."

My Ukrainian family really tried to help me fit in by buying me what they understood to be "American food," like hot dogs. But they could never get it quite right. They neglected to buy hot dog buns, so I'd end up with hot dogs sliced in half stuck between two slices of bread, with not even a smear of mayonnaise.



JJ got a pickle! A whole pickle! *She is so lucky.*

Stephanie procures a crinkly bag, opens it slowly...*Oh, these are my favorite!* Fluorescent curly cues of perfection, their orange powder stays on your fingers well into fifth period.

The floor is now open for negotiations. Doritos Cool Ranch are swapped for Lay's Sour Cream & Onion chips. Half a turkey on whole wheat for tuna salad (with relish) on Dutch crunch. Sure, that

makes sense. Hostess cupcakes for Fruit Gushers. *That's just stupid!* Chocolate sponge cake with a vanilla cream filling for measly fruit flavored dreck? *You should at least hold out for Fruit Roll-Ups you can wrap around your finger, pointing and licking to your heart's content!*

The girls buying lunch that day don't even participate. And why should they? They've hit the jackpot with a lunch of their own choosing—piping hot pizza or greasy chow mein, maybe even nachos with pickled jalapenos and an It's-It for dessert!

Uncharacteristically, I stay quiet.

I have nothing to contribute. Nothing for the trading floor, no pocket money for a stray Ring Pop. And my lunch? Never an element of surprise. I know exactly what my foil pouch

**"[M]y lunch? Never an element of surprise...No sides. No pickles. Certainly no dessert."**

holds—bread and bologna and apple juice. I know because I packed it myself. No sides. No pickles. Certainly no dessert.

They are finishing up now. And just like that my gluttonous girlfriends have had their fill and begin offering up the remnants. "Does anyone want this?"

Sometimes I bite with a cool, nonchalant response: "Well, I'll take it if you're just going to throw it away." If it's something amazing I'll make them dare me to eat it: "I bet I can eat that french fry dipped in ice cream!"

I watch as at least three bites of sandwich are discarded, chip crumbs are thoughtlessly wiped from jackets, a half-eaten apple shoved back into a backpack. I wonder what my parents, who never waste, would think of this.

But I always have to let some of it go because I can't look too eager—that's just embarrassing.

*Yuliya (it rhymes with Goo-lia) Patsay is Soviet born and San Francisco raised. She is a storyteller, voice actor, and speaker and is working on completing her memoir, Until the Last Pickle, which will be out October 2022.*





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