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magazine

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Letter from the Editor: Safety in Childhood

By Kirsten Pflieger



Kirsten and her husband Karl are teaching their daughters, Serenity (4) and Sierra (2), to stretch their wings by exploring the city on foot, by bicycle, and on Muni.

I have fond memories of walking to the store when I was 6 or 7. Sometimes I went with my sister, sometimes I went alone, but I always went for candy. We moved when I was 8, and our new home was in a more rural subdivision. There weren't any stores within walking distance, but our yard backed up to a cow pasture. My sister and I began climbing the barbed-wire fence almost immediately and making the pasture our own. We made dandelion crowns and built forts under a bridge that crossed a stream. We stayed away from the cows—we were smart enough to realize that as placid as

What these experiences taught me is that what is “safe” or “reasonable” is not one-size-fits-all.

they looked, we didn't want to mess with them—but would giggle uncontrollably whenever the herd decided to migrate across the bridge while we were playing underneath it. At that same house, my parents bought us a trampoline. We felt so free as we soared through the air. Of course, simply jumping wasn't enough, so we jumped with others and tried to “steal their

bounce,” taught ourselves how to do back flips, and dragged it next to the swing set so we could jump off of the top support onto the trampoline. Was it safe? Probably not. Was it fun? Absolutely. What these experiences taught me is that what is “safe” or “reasonable” is not one-size-fits-all. Each parent needs to take into account her or his own children and the circumstances in which they live. Knowing what is and is not dictated by law is a good place to start. On page 16, Tara breaks down some laws that affect parents in San Francisco. Shannon sheds light on how to keep our kids safe online on page 20. Anna considers how one's cultural background plays into your perception of safety on page 24. Many parents worry about how to talk to their children about sex, but keeping this line of communication open helps protect our children against both sexual predators and their own raging hormones. Dr. Steven Martel gives advice on starting and continuing these conversations on page 8. As parents, we are strongly impacted by our own upbringing. I ♥ Mom on page 39, and Dadlands on page 10, offer firsthand accounts of how that plays out in the city.

As for me, I am pretty sure that my children will never live next door to a cow pasture, and we will probably never have space for a trampoline, but I have high hopes for my ability to send them out to the store in a few short years. And I will pretend that I don't notice they are using the change to buy candy.

K Pflieger

Housekeeping

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THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Technicolor dreams, first days of school, first fall illnesses, final camping trips, long afternoon naps, iced coffee, and meat. Lots of meat.

COMING NEXT: November—Art and Music; December—Simplicity

CONTEST: Congratulation to Claire SunSpiral, the winner of the two experience days at NextSpace and NextKids in Potrero Hill.

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

Letter from the Board: Serving the GGMG Community

By Laurel Kellam

I have served as chair for a few months now, and I am so excited about the changes we have made to the board during that time. We have expanded from 9 to 12 members and have filled all of the board positions. Please help us welcome four new board members:

- Director of Community Support **Tiffany Bindoo**, from Community Support
- Director of External Communications **Addie Bjornsen**, from Social Media
- Director of Internal Communications **Sallie Hess**, from the Magazine committee
- Director of Member Engagement **Kristen McGuire**, from Playgroups

The board worked hard to recruit an amazing team of women. We strove for diversity to better represent GGMG. As a result, we have single moms and partnered moms, moms with young kids and moms with older children, and moms from all over the city. We hope that by having a board with moms of all different family setups and backgrounds, we can better serve GGMG as a whole.

Also in the interest of serving GGMG better, we are happy to announce that this year's survey is live. We've streamlined the survey to a few questions that can really help the board steer GGMG towards the future. The survey can be found at www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016GGMGSurvey. It only takes 10 minutes, and upon completion you have the opportunity to enter a raffle for great prizes, including a Nob Hill Spa gift certificate, UrbanSitter gift certificate, Amazon gift certificate, and more! By filling out this survey, you will be helping the organization know what our members want to

get out of GGMG and what we can do to better serve our members. We hope you can take a few minutes to help us out and complete the survey. Some things to keep in mind: Please help us remember and honor volunteer Caitlin Mullinix at the Light the Night Walk, November 12. For more information about joining GGMG's Light the Night team, please visit www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/92968552. GGMG is partnering with Project Night Night, www.projectnightnight.org, to host a fund drive from now until October 31. Donate your new blankets or like-new books or

We've streamlined the survey to a few questions that can really help the board steer GGMG towards the future.

stuffed animals to help homeless children feel secure, cozy and ready to learn. Go to page 9 or www.bigtent.com/group/forum/message/94093212 for more information!

Laurel Kellam



Laurel is a mom to three kids, wife to an amazing husband, and sales rep for a financial software company. When not managing all that (plus volunteering with GGMG), she enjoys wine, running, reading, and sunshine (assuming the temperature doesn't go over 73).

Volunteer of the Month



Congratulations to **Heather Nichols**, our October volunteer of the month! Heather began volunteering in August 2014 for the Membership Committee, reviewing and approving memberships. She is also a project manager at UCSF, wife to husband Jeff, and mom to beautiful 3-year-old Clara Rose.

Her Favorite Pastimes: spending time with family, traveling, kayaking, swimming, and shopping for bargains; **Books:** *Little Fur Family*, *Miss Rumphius*, *The Day the Crayons Quit*; **Film:** Mr. Mom; **Restaurant:** Arizmendi Bakery; **Destination:** Indian Springs; **Parenting advice:** Join (and volunteer for) GGMG!

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

San Francisco has a wide range of places to trick-or-treat on Halloween. A general rule of thumb is, the younger the child, the earlier you should venture out, ideally before it’s really dark. Older kids hit the streets after dark, and things get spookier.

DESTINATION STREETS

The following Halloween “experiences” are mostly well-established, often organized by neighborhood associations, and will often include activities such as parades and crafts, in addition to the actual trick or treating. Check neighborhood websites or Facebook groups for details. Be forewarned, many of these places are very popular, can get extremely crowded, and are not very toddler-friendly. Parking can be a nightmare, as some of these streets are closed off to traffic, so plan transportation accordingly.

COLE VALLEY

Belvedere St. between Parnassus Ave. and 17th St.

The famous “Hell-vedere” block party is one of the best places to experience a real San Francisco Halloween. This event is better for older children as some decorations can scare little ones.

MARINA

Chestnut St.

The Marina Tiny Tots Parade is perfect for babies and younger children. It starts at Moscone Recreation Center at 10 a.m. and heads to Chestnut Street for trick-or-treat.

NOE VALLEY/MISSION

Fair Oaks St. between 21st and 26th streets

This beautiful street between Noe and Mission with amazing decorations is known to be particularly family-friendly and great for all ages.

NOPA

Grove St. between Baker and Central streets

This block party seems to be a favorite of local GGGMG moms. It begins at 5:30 p.m. and includes a costume contest and a parade.

OUTER RICHMOND

Balboa Ave. and 35th to 39th Ave.

The first BalBOOa Fright Fest will take place this year from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.



POTRERO HILL

18th St. and Connecticut St.

Halloween celebrations kick off around 6 p.m. with a parade followed by trick or treating at local shops and homes.

PRESIDIO HEIGHTS

Washington St. between Presidio and Arguello streets

This is a great chance to see the beautiful mansions of Presidio Heights decked out in Halloween finery and is appropriate for all ages.

SEA CLIFF

Entrance near 25th Ave. and Lake St.

This is an affluent neighborhood with beautifully decorated houses, with a fairly flat terrain and Halloween candy generosity. Suitable for all ages.

WEST PORTAL

Wawona St. between Taraval St. and 15th Ave.

A very popular destination with great decorations, but be forewarned some are really scary, so be mindful of little ones!



OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS AND RETAIL STREETS

If you prefer to not brave the crowds at the destination streets, the following residential and retail streets also provide great options, with earlier event times and minimal scary elements.

BERNAL HEIGHTS

Cortland Ave.

Starting at 5:30 p.m.

INNER RICHMOND

Clement St. between 2nd to 8th Ave.

From around 3 to 6 p.m.

LAKE STREET

Lake St., 5th to 10th avenues and 17th to 22nd avenues

The beautiful houses on dead-end avenues north of Lake Street are great, safe spots to trick-or-treat with children of all ages.

LAUREL HEIGHTS

Sacramento St. between Spruce and Presidio streets

NOE VALLEY

24th St. between Diamond and Dolores streets

The shops on 24th Street host Halloween activities during the day and early evening. Nearby homes welcome older revelers later in the evening for trick or treating.

PACIFIC HEIGHTS

Fillmore St. between Bush and Jackson streets

From around 4 p.m.

STONESTOWN

Stonestown Galleria

From 3 to 7 p.m.

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



Go for a Spin

By Lynn Perkins

San Francisco offers great locations for cyclists of any age. Whether your child is on a Skuut, tricycle, or a bike with training wheels, the **path at Mission Creek Park** across from AT&T Park is a great place to enjoy a cycling outing. It’s also a sunny escape from foggy sections of the city. When your child is ready to try a hillier course, visit the **park area behind 1 Letterman Dr.** in the Presidio. The path is sheltered from any traffic and passes by a duck pond at the bottom of the loop.

Once your child is comfortable with the rules of the road and you are ready to hit the streets, try a practice run in the car-free zone at **Golden Gate Park on Sundays**. Treat the road as if it’s open to see whether or not your child is ready to cycle alongside traffic. For a scenic, minimal traffic route, start at China Basin and follow the **bike path along Terry Francois Boulevard** past Bay Front Park. Mission Rock Resort and The Ramp serve as good lunch options as well as turnaround spots. Check to make sure the Giants are not in town since there is more traffic on game days.

With practice, your child will be comfortable, capable, and confident on his or her own two wheels. Looking for more tips on cycling with children? The San Francisco Bike Coalition offers pointers on teaching your child, along with kid-friendly gear recommendations and routes at www.sfbike.org. You can also find their Freedom From Training Wheels station at Sunday Streets events. ♦

Lynn Perkins is CEO of UrbanSitter. She enjoys chasing her 7-year-old twin boys on their bikes at Crissy Field.



Ask the Expert

Body Talk: Educating Our Children About Sex

By Steven Martel, M.D.



When is the best time to talk with kids about sex?

The best time to talk to kids about sex is when they start to ask questions. Children often notice the difference between girl parts and boy parts in the toddler years. I encourage parents to use proper terminology of body parts in addition to the more comfortable words parents often use.

Parents might get questions about words children hear that refer to birth, delivery, etc. around age 5 or 6. The questions are usually simple, such as, “How does a baby get in your stomach?” and “How does a baby get out of your body?” For older kids and teens, a great way to enter into the topic is when sexual themes appear on television, in the news, or in movies.

How can parents begin the discussion during the toddler years as their toddlers become aware of their bodies?

Parents can teach their children from a young age the proper anatomical names for their genitalia. It is very appropriate for toddlers to learn the names for their body parts: penis, scrotum, testicles, vagina, and vulva, in addition to other words that are favored by the parents.

Any words of advice about sexual safety and how we discuss stranger danger with our children?

We should teach kids from an early age that adults should not look at their genitalia without a parent’s presence and/or permission. I encourage doctors to ask the parent’s permission before checking the child’s genitalia, so that we model the proper behavior we want children to be aware of. I also recommend that the doctor or adult tell the child why they need to look at the genitalia. In my practice, I ask the parents, “Is it okay for me to check the penis or vulva to make sure everything is healthy?” Once I have checked, I tell the child and parent that everything is healthy.

As kids get older, I suggest parents occasionally review different situations with their kids that could have the potential for problems. For example, “What would you do if a man looked sad and asked you to help him find his dog?” or “What would you do if someone offered to give you a candy bar if you went for a drive with them?”

I also like to encourage parents to not make “secrets” a fun activity. For example, it is difficult for a toddler or young child to differentiate between “We are having a birthday party for daddy and it’s a secret, so you can’t tell anyone” and a “secret” where an adult wants to keep inappropriate behavior hidden. I prefer that parents teach their children from a young age that their family doesn’t keep secrets and if anyone asks the child to keep a secret, she should always tell her parents. In lieu of using “secret,” substitute the word “surprise.” It’s okay for people to keep surprises from one another—no adult who has intentions of harming a child will use “surprise” as a means to keep the child silent.

Any books about sex education for the younger child that you might recommend?

Robie Harris’ books are a great place to start. *It’s So Amazing!: A Book about Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies, and Families* is good for young kids, *It’s Not the Stork* for slightly older kids, and *It’s Perfectly Normal* for pre-teens and teens. *The Teenage Body Book* by Kathy McCoy and Charles Wibblesman contains excellent comprehensive information for teenagers. ❖

Dr. Martel is pediatrician at Discover Health in San Francisco. He is an expert in the health and well-being of children. He partners with parents to provide a compassionate, holistic, and patient approach to understanding the unique health, developmental, and emotional needs of children from birth through college. He especially enjoys sharing his perspective on behavior modification and discipline with families who struggle with this challenge.
www.n1health.com/DiscoverHealth/meet-the-team

I prefer that parents teach their children from a young age that their family doesn’t keep secrets and if anyone asks the child to keep a secret, she should always tell her parents.

GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

Community Support

Project Night Night

Does your child have a favorite book? Or a favorite stuffed animal? Or a favorite blanket that he won’t leave home without?

We all know what happens when those favorites are misplaced or need to be washed! Now imagine a child who doesn’t have a book to read or a stuffed animal to cuddle or a blanket to snuggle. This is the reality for children facing homelessness.



Community Support has partnered with Project Night Night to collect new blankets and like-new stuffed animals and books to be distributed to local children. To learn more about Project Night Night, including donation requirements and drop-off locations, please visit www.gmg.org. Also, check out the events listings to learn more about the PJ StoryTime event at Books, Inc., on October 7, benefiting Project Night Night.

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Have you joined the Golden Gate Mothers Group Light the Night Team, benefiting the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS)? The GGMG team will walk in memory of our fellow mom Caitlin Mullinix, who was a dedicated GGMG volunteer and a tireless supporter of LLS. This year’s walk is being held at AT&T Park on Thursday, November 12. There are no minimum contribution requirements to participate; we simply hope to have a large turnout to honor Caitlin’s memory and support her family, who will also have a team. To learn more about how you can join the team or make a donation, visit our team webpage at www.tinyurl.com/p5bqpy4.

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DADLANDS

Tiger Dad

By Herbert Gracia

My wife may be Asian, but I consider myself the tiger parent when it comes to safety. Well, more like a part-time tiger parent considering I'm at work all day long, but when I get home it's definitely on.

My wife is at home with our two kids 24/7, so she does most of the day-to-day discipline. I am used to her giving me silent glares when I come home and immediately offer the kids chocolates without checking to see if they finished their dinners. She makes loud sighing noises every Saturday morning when I turn the TV on for our kids to watch cartoons. And she practically has a heart attack when I agree to buy whatever toy the kids are begging for in Target. But not keeping them within arm's reach when we're outside? That's a different story.

The first time our family walked around our neighborhood without a stroller, my kids took off down the sidewalk. I panicked, shouting for them to come back right now! Instead, Tigerlily stopped, turned around, and looked at my wife. "You can go ahead," she called. I thought she was crazy. I ran after Tigerlily and Bear,



I try to remind myself that they're going to be just fine without me hovering. Probably.

who had never stopped running in the first place and was now approaching the intersection. But before I could reach them, they stopped—right behind the lines on the curb. Not even their toes crossed the line. My wife joined us a minute later, smugly smiling at the kids and telling them what a good job they had done. It turns out they had been practicing that for weeks.

It's easy for my wife to be so laid back about safety. She grew up in the Midwest, where she could bike to the park and play outside with the neighborhood kids until the street lights came on. She babysat her neighbors and went to block parties where everyone brought casseroles to share. I was raised in a lower-middle-class Hispanic neighborhood where "stay inside" was practically a catchphrase. Kids didn't even walk outside to go to the local library. Our neighborhood wasn't safe, with gang members hanging around on street corners and selling drugs. That, combined with my mom's Mexican overprotectiveness, made her need to know everything that was going on: who I was

with, where I was going, what I was eating. You get the picture.

It drives me crazy when my wife lets the kids play in the other room while she works on her computer or does the dishes. What if they try to climb out the window? (Why is the window open in the first place?) What if they're choking on something and she can't hear them? Why are they so quiet in there? I don't trust them when they're quiet.

Sometimes I do get it right. When Tigerlily was 2 years old, she came home after her first day with a new nanny, crying uncontrollably. "She's just tired," my wife kept repeating. Normally I would let my wife make the decisions, as I do with most child-related things, but this time I insisted. We drove her to the ER, where a doctor told us she had nursemaid's elbow—a condition where the forearm bone literally pops out of its socket. I felt so helpless, watching my daughter cry and knowing I hadn't done anything to prevent it. I couldn't have. Maybe no one could have. As it turned out, it was a simple fix and she hasn't had a return trip to the ER since. (Now Bear, that's another story.)

I still wish my wife would spend less time talking with friends at the playground and more time making sure the kids don't jump off the top of the slide, and I want to call the

doctor every time the kids have a cough, but I try to remind myself that they're going to be just fine without me hovering. Probably. ❖

Herbert is a designer and dad to 4-year-old Tigerlily and 2-year-old Bear. He is the creative director and co-owner of Faze Apparel, a San Francisco-based clothing boutique in the Mission District. www.fazeapparel.com



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

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Books for Kids Halloween

By Laure Latham

Ghouls and bats, witches and zombies, pumpkins and treats! These books will make your bedtime rituals a lot more exciting than usual. Spooky nights are so much fun, some kids might even forget to go to bed! But rest assured, delicious Halloween dreams will come at night. Just grab a chair, open a book, and get carried away in stories where everything is possible.



Boo! By Leslie Patricelli

When Halloween is here, what does Baby do? From picking a pumpkin to carving a jack-o'-lantern or choosing a costume, there's so much to do! Toddlers will love pointing at the various jack-o'-lantern designs or costumes. If a pumpkin patch is in your future, let this book be your guide to spooky fun at bedtime.

Ages: 0 to 2 years

Happy Halloween, Witch's Cat

By Harriet Muncaster

When a little girl believes that her mother is a good witch and that she is a witch's cat, finding the right Halloween costume ends up being tricky. The fabulous artwork was created in 3-D with mixed media, and each costume comes in a different color, making a fun color-learning scheme.

Ages: 2 to 5 years



Ghost in the House, a Lift-the-Flap Book!

Written by Ammi-Joan Paquette,
illustrated by Adam Record

There's a ghost in the creepy haunted house, and on this dark, spooky night, he wanders alone. Or, is he? First, a groan. Second, a growl. Third, a click-clack! One by one, the ghost counts different Halloween creatures who join the spine-chilling romp. This rhyming counting book is sure to be a bedtime favorite.

Ages: 4 to 8 years



It's Raining Bats & Frogs

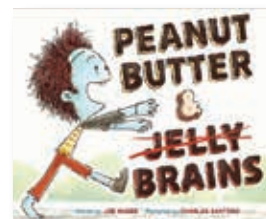
Written by Rebecca Colby, illustrated by Steven Henry

What's a young witch to do when it starts raining on the witches' parade? Whipping her wand, Delia chants a spell that turns the boring pouring rain into... cats and dogs. That's all fine until her fellow witches grow tired of cats and dogs. This great Halloween book will have kids in stitches as they try to figure out the perfect type of rain for weather-adverse witches. *Ages: 2 to 5 years*

Peanut Butter & Brains: A Zombie Culinary Tale

Written by Joe McGee, illustrated by Charles Santoso

Unlike his zombie friends, Reginald the zombie doesn't want brains for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. He craves a peanut butter and jelly sandwich! Join the resourceful young Reginald as he strives to get his hands on a PJ&B sandwich, and to stop his zombie friends from scaring the citizens of Quirkville. *Ages: 4 to 8 years*



Scream Street: Secret of the Changeling

Written by Tommy Donbavand

Resus Negative (wanna-be vampire), Cleo Farr (mummy), and Luke Watson (half-werewolf) are three kids living on Scream Street. When they realize that a baby has been replaced with a fork-tongued changeling by dark fairies, they need to figure out a plan to get the baby back. Scary adventures ensue in the 12th installment of this hugely popular series. *Ages: 8 to 12 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.



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From Womb to World

Back to Sleep

By Juli Fraga

Baby safety is on the forefront of any new parent's mind. As your little ones make their way from the womb to the world, it's normal to wonder and worry about how to keep them safe and healthy.

One of the most common worries among new parents is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), which is the leading cause of death for infants 1 month to 1 year of age. While the exact cause of SIDS remains unknown, there are several things you can do to increase the sleep safety of your baby.

First, educate yourself about the risk factors. Some of the key risk factors are outlined below. Discuss any concerns with your pediatrician, who can offer additional information.

Risk factors

Many SIDS deaths occur between 2 and 4 months of age. Prematurity, low birth weight, stomach sleeping, and overheating from excessive sleepwear increase the risk of SIDS.

Prematurity and/or low birth weight increase the risk for SIDS because the baby's lungs may not be fully developed. If your baby is a preemie and your doctor is concerned, you may be sent home with a monitor to track your baby's breathing.

Prematurity, low birth weight, stomach sleeping, and overheating from excessive sleepwear increase the risk of SIDS.

Stomach sleeping is one of the leading risk factors, because placing a baby on his or her stomach narrows the airway. The "Back to Sleep" campaign educates parents about the importance of placing the baby to sleep on his or her back. Since the American Academy of Pediatrics began the campaign in 1994, SIDS deaths have dropped by 50 percent. Of course, as babies grow and develop, they may eventually roll onto their stomachs, and at this point, babies have more neck control and it's safe to let them sleep in this position.

Overheating also increases the risk of SIDS. One theory is that hotter rooms can cause babies to go into a deeper sleep, making it difficult for them to awaken. Control the temperature of the baby's room or sleeping area and make sure the room does not get too hot. Keep it at a comfortable temperature for an adult to ensure the baby does not overheat.

Safety tips

- Make sure your baby has a firm mattress for sleeping. If you are co-sleeping, use a separate co-sleeper.

- Use a sleep sack to keep your baby warm and avoid pillows, blankets, and toys in the crib, bassinet, or co-sleeper.
- While they are decorative, steer clear of bumper pads in the crib, as they increase the risk of suffocation.
- Keep your baby away from secondhand smoke.
- Pacifiers have been linked to a lower risk of SIDS. Don't worry if your baby rejects the pacifier, but if your baby does use one, it's okay to use it for sleep.
- Some babies have gastrointestinal problems, such as GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), that may cause them to spit up frequently. If your baby has GERD, follow your pediatrician's recommendation for different sleep positions.
- Evidence suggests that getting vaccines on time may cut the risk of SIDS in half.
- Get regular prenatal care and baby well visits.
- A large German study conducted in 2009 indicates that even partial breastfeeding for at least 6 months reduces the risk of SIDS.

Co-sleeping

In America, the co-sleeping debate is as varied as sleep training. Everyone has an opinion, and some opinions may sound like judgments. "Co-sleeping increases the risk of SIDS" is not an uncommon belief. However, there is no clear evidence that this is true. In fact, new research indicates that sleeping in the same room as your baby may lower the risk of SIDS dramatically. If you choose to share a bed with your baby, make sure you are using a firm mattress and/or a co-sleeper, which you can place onto your bed for a firmer sleeping surface.

Products that reduce SIDS

There are a lot of products, such as sleep positioners and pillows, that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, there is no evidence that these products decrease risk and many have not been clinically tested to do so.

Additional resources

American SIDS Institute: offers 24-hour information and education for families and pediatricians. 1.800.232.7437

Back to Sleep Hotline: provides information, support, and referrals. 1.800.505.2742

National SIDS Resource Center: www.sidscenter.org ♦

Juli Fraga is a maternal mental health psychologist, writer, and mother. Her essays about motherhood and psychology have appeared in Psychology Today, The New York Times, and The Washington Post. She lives in San Francisco with her husband, daughter, and their two cats.

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Knowledge is Power

By Tara Hardesty
Photographs by Carolyn Soling

As a parent, it seems that there is a never-ending list of things to worry about. When it comes to your child’s safety, if you are like me, you may be quick to catastrophize, replaying an episode of *Law & Order* in your head while substituting the main characters with your family members.

A good way to combat these fears is with facts. Having accurate information on the laws that pertain to your child can make a significant difference in how you handle the worries of parenting, and help you navigate decisions big and small.

In order to sort out the fact from fiction in child-safety laws and to get answers to commonly asked questions on this topic, we reached out to a husband-and-wife team who both work for the city of San Francisco.

Attorney Jenn Williams serves as an administrative hearing officer as well as a contributing author to *Seiser & Kumuli on California Juvenile Courts Practice and Procedures*. Her husband, Bassey Obot, is a sergeant with the San Francisco Police Department. Both have a tremendous experience and knowledge when it comes to our city’s laws. They are also parents.

First, I wanted to hear about the experience of being a parent and a public servant at once. “Now that I am a mom I see things with a totally different set of eyes,” Jenn said. “Witnessing child abuse and neglect takes a greater emotional toll once you have kids of your own.” Bassey agreed: “I see a lot investigating crimes, a lot of common threads that make me more aware. Especially in San Francisco, you want to keep your head on a swivel.”

While it is natural to think of the extremes as parents, both Jenn and Bassey talked extensively about the importance of day-to-day parenting, like teaching your child basic traffic safety rules. Also, common-sense guidelines, like being alert to your surroundings, should not be overlooked, especially in a dense urban area like San

Francisco.

“You are an expert in your area/community. If something doesn’t look or feel right, it probably isn’t. Trust your gut,” Bassey said. He also emphasized the use of the police non-emergency line, which collects tips that give police the leverage to look into something that may be suspicious. In San Francisco, call 415.553.0123 for situations that require that police, but do not require an immediate response. Call 311 for other situations that require city services other than the police, like the removal of needles from the sidewalk.

We get caught up in our own responsibilities, but remember to learn from your kids too. “Listen to what your children tell you. They are one of our best sources of information. Pay attention to what they say about what they observe or feel,” Jenn said.

Another factor to consider is new parent friends, and how you integrate them into your family. “Just because you get along with new parents when you go out to dinner with them doesn’t mean they may be the best to watch

your kids,” Bassey said. He encourages parents to spend time with caregivers and look into things closely when it relates to your children.

Regardless of the age of your child or how long you have been a parent, it is important to always have a healthy sense of checking things out. Jenn reiterates trusting your gut, saying, “Put your instincts first when it comes to the safety of your kids, even when doing so may be socially difficult.”

The laws

With so much information available, it can be unclear what safety measures fall under parental discretion versus those mandated by law. Below are answers to commonly asked questions.

Editor’s Note: The information in this article is not meant to be legal advice; this is not a legal document.

What is the law regarding children’s safety seats?

A child under 8 years old riding in a car must be in a child restraint system in the backseat, and those between 8 and 16 years old must use a child safety seat or seat belt, unless a parent is present in the car as a passenger and not driving.

There are some exceptions to this rule: for example, a court may exempt requirements for a child by age, weight, or size if using a child safety seat would be impractical because of physical unfitness, medical condition, or size, and that a special needs system is not available. In addition, in the case of a life-threatening emergency, a seat belt is OK if no passenger restraint system is available.

Moreover, a child weighing more than 40 lbs. may ride in the backseat with only a lap belt when the backseat of the vehicle is not equipped with a combination lap and shoulder safety belt. If a child is under 8 but is at least 4’9”, the child may use a safety belt instead of a child restraint system.

Likewise, a child under 8 may ride in an appropriate safety seat in the front if: 1) there is no back seat, 2) the rear seats are side- or rear-facing, 3) the restraint seat cannot be installed properly in the rear seat, or 4) for medical reasons. However, California law states a child cannot ride in a rear-facing

system in the front seat of a car with an active front passenger airbag.

Finally, car seat manufacturers require rear-facing seats until age 1 and 20 lbs. Check the manufacturer’s guidelines for your specific seat. If you have questions about these rules, contact your local police station for assistance.

Note: At the time of publication, Assembly Bill 53 had passed and is awaiting the governor’s signature. This bill requires a parent to secure a child who is under 2 in a rear-facing child passenger restraint system unless the child weighs 40 lbs. or more or is at least 40 inches tall.

Can you bring your child to bars in California?

This is governed by the Alcohol and Beverage Control Department and varies by establishment. If food is served, it is generally alright.

Is it OK to leave a child in a car?

A child under the age of 6 can be left in the car with someone who is at least 12 if the car is not on, and there is no risk to the child. The wording “no risk to the child” leaves the law open to interpretation, both by parents and bystanders.

When does my child need to wear a helmet?

Anyone under 18 years old must wear a

helmet whenever riding on wheels. This includes roller or inline skates, non-motorized scooters, skateboards, as well as bicycles. The helmet must be fastened and securely fitted, and meet standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) or the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). This also applies to children in a restraining seat attached to a bicycle or in a trailer towed by a bicycle.

How do I know if my day care provider has properly childproofed her home?

Childcare providers, by law, must meet certain state requirements and guidelines (limits on the number of children in their care, for example). Childcare licensing workers inspect day care programs statewide—and cite health and safety violators. (They track and investigate complaints as well.)

You can call your local childcare licensing office to check on any childcare provider’s license and record. To locate your local office and learn tips on finding and choosing childcare, visit www.cclcd.ca.gov (click on Facility Facts).

At what age can children walk to school alone?

There is no law in California dictating a minimum age for walking to school alone. According to the National Highway Traffic



Safe Administration, children, even of the same age, vary in their readiness to handle traffic situations, such as choosing a safe time to cross a street. In general, children are not ready to cross a street alone until age 10.

It is less a matter of minimum age, and more about whether children have demonstrated that they can safely walk and cross streets independently. Ideally, parents are a central figure in their children’s safety education. Parents have the best opportunities to effectively assess their individual child’s skills and teach safe behavior in the course of daily life.

At what age can children stay at home alone?

There is no minimum age in California. Many people think that 12 is a reasonable age, but every situation—and every child—is different. It depends on various factors: the child’s level of maturity and judgment, the time of day, the safety of the neighborhood, and the proximity of another responsible adult who could be available in an emergency. The legal question would be whether or not the child would be put at risk if left alone—whether you could be endangering or neglecting the child.

At what age can they babysit?

There is no legal age identified for this in California.

Is it illegal for an adult stranger to contact my child online?

Yes, in certain circumstances. An adult cannot send sexually explicit or obscene material to a child in an effort to seduce the child. It is also against the law for an adult with sexual motives to seek to seduce a child online or to arrange an in-person meeting with the child—even if the adult fails to show up. Just setting up such a meeting is a misdemeanor that could lead to a year in jail. If the meeting does take place, the adult could face four years in state prison for online enticement.

If your child is solicited or sent obscene material online, contact local law enforcement and the 24-hour CyberTipline at 1.800.843.5678 or at cybertipline.com. By law, Internet service providers must also report any child sexual exploitation or child pornography to the federally mandated tip line.

What should I do if I suspect a child is being abused or neglected?



Parents have the best opportunities to effectively assess their individual child’s skills and teach safe behavior in the course of daily life.

Call your local Child Protective Services hotline, 415.558.2650 in San Francisco, or contact the local police. The youngster could be at great risk. Unless it can be proven that you knowingly filed a false report, you cannot be held liable if you are wrong.

Will the alleged abuser find out that I filed a report?

It depends. You can remain anonymous unless you are a mandated reporter.

What is a mandated reporter?

Because abused and neglected children are at such great risk, individuals in certain professions are required by law to report suspected abuse. The list of so-called mandated reporters generally includes teachers, school personnel, doctors, nurses, police officers and firefighters, as well as certain other professionals who regularly come in contact with youngsters.

Mandated reporters must notify authorities immediately and file a written report within 36 hours. They simply must have a “reasonable suspicion” that abuse or neglect

has occurred; they do not have to have any specific medical indication.

A final perspective

Parenting today requires a discerning mind and a vice grip on your instincts. As we heard from parents who are in the business of knowing and working with the law, the most important thing you can do is trust your gut and pay attention to the voices that tell you something doesn’t feel right. And go the extra mile when researching anything regarding your child’s safety.

If you have questions that were not answered in this article, do not hesitate to reach out to your local police department or to another parenting resource that you trust. ♦

Sources: California State Bar’s Kids and the Law: An A to Z Guide for Parents, California DMV, and state Penal and Vehicle Codes

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



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Brush Up on Your Media Savvy (and Stop Feeling Guilty)

By Shannon Brennan
Photographs by Albena Ilieva

Ask any parent about the tactics they’re employing to keep their kids from seeing inappropriate media content, and you will likely get a response that includes the following: a look of panic, a creeping, shame-filled blush, and a breathless, “I know I should be doing more, but I just hand her the iPad with some vetted videos and edutainment apps on it and hope for the best.”

Whether you casually poll your parent friends, post an inquiry in one of your mom-centric Facebook groups, or make a beeline for the IT department at work to see what the tech-savvy folks amongst us are doing, the approach is nearly universal, and we’re feeling really guilty about it.

Just the facts

It’s no wonder that we’re worrying, given the ubiquitousness of media-viewing devices and the frequency of kids’ media exposure, even in our screen-time-shamed culture. Seventy-two percent of children ages 8 and under have used a mobile device for some type of media activity, such as playing games, watching videos, or using apps. Additionally, 38 percent of children under 2 have used a mobile device for

media, according to findings from the 2013 Zero-to-Eight, Children’s Media Use in America study from Common Sense Media. Although children are experiencing increased exposure to mobile media, TV is still the dominant media force amongst children, with the same study showing that 58 percent of children under 8 watch TV at least once per day, and another 24 percent watch TV at least once per week.

In total, Common Sense Media found that children under 8 average about two hours of screen time across media per day, and that media consumption is something that increases as kids get older. Ninety-two

percent of teens report going online daily, including 24 percent who say they are online “almost constantly,” according to an April 2015 study from Pew Research Center. The 2014 Teen Internet Safety Survey conducted by the Futures Company found that, on average, teens spend 5 hours and 38 minutes online every day.

In short, it is very likely that your kids have access to media and the Internet, and that access is likely to increase as they get older. Thus, understanding how to help them engage with various forms of media safely becomes increasingly important as they get older.

Worry less

While kids’ media exposure is a very real phenomenon, the thing that parents most worry about—that their children will unknowingly interact with predators and strangers online (*Realities of Cyber Parenting*, Intel, June 2015)—is a fairly sensationalized concern.

If you’re feeling anxious about the dangers of predators online, take a deep breath and know that a few basic tactics, as recommended for parents in the FBI’s *A Parent’s Guide to Internet Safety*, can dramatically reduce the remaining risk:

- Talk with your kids about the dangers of communicating with strangers online.
- Emphasize the importance of never giving out personal information online and never going to meet someone they’ve met online.
- Keep computers in common rooms in the house when possible.
- Know your kids’ passwords so that you can check in if you notice them engaging in any suspicious activity.

Talk first, talk often

Rather than fretting about the rare tragic possibilities, the recommendation is that parents channel the bulk of their energy into educating their kids early on, sharing information with them about how to be safe, as well as how to be good online citizens. Caroline Knorr, parenting editor at Common Sense Media, suggests that parents “talk [with their kids] about establishing healthy habits, so as they grow and spend more time online,

Media and Internet safety should be an ongoing, age-appropriate conversation that you have with your kids on a regular basis.

they have a solid foundation.”

Focusing on conversation and education as the primary approach to addressing kids and media seems to be the consensus amongst technology and safety experts. This shouldn’t be a “talk” that you schedule to have once with your children and then tick off your list. Media and Internet safety should be an ongoing, age-appropriate conversation that you have with your kids on a regular basis. Suggested guidelines for these conversations include:

- **Establish expectations** Let your kids know what you expect from their online behavior.
- **Cover the whys** When possible, explain the “whys” behind your rules so they can start to learn how to make better decisions for themselves.
- **Be a good online citizen** Help your children understand that being a good person doesn’t stop when they join the virtual world and encourage good manners online, as much as off.
- **Talk consequences** Online actions have consequences, just as much as offline actions do. Help your kids understand this.
- **Passwords** Remind your children to never tell anyone their passwords. This one is critical for helping kids manage their online privacy, even before they truly understand what online privacy means.
- **Speak up** If your kids see something online that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, they need to know that they can talk to you about it; encourage them to speak up.

Listen, listen, listen

If you’ve ever asked an 8-year-old to explain to you why they like to play Minecraft, you know how eager kids are to share their media-related passions. Try tapping into that passion and commit to asking questions and listening.

If you establish early on that you will listen with rapt attention when they tell you about

their favorite app-of-the-moment or TV show of the month, they will tell you everything you want to know, and probably much, much more. This will help to open the lines of communication so that you can turn on that fine-tuned parenting ear and listen for any red flags.

Be curious, stay educated

You do not have to be a technology expert or children’s programming guru to develop a healthy curiosity about the media your kids are consuming. Simply making a commitment to tune in from time to time can go a long way.

Know what shows your kids are watching, and whether they are watching them on a tablet, mobile device, or good, old-fashioned TV. Know what sites they are visiting online and what apps they are engaging with, as well as the uses those sites and apps are intended for. Take time to tune in yourself, whether sitting and watching an episode with your kids or playing the mobile game they seem so enchanted with. These actions certainly don’t require a degree in computer science, and can go a long way toward upping your comfort level as a parent and keeping your kids safe.



Why the low-tech approach?

All of the approaches discussed thus far have been low-tech, with conversation and education at the core. Why not spend more time thinking about parental controls and putting devices on lockdown? Wouldn't it be easier to just build bigger fences?

"All-out bans and trying to control everything your kids see, for one thing, would just be exhausting, and a full-time job," explains Caroline Knorr. "For another, all that would do is force your kids to be sneaky and circumvent your rules by going underground. This is going to make it much harder to have open and honest conversations about what they see online, and how to handle it." Along with that advice, Knorr reminds us that the Internet is a great learning resource, and that simply cracking down on access also gets in the way of the good stuff that's out there for kids to engage with and learn from. "The Internet isn't going away anytime soon, so teaching kids digital citizenship skills early will help them in school, when they get a job, and throughout the rest of their lives."



Staying current

The media landscape changes incredibly quickly—from emerging social media to shifts in privacy policies and FTC guidelines. Staying up to speed on what you should be doing as a parent is just as important as taking action in the short term.

A big part of staying current goes back to the low-tech approach of talking to your kids and asking them about what new sites and apps they and their friends are using, as well as talking to other parents and keeping yourself connected.

Some independent resources geared at keeping kids safe online and when engaging with media include:

- Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org)
- Enough is Enough (enough.org)
- Wired Safety (wiredsafety.org)
- CyberAngels (cyberangels.org) ♦

Shannon Brennen lives in Noe Valley with her husband, 10-month-old son, and a French bulldog named Fergus. She and her family enjoy long walks at Fort Funston, Sunday picnics in the Presidio, and socializing with their grown-up friends between baby nap times. She spends her days working in digital marketing in the wine industry.

Tactical Online Safety Tips to Implement Today

We asked Caroline Knorr, Parenting Editor at Common Sense Media, to share some quick tips that parents could implement on your lunch break. Here's some of what she shared with us:

If you have little kids who love YouTube. Go to YouTube and add age-appropriate videos to your Watch Later tab. The videos will be added to your Watch Later section and you can instruct your children to go to the Watch Later channel when they go on YouTube. This will give you some peace of mind that they will not randomly search for content on YouTube and run into age-inappropriate videos.

If your kid uses social media. Check whether their profile is public or private. This is the setting that allows the profile to be viewable by any other user of the same service. Some services like Instagram and Tumblr are public by default, so you have to manually set them to private. If you make them private, they are non-viewable by anyone who is not a "friend" or otherwise "following" your kid.

If you have an iPad or iPhone. Set up Guided Access. This "freezes" the iPad or iPhone on a single app, restricting your kid from clicking out of that app until you "unfreeze" it. Guided Access can be found by tapping "Settings," then "Accessibility" on your iPhone. This is a useful feature to reduce distractions and limit your kid's risk of encountering age-inappropriate content.

If you have a tween/teen who uses social media. Download the apps they're using so you can see how they work. This will be an eye-opening experience. A few popular apps to experiment with: Instagram, Yik Yak, Kik, Snapchat, and Tinder. Once you see how they work, you can help guide your tweens and teens to use these apps responsibly and respectfully.

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What Does Safety Really Look Like?

By Anna Gracia
Photographs by Whitney Cooley

Our preoccupation with child safety comes early. Like, pregnancy early. Don't eat sushi or soft cheese—even though the Japanese and French do it. Don't drink coffee or wine—even though pretty much the whole of South America, Europe, and Australia think it's fine in moderation. Don't ride roller coasters. (OK, that one's probably a good idea.)

After our babies are born, our obsession seems to amplify: they must eat vegetables every day, but not carrots because of their nitrate levels; fruit, but only from the “clean 15.” And it doesn't end at food. The list of dilemmas is endless: Which car seat has the highest crash test ratings? Is a BPA-free plastic lunchbox good enough, or should food only be packed in glass containers? What about stainless steel? How much radiation is my child absorbing through my cell phone? Is it ever acceptable to leave my child unsupervised—at home, in a car, or walking on the street?

U.S. vs. abroad

The high-profile case of Danielle and Sasha Meitiv—Maryland parents who were investigated by CPS for letting their 10- and 6-year-old children walk a mile home from a park by themselves—ignited a scorching debate about parental supervision in the US. While many were horrified by the idea of young children walking outside unsupervised, parents in a number of other countries do precisely that. Germany, in fact, has official recommendations and laws of what children should be able to do at certain ages. For example, a child as young as 6 can go to the movies unaccompanied, and after-school care stops at age 10, when children are considered ready to spend the afternoon alone.

The World Values Survey—developed by social scientists around the world to study changing values and their impact on social and political life—asks individuals around the world what they think is most important when raising a child. The survey has been conducted six times over the past 24 years and has included over 400,000 responses. The latest results, released earlier this year, showed child independence as one of the top priorities for parents in the EU and Asia.

These findings reflect not just sentiment but actual practice in these countries. In Sweden, it is common to see 3-year-olds biking down the street or climbing tall trees with little or no adult supervision. Yet, Sweden has the lowest rate of child injury in the world. Norwegian researcher Ellen Hansen Sandseter explains it this way: “The most important safety protection you can give a child is to let them take...risks.”

Our country's vague laws may be partly to blame for our over-cautiousness when it comes to child safety. Many states, California included, have no specified age at which children can walk alone, stay home alone, or even stay in a car alone. Instead, our regulations are littered with indefinite language like “if” and other gray area vocabulary (see Tara's feature for more on these laws on page 16). While there are no hard figures on the number of parents who have been arrested for leaving their child unattended—in a car or otherwise—a quick

Google news search turns up story after story like these from recent years:

- A father in Ohio was arrested after his 8-year-old ditched the church bus and went to play with neighborhood friends instead of going to youth group.
- A father left his 2-year-old in a car at a CVS parking lot for “several minutes,” according to the police investigation. He was arrested and charged with endangering the welfare of a child.
- A Connecticut mother was arrested for leaving her infant for 5 minutes in a locked car, air-conditioned via remote starter. There were no keys in the ignition.

Some of our other cautious practices, however, stem from more clearly defined regulations. Bicycle helmet usage is common in the U.S., with legislation mandating its use in 22 states and over 200 localities. Famously bicycle-friendly Europe, on the other hand, has only a handful of countries with even partial laws of the sort. Denmark and the Netherlands, in fact, have some of the lowest helmet usage in the world, despite strong cycling cultures.

Many people in those countries believe, as some studies suggest, that wearing helmets is actually less safe because cars are more likely to pass a helmeted cyclist, and pass more closely. Also, that forcing people to wear helmets discourages cycling in the first place, thereby reducing the number of cyclists on the road and making it less safe for those who are.

Many states also abide by Megan's Law, which makes the list of registered sex offenders and their addresses public information. It is not uncommon for parents to take a look at their local list, sometimes impacting their decisions on where to move or when to allow their kids outside unsupervised.

Opponents of the registry point to the fact that sex offenders have the second lowest recidivism rate (2.5 percent for rape and 5.3 percent for sexual assault after three years) and that in 93 percent of sex abuse cases, the victim already knows the perpetrator. Additionally, loss of relationships and employment from being publicly named, and the housing location restrictions often causes

them to become homeless—further isolating them from society and possibly raising the risk of a relapse.

Additionally, our national registry has ballooned to 760,000 people (105,000 in California alone) with crimes like public urination, streaking, and consensual sex between teenagers qualifying for inclusion in

The most important safety protection you can give a child is to let them take...risks.

some states, alongside crimes like rape and possession of child pornography. Other countries, including the U.K., South Africa, and New Zealand all have sex offender registries, but only the U.S. avails its list to the public, giving parents one more thing to worry about.

The upside of vigilance

Despite our general propensity to overprotect in comparison to other countries, there are some benefits. Many safety measures championed by advocates in the U.S. have drastically reduced injuries and fatalities to children.

A century ago, infectious diseases posed the primary threat to children's health. Today, we have access to a wide variety of vaccines to prevent many of these diseases—everything from polio to chickenpox to tetanus. Influenza is the only vaccine-preventable disease that even makes the top 10 leading causes of death in children today.

Diphtheria, with 206,000 cases and more than 15,000 deaths in 1921 (two years before its toxoid was licensed) has only appeared once since 2004.

Despite this evidence, vaccine skeptics have resisted getting their children vaccinated. The most recent anti-vaccine movement began with Andrew Wakefield's now-discredited 1998 paper on the link between autism and the vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella, but remains a hotly contested issue in the U.S., especially after a large measles scare earlier this year.

The outbreak, spreading across 24 states and infecting 117 people, prompted California



lawmakers to pass SB277—a law requiring all students enrolled in school to be fully vaccinated (exempting those with medical exclusions). While many parents are still registering their outrage over what they consider to be a severe governmental overreach, it is worth noting that there were 668 registered measles cases last year in the U.S. alone. In 2000, there were only 86 cases.

Contrast this law with the public health policy of countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, where polio is still endemic, with new cases being reported nearly every month. Polio—a disease that’s been almost completely eradicated from our vocabulary in the U.S., save for a history lesson on FDR.

Many foreign governments lack the financial and human resources for comprehensive vaccination programs, instead relying on independent health organizations and foreign aid groups who must prioritize on which diseases and areas to focus their efforts. As a result, 20 million people worldwide still suffer from measles, maternal and neonatal tetanus persist as public health problems in 25 countries, and the Hib vaccine, which prevents meningitis and pneumonia, has only 18 percent coverage in the Western Pacific (compared to 90 percent in the Americas).

Another public health policy with great impact has been our recent legislation of tobacco. With stricter regulations from the FDA on marketing, increased tobacco

Our perspective on safety changes based not only on geography, but the socioeconomic status of our society as well.

education, and recent proposals to increase the legal age to 21 to buy cigarettes, our country is attempting to eliminate adolescent dependency on tobacco. Cigarette smoking among U.S. high school students actually dropped to 15.7 percent in 2013, the lowest rate in 22 years. However, illness and death from secondhand exposure remains a threat, especially to children. The California Environmental Protection Agency estimates that secondhand smoke is responsible for tens of thousands of infant hospitalization from upper respiratory infections and causes



430 SIDS deaths annually in the U.S. To combat these statistics, many cities around the country have implemented indoor smoking bans, and seven states (California included) ban smoking in cars with minors present.

The impact of wealth on safety

Parenting is an exercise in conditioning our children to the cultural norms of our society. Our perspective on safety changes based not only on geography, but the socioeconomic status of our society as well.

Access to choices about safety can be severely restricted by our means. While CPS ultimately cleared the free-range Meitivs, Debra Harrell of South Carolina, a working

single mother on minimum wage, was arrested for doing virtually the same thing. Harrell had to work her shift at McDonald’s and didn’t have childcare for her 9-year-old, so she let her daughter play at a nearby park, equipped with a cell phone and house keys—a decision that cost her 17 days in jail and her job. With the national average rate of babysitters at \$10 per hour and a federal minimum wage of \$7.25, parents like Harrell are forced into making decisions that may not necessarily reflect their stance on safety.

Children in low-income families (45 percent

of kids under 18 in the U.S. fall into this category) suffer greater safety risks in nearly every category: nutritional status, unintentional injury and death rates from things like drowning and burns, and even food-borne illnesses. They are more likely to be exposed to violence and are disproportionately affected by mental health challenges.

Furthermore, children in relatively poor countries are often even worse off. Millions of parents across India, China, and Nepal pile their children onto the front of their motorcycles because they cannot afford cars, let alone car seats. One third of Indonesian children under 10 have tried smoking because there is no age restriction on who can buy or smoke cigarettes. Then there is the myriad of safety issues most of us never even think about: child labor, sex trafficking, or civil war.

These comparisons of safety are not meant to make us feel guilty for our privileges, wring our hands over how we could be better parents, or start a culture war a la *Bringing Up Bébé* or *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. Child safety is not a competition. There are no clear winners of who is doing it right, but there are clear losers of who is most at risk. So perhaps while we are contemplating our own personal safety standards, we can use our information and advantages to help those battling uncertainties larger than our own. ♦

Anna is a writer who usually mixes in a few jokes to lighten up her serious worldview. You can read more from her at TheSnarkyReviewer.com.

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Safety First!

By Stef Tousignant

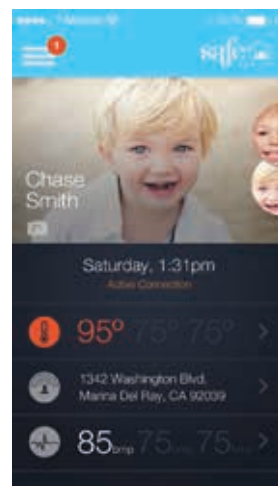
Gizmos and gadgets to keep your kids safe at home and on the go.

Paxie Bracelet

\$175 plus a \$9.99/month subscription

This GPS tracker comes in an array of colors and patterns—one for every personality! This bracelet is unique in that it also boasts an activity tracker that reports your child's heartbeat, temperature, and more.

www.oursafefamily.com



Nest Cam

\$199

Whether you are checking in on the house when on vacation or just making sure the dog isn't on the couch while you are at work, you can tap into this camera's live feed right from your phone—you can even tell the dog to get down with the built-in microphone! It can also be used as a baby monitor—a GGMG forum favorite!

www.nest.com



Nest Protect

\$99

Studies show that kids respond best to the sound of a human voice when sleeping. The Nest Protect is a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector rolled into one. It uses a human voice to alert you of an emergency, as well as the location of the emergency within your home, so you can head the other way.

www.nest.com



Door Monkey

\$12.95

This clever device installs on your interior doors with one click and no tools and keeps little fingers from being pinched, while still allowing for airflow throughout your home.

www.doormonkey.com



Safe Plate Outlet Covers

\$12 for a pack of three

Never lose an outlet cover again with this outlet plate that has spring loaded covers and super easy installation.

www.amazon.com



iSwimBand

\$39

Perfect not only for kids who can swim, but also for those who can't. You program this smart device with the connected app based on how long each individual child should be under water (if at all!). If that time is exceeded a SUPER loud alarm is set off on your phone. The device can be attached to goggles or to your toddler with a tamper resistant wristband.

www.iswimband.com

Rhoost Table Corner Guards

\$14.99 for a pack of four

Typical foam corner guards can take the beauty right out of your beautiful dining or coffee table. These corner guards from Rhoost are attractive, non-permanent, easy to install, and come in three colors.

www.rhoost.com



CARES Airplane Safety Harness

\$75

Skip lugging your heavy car seat onto the plane and strap your child (22 to 44 pounds) into the FAA-approved CARES harness, which weighs less than one pound and fits into any carry-on bag!

www.kidsflysafe.com



Balance Buddy Push Bar

\$20

Your back will thank you once you install this awesome push bar. Simply attach and push your new cyclist along until they are comfortable riding on their own. The Balance Buddy is height adjustable and has a cushioned non-slip safety grip.

www.amazon.com



KidCo Anti-Tip TV Straps

\$12

You have thought of all the ways to protect your children in an earthquake, but have you thought about what will happen to your flat screen TV when the shaking starts? Add these straps to the back of your TV, then attach to the wall or your media center to secure.

www.KidCo.com

Stef Tousignant is the head of marketing for the free mobile app Mommy Nearest. She lives in the Inner Richmond with her high school sweetheart and two boys (3 and 7) who love to play air guitar and explore Golden Gate Park. www.mommynearest.com

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

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

Vendors who would like to partner with GGMG, please contact feedback@ggmg.org.



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

KIDS ACTIVITIES

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



Weekly Playgroup at Calvary Presbyterian Church

A weekly playdate to enjoy mommy/baby camaraderie, music, stories, and more.

DATE: Wednesdays in October
TIME: 10 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 2515 Fillmore St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Drop in. All ages and caregivers are welcome.



Mazel Tots, Bagels, and Babies at Congregation Emanu-El

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

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

REGISTRATION: Drop in. All ages are welcome.

JAMaROO Yoga at Pacific Heights Health Club

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

DATE: Tuesday, October 6
TIME: 9:30 to 10 a.m.
PLACE: 2356 Pine St.
COST: \$10

REGISTRATION: Ages 2 to 3 years. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Play Lab at seesaw

Led by a child psychologist, this class addresses peer interaction, play, and social learning skills.

DATE: Wednesday, October 7
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 600 Octavia St., Suite A
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 18 to 36 months. Register by emailing info@seesawsf.com.

It’s Yoga, Movers at It’s Yoga Kids

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

DATE: Friday, October 9
TIME: 9:30 to 10 a.m. or noon to 12:30 p.m.
PLACE: 569 Ruger St.
COST: \$15 cash; \$18 credit card

REGISTRATION: Register by emailing info@itsyogakids.com.

Playdate at Congregation Sherith Israel

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

DATE: Monday, October 12
TIME: 10:30 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 2266 California St.
COST: \$3

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to 4 years. Drop-in.

Storytime Art at JAMaROO Kids

This class combines the joys of reading and art.

DATE: Wednesday, October 14
TIME: 10:15 to 10:45 a.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: \$10

REGISTRATION: Ages 3 to 5 years. Introductory rate. Register at www.jamarookids.com or call 415.614.2001.

Tiny Tumbling at Recess Urban Recreation

Tiny Tumbling Class introduces movement to beginner walkers and climbers.

DATE: Thursday, October 15
TIME: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Class: 11 to 11:45 a.m.
Free Play: 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$15 per parent + child unit

REGISTRATION: Ages 12 to 24 months. Register by emailing info@recess-sf.com.



Mommy Baby Yoga at Carmel Blue

Mommy baby yoga is a unique and meaningful way to connect with your baby while reconnecting with your body. Please bring a blanket for your baby to lie on and any of their favorite toys.

DATE: Thursday, October 15
TIME: 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: \$17/class or \$75 for five-class series

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to pre-crawlers. Register at www.carmelblue.com/calendar.



Baby Boot Camp at Crissy Field

Try this innovative stroller fitness program to help regain or enhance pre-pregnancy fitness levels.

DATE: Friday, October 16
TIME: 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: 99 Yacht Rd. (meet at the landing to the west of the parking lot)
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Participants must be at least 6 weeks postpartum. Register by emailing kathleen.laipply@babybootcamp.com.

Infant Sensory Exploration at Recess Urban Recreation

Join your child in exploring sensory play through light, texture, sound, and scent. Come ready to play, investigate, and discover new ways you can engage your child’s senses with everyday household items.

DATE: Friday, October 16
TIME: 11 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.
Free Play: 11 a.m. to noon
Class: noon to 12:45 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$15/parent + child

REGISTRATION: Ages 4 to 12 months. Register by emailing info@recess-sf.com.

Interactive Playgroup at Children’s Council San Francisco

Learn how to build connections with children through play! Child development experts lead engaging play sessions with activities that you can use at home.

DATE: Tuesday, October 20
TIME: 10 to 11 a.m.
PLACE: 445 Church St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 3 to 6 years. Register by emailing aaron@childrenscouncil.org.

Le You You Mandarin Music at seesaw

Children will sing songs in Mandarin and enjoy music and movement.

DATE: Tuesday, October 20
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 600 Octavia St., Suite A
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 6 months to 3 years. Introductory rate. Register by emailing info@seesawsf.com.

Totshop: Peekadoodle Pumpkin Patch at Peekadoodle Kidsclub

Your little goblin will create a festive decoration for home, work on pumpkin art, and make delicious pumpkin chocolate chip cookies! Get ready for a howling good time.

DATE: Tuesday, October 20
TIME: 11:15 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 900 North Point St., Suite F100
COST: FREE

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

New! Exploring Ballet at TUTU School West

Explore movement and music through the magic of ballet and leave with a tutu to take home to continue the fun!

DATE: Wednesday, October 21
TIME: 9:30 to 10:15 a.m.
PLACE: 239 West Portal Ave
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Ages 3 to 4 years. Register on BigTent.



Baby Boot Camp at Noe Basketball Courts

Try this innovative stroller fitness program to help regain or enhance pre-pregnancy fitness levels.

DATE: Wednesday, October 21
TIME: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

PLACE: 24th and Douglass streets
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Participants must be at least 6 weeks postpartum. Register by emailing kathleen.laipply@babybootcamp.com.

New! Toddler Ballet Playdate at TUTU School West

Explore movement and music through the magic of ballet and leave with a tutu to take home to continue the fun.

DATE: Wednesday, October 21
TIME: 10:30 to 11:15 a.m.
PLACE: 239 West Portal Ave
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION:AGES Toddlers 18 months to 3 years old with caregiver participation. Register on Big Tent.



Parent Tot Music & Movement at JAMaROO Kids

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

DATE: Thursday, October 22
TIME: 9 to 9:30 a.m.
PLACE: 388 4th Ave.
COST: \$10

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



Baby Food Cooking Class at Carmel Blue

Join nutritionist Virginia Watkins and Cristina Serafyn, from Fresh Baby Bites, for a live and interactive cooking class all about making the best, easiest, and most nutrient-rich foods for your little ones. Ideal for parents of babies 3 to 10 months. Babies are welcome!

DATE: Friday, October 23
TIME: Noon to 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special: \$40

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2609

Date Night Drop-Off at Recess Urban Recreation

Drop your little ones off at Recess for some after-hours fun while you enjoy some grown up time! Pizza and snacks provided, as well as free play in the playspace and an art activity to take home.

DATE: Friday, October 23
TIME: 6 to 9 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$45 per child (+\$15 for siblings)

REGISTRATION: Ages 2.5 to 6 years. Register by emailing info@recess-sf.com.

Introduction to Baby Sign Language with Touch Blue Sky at Carmel Blue

Baby sign language gives babies the opportunity to communicate long before they can verbalize their wants and needs. Taught by Teri Voorhes.

DATE: Saturday, October 24
TIME: Noon to 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special: \$35 for one parent; \$65 for both

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2881

Pumpkin Picking at McClellan’s Organic Dairy in Petaluma

Come pick your perfect pumpkin straight off the vine and join in some fall harvest fun.

DATE: Sunday, October 25
TIME: 10 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 6475 Bodega Ave.
COST: Free for kids 3 and under; \$6 for kids 4 and up; \$4 for adults

REGISTRATION: All ages welcome. Register on BigTent. No refunds.

Understanding Your Toddler at Carmel Blue

In this six-week playgroup series, learn all about your child’s rapidly developing brain, positive parenting approaches to navigate tantrums, the “No!” stage, and other toddler behaviors. Taught by Mini Pullon Lopez of Early Childhood Matters.

DATE: Tuesdays, October 27 to December 8 (no class November 24)
TIME: 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special for first timers: \$180 for one parent

REGISTRATION: Ages 14 months (walkers) to 30 months. Limited to nine attendees. www.tinyurl.com/CB-LearnPlay

Halloween Happy Hour at Recess Urban Recreation

Wear your best costume and enjoy treats, games, crafts, music, and more. The two hour reservation includes free play, art lab time, free snacks for you and your little ones, and more.

DATE: Friday, October 30
TIME: 5 to 7 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$10 per child

REGISTRATION: Ages newborn to 5 years. Register by emailing info@recess-sf.com.

Baby Sign Language Playgroup at Carmel Blue

Our six-week playgroup is a fun opportunity for you to build your signing vocabulary with themes like mealtime, animals, colors, family, bedtime, and more. Taught by Teri Voorhes. Ideal for parents of babies 3 months and up.

- DATE:** Saturdays, October 31 to December 12 (no class November 28)
- TIME:** 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 418 Grant Ave.
- COST:** GGMG special: \$120 for one parent, \$170 for both

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?regevent_action=register&event_id=2902

JUST FOR MOMS

Exclusive GGMG Cooking Class at Katherine Michiels School

Having a hard time coming up with big dinner dishes that can be made in advance and served in a pinch? Have a picky eater at home and looking for ideas to introduce new foods? Learn how to make simple, yummy meals that don't take too much of your time with Chef Annie from Y.U.M. Chefs.

- DATE:** Wednesday, October 28
- TIME:** 7 to 9 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1335 Guererro St.
- COST:** \$15 (a 60% discount for GGMG members)

REGISTRATION: *Space is limited. Register by October 20 at www.yumchefssf.org/ggmg-class-oct-28.*



Buds with Buds

In July, GGMG members gathered at **Sunset Reservoir Brewing Company**. We took over two big tables on the balcony and enjoyed locally brewed beer, appetizers, and dinner with friends (new and old!). Our first event at Sunset Reservoir Brewing Company was a hit so we'll have to do this again soon!



The Endless Summer Party

with Caring Creatives, GGMG, Reso, and Plate took place on August 30 at the Julius Kahn Clubhouse and welcomed kids, families, and a bevy of hardworking volunteers. The wonderful activities offered by Caring Creatives were all inspiring and nature-based, much like the outdoor children's programs that they offer. GGMG packed the park, per usual, with fabulous mama-members, kids, families, and friends sharing support and camaraderie. Reso shared tasty snacks, while tickling ears about the new children's activity-based reservations platform. Plate served delicious, healthy, family friendly food to-go. Thank you to all who made this endless summer one we won't ever forget!

Member Mixers

Have you ever wanted to meet other moms in person instead of online? Our **last Member Mixer of the year** will be held this month and it's not to be missed. Details are on BigTent. Sponsors include Dwell and Earth Baby. Hope to see you there!



On August 18, GGMG hosted its first mixer where GGMG members were invited to bring their non-member friends. With great company and three raffle prizes from Earth Baby, Wala Swim, and Urbansitter, it was a fantastic time at Raven Bar in SOMA.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

PJ Party for Project Night Night

Get your little ones dressed up in their pajamas and join GGMG parents and their kids in a fun evening of giving back to Project Night Night at Books, Inc. We will be joined by very special guest Gianna Marino, who will be reading her new book, *Night Animals*.

- DATE:** Wednesday, October 7
- TIME:** 6 p.m.
- PLACE:** 3515 California St.
- COST:** FREE with donation of a book, blanket, or stuffed animal

REGISTRATION: *Ages 3 to 6. Register on BigTent.*

Give Thanks and Give Back: SF Food Bank Project

Back by popular demand! Join GGMG parents and their kids in a fun morning of giving back to the community. The SF Food Bank processes produce and food for other community organizations.

- DATE:** Sunday, October 25
- TIME:** 9 to 11 a.m.
- PLACE:** 900 Pennsylvania Ave.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: *Ages 4 and up. Register on BigTent.*

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Making a Career Change: Find Work You Love at WeWork Golden Gate

This inspiring workshop, taught by GGMG mom and career coach Julie Houghton, will help you figure out what lights you up and why you were put on this earth (even if you're secretly scared that you're not passionate about anything). Find your confidence and start to take take action towards a more meaningful career.

- DATE:** Wednesday, October 28
- TIME:** Noon to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** The MEZZ Meeting Room, 25 Taylor St.
- COST:** FREE

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/93865456

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS



THE HEIGHTS SPOOKTACULAR HALLOWEEN PLAYDATE

Come join us in costume for spooky decorations, snacks, treats, mini pumpkin decorating, photos, and more on **Sunday, October 25**, from 9:30 to 11 a.m. at Presidio Heights Playground.

REGISTRATION: www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/93943165



MARINA HALLOWEEN MEETUP & HALLOWEEN REVISITED

The Marina neighborhood group will be planning a Halloween meetup event on **October 31**, as well as a Halloween Revisited event in early November so that our little ones can wear their costumes again.

REGISTRATION: *More information will be sent out via BigTent, or for more information, contact Julie Stewart at 917.885.3856 or julie.ohara@gmail.com.*



The Neighborhood Meetups Committee offers neighborhood-based events for GGMG members. GGMG volunteers organize regular playdates, moms-only nights out, book clubs, and special events for the whole family.

To find out about all the events for a neighborhood and RSVP, join the neighborhood subgroup on BigTent for the neighborhood(s) you are interested in at www.bigtent.com/group/subgroup. You are not restricted to only joining one subgroup and you are not required to live in the neighborhood in order to join. Many times, a neighborhood group will extend an invitation to the neighboring hoods, i.e., Noe Valley could include the Mission Neighborhood, and in those cases all Mission Neighborhood subgroup members can RSVP for the Noe event. If you have any questions or ideas for future meetups, please contact the co-chairs at sashafahimi@icloud.com and andreassen.tracy@gmail.com.



NOE VALLEY HALLOWEEN COSTUME FALL FUN

Always wanted to do a dry run for your costume? Prepare for Halloween by joining moms and kids in our neighborhood in costume and enjoy fall fun activities on **Saturday, October 24**, from 1 to 4 p.m. GGMG will provide goodies.

REGISTRATION: *Join Noe Valley Neighborhood Meetups to stay up to date on the details. Go to www.bigtent.com/group/subgroup and click on the link for Noe Valley to join.*



NORTH BEACH DAY AT THE AQUARIUM: WEAR YOUR COSTUME AGAIN!

All ghosts, goblins, superheroes, and princesses welcome on **Monday, November 2**, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at Aquarium of the Bay at Pier 39.

COST: Kids age 12 and under will receive free admission into Aquarium of the Bay. GGMG will cover the cost of one adult per household.

REGISTRATION: *Register by October 26 to andreassen.tracy@gmail.com.*

PARENT EDUCATION

PARENT EDUCATION PRESENTS:

Introduction to Homeschooling with Diane Flynn Keith

Join us at Sports Basement for an informative and inspiring conversation about homeschooling. Learn about the legal ways to homeschool in California, where to find curriculum, educational resources, and activities, how to connect with other homeschoolers for support and socialization, how homeschoolers get into college, and how people successfully homeschool their kids.

DATE: Tuesday, October 6
TIME: 7 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Register on BigTent.

Emotionally Intelligent Discipline at Recess

Symbio comes to Recess to discuss effective ways to set limits, deliver emotionally supportive guidance, and foster the development of a healthy sense of self in your child in the toddler and preschool years.

DATE: Tuesday October 6
TIME: 7:30 to 9 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$40 individual or \$60 per couple; save \$5 with promo code GGMG15

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Intro to Baby Sign Language for Parents, Caregivers, and Siblings at Recess

Learn the benefits of signing with your baby, techniques on how to teach your pre-verbal baby to sign, and fun activities and songs that will help you integrate more than 20 simple signs into your everyday routine.

DATE: Thursday, October 8
TIME: 10:30 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.

COST: \$38 individual (with baby), \$58 couple (with baby); save \$5 with promo code GGMG15

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Managing Sibling Relationships at Recess

Now that number two (or three) has arrived and everyone has adjusted to another person in the house, how do you support the sibling relationship as your children continue to grow? Join Aki Raymer of Parenting Paths to uncover how to best manage the relationships of your multiple-aged children. Get tips about quality time, responsibilities and expectations, resolving fights, and approaching each child in the best way for their developmental stage.

DATE: Tuesday, October 13
TIME: 7:30 to 9 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$38 individual or \$58 couple

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

New Mothers Group at Carmel Blue

Come share the highs, the lows, and the stuff in between in a casual social/support/information group with facilitation. Gain insights, information, and answers to your questions, as well as lasting friendships. Topics include sleep issues, traveling with baby, developmental stages, communicating with your partner, and much more.

DATE: Wednesday, October 14
TIME: 1 to 2:30 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Registration required.
www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2981

Hiring a Nanny: Challenges and Solutions

Hiring a nanny or creating a share care arrangement is not a simple task! Join us at Sports Basement and learn the meaningful steps to hiring a nanny that fits. Creating a share care arrangement with another family will also be discussed. Checklists, forms, and worksheets will be provided, so you have all the tools needed to make this important hiring decision!

DATE: Wednesday, October 14
TIME: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 610 Old Mason St.
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Please email admin@chirpchirpchirp.com.

How to Navigate San Francisco Real Estate Like a Pro

Learn how to navigate the ins and outs of San Francisco real estate from Vicki Valandra of Zephyr Real Estate, one of the city's top realtors and a GGMG mom. This

event is designed to help both buyers and sellers learn how to thrive in a fast-moving market. We will discuss best practices in presenting offers, financing, selling your home, and any other questions the group has.

DATE: Monday, October 19
TIME: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: 2282 Market St. (free parking)
COST: FREE

REGISTRATION: Email priya@zephyrsf.com.

Parenting Your Toddler at Recess

Join Karin Appleton of Early Childhood Matters to learn more about your toddler's rapidly developing brain, and gain positive parenting approaches for typical toddler challenges. This workshop, intended for parents of children 18-36 months old, teaches strategies to both reduce and respond to challenging toddler behaviors (tantrums, hitting, lack of cooperation, etc), while fostering a close connection to your child and nurturing your child's growing independence.

DATE: Tuesday, October 20
TIME: 7:30 to 9 p.m.
PLACE: 470 Carolina St.
COST: \$38 per individual or \$58 per couple; save \$5 with promo code GGMG15

REGISTRATION: www.recess-sf.com/workshops

Prenatal Moms Meetup at Carmel Blue

Do you feel like you're the only one you know who is pregnant? You are not alone! Join us and meet a great group of expectant moms. Our get-togethers are casual and are a great place to gain insight into life with baby or simple birthing tips. This is a great opportunity for moms to get together for support, advice, and to meet other expectant moms.

DATE: Saturday, October 24
TIME: 11 a.m. to noon
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: FREE

RSVP: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=3272

Newborn Care Class at Carmel Blue

Join Midwife Rebecca Plum to learn how to care for your newborn from those very first moments after birth. Receive personalized instruction, hands-on training, and leave feeling more familiar with newborn qualities and behaviors. Both parents are strongly encouraged to attend.

DATE: Sunday, October 25
TIME: 2 to 5 p.m.
PLACE: 1418 Grant Ave.
COST: GGMG special of \$125 for one or two parents with promo code carmelnb

REGISTRATION: www.carmelblue.com/event-registration/?ee=2582

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Committee Spotlight: *Playgroups*

Describe the personality of your committee.

We’re 64 percent choleric, 35 percent sanguine, 1 percent sarcastic (but 100 percent energetic, passionate about connecting mamas, kind, welcoming, and open!).

Why do you do what you do?

Playgroups is about providing a physical space where moms and families can meet face-to-face, turning online connections into real-life friendships. We are here to help build a strong community of caring and support for the families in our neighborhoods. By volunteering, we help build our own family support systems and cultivate meaningful relationships.

What types of activities or projects to you undertake?

Playgroup formation events, recurring playdates, special themed events, and moms night out meetups in our neighborhoods. See page 34 for some of our fun Halloween events happening this month and next!

How do you know when you are making a difference?

...when a mom breathes a sigh of relief because she has a playdate to look forward to.

...when moms get together and share diaper blowout stories and feeding woes, then discover sanity-saving tricks.
...when moms share an instant connection that becomes lifelong.

Who are your current volunteers?

Sue Chan coordinates six formation events a year and a team of four reliable volunteers. Sasha Fahimi and Tracy Andreassen do the heavy lifting as co-chairs for Neighborhood Meetups—they support 30+ hardworking, dedicated neighborhood volunteers.

What’s next?

We have been going through restructuring in an attempt to boost membership and turnout. PLEASE don’t hesitate to offer suggestions to your neighborhood ambassadors!

How can interested GGMG members get involved in the Playgroups Committee?

Check out your neighborhood subgroup’s “About” page for a list of directors and ambassadors in your area. You can also email either Sasha Fahimi at sashafahimi@icloud.com or Tracy Andreassen at andreassen.tracy@gmail.com.

GGMG HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR

Pack a whole Hallow’s Eve worth of fun into your Saturday morning with this celebration of fall, from pumpkin decorating to spooky music, a costume parade, and lots of fun activities for all ages.

Don’t miss our fabulous sponsored treats and activities including:

- Bouncy houses brought to you by UrbanSitter
- Refreshments brought to you by MommyNearest
- Fun family photo booth with free souvenir prints brought to you by RESO
- Organic kids snacks from Fresh Baby Bites
- Cold-pressed juice from Thistle

PLUS...

- Face painting, clowns, jugglers, a sports zone, and a dance party!

Don’t Forget...

- To grab your party favor from Tutu School
- Bring new blankets or like-new books or stuffed animals to donate to Project Night Night

This exclusive event is FREE for GGMG members and their guests. RSVPs are still open, so head over to BigTent to reserve your family’s spot today!

DATE: Saturday, October 10
TIME: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
PLACE: Sharon Meadows in Golden Gate Park (near Sharon Art Studio and the Koret Children’s Playground)
COST: Free for GGMG members, their families, and guests

Member Support: *Resources for Pregnancy and Infant Loss*

October marks Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. The loss of a baby, at any stage, is a devastating experience. Parents often report feeling shock, deep despair, and extreme isolation. You are not alone, and we have gathered some resources that help parents process their grief and connect with other bereaved parents who are mourning the loss of their baby.

HAND of the Peninsula offers empathetic peer support to bereaved parents following miscarriage, stillbirth, interruption of a wanted pregnancy after prenatal diagnosis, or death in the first year of life. www.handsupport.org

Grupo Amparo offers a support group for Spanish-speaking parents and families who have experienced a pregnancy loss or infant death. Please contact facilitator Julie Mitra at 415.764.0211.

Pregnancy After Loss is a support group for parents who are pregnant after a previous miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death, or termination of a wanted pregnancy due to prenatal diagnosis. bit.ly/1DNxNy7

Beyond Choice is a support group for women and their partners who have terminated their pregnancies because of a fetal abnormality. bit.ly/1LW33ml

Helpful books include: *Empty Cradle, Broken Heart, Three Minus One, They Were Still Born, When Men Grieve, Pregnancy After a Loss*

Helpful websites include: glowinthewoods.com, stillstandingmag.com, www.missfoundation.org

Forum Tips: *The ABCs of RSVPs*

To RSVP for a GGMG Event:
On BigTent, find the RSVP page for the event you want to attend and follow the directions to register.

To Cancel an RSVP:
If you have registered via BigTent, check if the registration is still open on the event page.

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

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

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

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



Recruiting Committee: *GGMG Has Some Big Shoes to Fill!*

Are you looking for a leadership role in GGMG? We have several positions open and are looking for great volunteers to help lead some of the various committees and neighborhood meetups. No prior experience volunteering with GGMG is necessary—just bring your passion and enthusiasm! Below is a list of the open leadership positions. Please contact recruiting@ggm.org for more information.

- Kids Activities Co-Chair**
- Neighborhood Meetup Captains for:**
Haight, Mission, Richmond, Sunset
- Operations Co-Chair**
- Social Media Co-Chair**





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I ♥ Mom

Home on the (Free) Range

By Sonya Abrams

In the rosy retrospection of my childhood, I'm running alone through the countryside, summer light hitting my shoulders, charging into the kind of uncomplicated freedom one might find in an old laundry detergent or allergy-medication ad. My parents flicker fuzzily at the edges of my memory, never interfering.

Though my formative years weren't nearly as unsupervised as the imagery my memory conjures, it's true that my parents did step back and let us children steer our own course, allowing a measure of independence that's not only charmingly antiquated today, but even raised the occasional eyebrow in the more freewheeling 1980s.

Weekends and summers were spent in Vermont, where my parents would usher me out the door starting at age 4 or 5, my soggy-diapered little brother toddling behind. We'd wander through woods and cornfields, searching for blackberry bushes and wildlife. While my parents relaxed with beers and swapped stories with other adults at our local swimming hole, we would forge upstream, well out of sight. There were mishaps and oversights, of course, like the time my brother got entangled in barbed wire, and I had to carefully detach his tiny foot and carry him back. Or when, as a 2-year-old, he slipped away from a neighborhood party and wandered toward home, naked and alone, for two miles. But these incidents, rather than cause my parents to draw us closer to their chests, just became light-hearted party chatter. Our expansive worlds remained intact, our independence unabridged.

In addition to giving us long leashes, my parents governed with ease and an absence of neuroticism that brought a sense of security to our world. Where parents today tend to plan for the worst-case scenario, my parents' decisions were made on the assumption that things would always work out. They let us visit friends' houses without meeting their parents, asking where we'd be going, or establishing curfews. They began vacationing without us before I could talk, the babysitter's instructions for a week-long absence written out on a small note card, not much bigger than a Post-it. Occasionally they dipped into the space where being easygoing flirted with recklessness, like when they sent me off on a stroll with a sitter who'd been prefaced to them as emotionally unstable, and we didn't come back. "What do you mean, Mom?" I asked later. "You just....didn't come back." But kidnappings didn't stop my parents from landing sitters of dubious provenance wherever they could

find them. A background check, even a reference check, would not have crossed their minds. And things generally worked out. Kidnappings aside.

Though I can't say with certainty how my parents' approach shaped me, I grew up to be fiercely independent. My parents were always available for emotional support, advice, and wisdom, but I tackled college, international moves, and job searches on my own without hand-holding. So when I found myself pregnant with my firstborn, I naturally assumed that I'd be the laid-back mother that my parents had modeled for me.

It hasn't worked out that way. I'm not an overbearing



helicopter parent who hovers overhead and swoops down at the slightest sign of unrest. I'm more like a housefly, nervously careening around the edge of a room, but staying at arm's length except for the occasional spastic buzz-by. I see danger everywhere. On childhood beach excursions, my parents would lay back on their towels and watch from afar as we splashed in the waves, riding out with the tide. When I take my own

children to the beach, visions of rogue waves wash over me, and I redirect them to higher ground. Much higher. My mom's threshold for babysitter selection was, in her words, "anyone with a pulse." I conduct in-depth background checks before giving a sitter my address, including interrogations of former high-school teachers and analyses of Facebook photos. As my children set off on their everyday adventures, TV news footage reels start playing in my mind: "What was supposed to be a quick train ride to the zoo turned to tragedy today," or "Investigators don't know what caused killer bees to attack the bouncy house." Although I try not to let my anxiety prevent my kids from doing what they love I find

...my parents' decisions were made on the assumption that things would always work out.

myself constantly on guard, one hand scanning Waze to check for terrorist attacks along my sons' travel routes.

When my parents visit, they watch my nervous buzzing with bemused looks, occasionally offering up a gentle admonition to lighten up. I attempt a breezy smile. Then the newsreel starts up: "Authorities don't know how the grizzlies got inside the rental home of the visiting grandparents..." ♦

Sonya Abrams is an editor and photographer as well as the proud and exhausted mom of three kids under four years old.



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