

APRIL/MAY 2019



GGMG

GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine



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Letter from the Editor:

The Nature of the Beast

By Sonya Abrams



Sonya is an editor, photographer, and mother to many beasts—three human, multiple feline, and one canine. She sometimes struggles to find the appropriate moniker for herself: ringmaster, zookeeper, dog whisperer, or dragon slayer.

My daily routine: I pick up the children mid-afternoon, two from preschool and one from elementary. We drive home making silly, relaxed talk about our days. *I got this*, I think. I’m engaged, we’re harmonious, and I’m eager to see them after a few hours apart. Then we get home. They burst in the door, shoes and bags flying, oblivious to my pleas to put their school gear away. They attack their toy bins, limbs akimbo; inevitably someone trips/elbows/grazes someone else, and civilization breaks down. They argue, they steal, they pinch, they chase each other around the room, they leap off couches and tables. Someone decides to ride our elderly dog, who then nips, causing tears to be shed, and someone else upends a chair in pursuit of a snack hidden on a high shelf, skinning a shin in the process. I break the promise I make to myself each morning and begin yelling, hurling empty threats on deaf ears. My children are wild, they are feral, they are stir-crazy zoo animals, and I have lost control of the situation.

In this issue our writers take a walk on the wild side to try and tame the beasts we bring into our houses as well as the ones that live within us. On page 20, Tara Hardesty looks at sibling rivalry—the good, the bad, and the ugly—and provides survival advice on how to manage sibling relationships gone sour to turn the focus to empathy and cooperation, rather than conflict. Stephanie AuWerter trains her eagle eye on household pets on page 16, with a helpful guide to deciding how—and whether—to bring a furry friend into your household. On page 24, Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss taps into the mama bear instinct with an examination of this phenomenon, offering advice on how to advocate for our children while giving them space.

My own children’s animal instincts are on display daily. Much of their wild behavior serves only to sprout another gray hair on my head—the public meltdowns, the impromptu games of chase in public parking garages, the decisions to turn grocery carts into bumper cars. But I also get glimpses of how their wild

Much of their wild behavior serves only to sprout another gray hair on my head.

natures tap into something deeper and more pure. The impulses that lead them to leap dangerously off furniture onto each other are the same ones that lead to acts of courage when they confront new challenges—an obstacle course, a roller coaster, a new doctor’s

gleaming needle, a dark basement room that they decide to explore, flashlights in hand, in order to rid the house of monsters. As much as I’d like to tame the wild beasts in my life, I want to preserve that wild passion and energy and let them harness their own excitement as they navigate the jungle of life.

Sonya Abrams

Housekeeping

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COMING NEXT: June/July: Take a Break

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

THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY: Near-death cold/flu; trip to Asilomar, Visit to the SF Botanical Garden; potty training; a 16-hour drive from hell in a blizzard parking lot to Squaw; 7-year-old party planner; month-long coughs and getting creative with inside play; making dandelion root coffee; giant, trombone-playing, light-up, dancing ROBOTS at the MUSE concert; Pink eye and lots of Tinker Bell movies; reaching a 3-month milestone with our newborn; Tahoe snowmageddon drives times two.

Letter from the Board:

Wild and Wonderful

By Karen Brein

My almost 4-year-old is silly, sensitive, and curious while my 2-year-old is free-spirited, bold, and energetic. They are best friends and play together nicely (most of the time). Yet there are multiple times per day when their two personalities come together in such a way that they start playing the most insane games and go completely wild. Picture this: the three of us are at the California Academy of Sciences. One moment we are calmly naming colors of fish in the aquarium when all of a sudden they start chasing each other around. Before I know it they are wrestling each other on the ground, laughing uproariously. I’m doing my best to stay calm and redirect while onlookers try to avoid getting knocked over by these two little balls of energy. In this scene, I am six months pregnant with baby number 3, on the brink of tears, and have fully lost control.

I live in a world of beautiful chaos, directed by my wild and wonderful children, and I wouldn’t change a thing.

I wish I could say that that I have perfectly behaved kids who always listen and follow basic social norms. I wish that strangers on the street would stop giving me judgmental looks for not being able to maintain order with my growing family. But I live in a world of beautiful chaos, directed by my wild and wonderful children, and I wouldn’t change a thing.

Thankfully I have GGMG to remind me that I’m not alone in raising my kids. After a difficult day, I can open the GGMG forums and instantly feel connected to other moms. It can be hard to find

your village, and GGMG makes the San Francisco mom community feel a little smaller. Your words and support mean so much to me and many other members. Please keep posting, commenting, and engaging in our online forums; it’s the best way to stay engaged with GGMG on a daily basis.

I also encourage all of our members to attend our amazing events this spring. New events are added each week, so keep checking the calendar! A few examples of upcoming events include the April Playgroup Formation Event (for newborns and infants) on April 7 and the Moms Networking Downtown Lunch on April 9. We also have our extremely popular Spring Fling event coming up on Sunday, May 5. For the first time we will host this event at the Randall Museum! The Spring Fling is one of my favorite events of the year because my brood gets to surround themselves with lots of other energetic kids—a perfect way to ensure a great night’s sleep!

To those of you with wild, crazy, loud, and lovable children—thank you for being part of my village! And for those of you with calm, quiet, sweet, and lovable children—you are welcome to my village, too, and I hope you find it entertaining.



Karen is mom to two adorable and spirited kids, Adam and Ava. Her favorite pastimes include drinking coffee, drinking wine, indoor cycling, and taking long walks around San Francisco.

Karen Brein

Cover Outtakes



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

Cover photo by Mini Anna Photography
Cover model: Woods (4)

Outdoor Springtime Events

By Veronica Reilly-Granich

Spring is blooming everywhere you look in the Bay! Here are the best events to get out and soak up the sunshine.

Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival
April 13, 14, 20, 21

You can view cherry blossoms blooming and watch a wide variety of performers, including traditional Japanese Taiko drumming. Enjoy a parade and food booths run entirely by nonprofit organizations as well.
sfcherryblossom.org

The SF Grilled Cheese Fest
April 13 and 14

Top chefs from around the Bay will be grilling up that comfort food classic at SOMA StrEatfood Park. A variety of craft beer will be on tap and the Stu Tails will provide live music.
www.somastreatfoodpark.com/events

Stanford Holi Festival
April 20 and 21

Celebrate Holi in style at Stanford. This Hindu spring festival is also known as the festival of colors and honors the god Krishna. Sponsored by the student group Asha for Education, all proceeds go to support education projects in India.

Earth Day San Francisco
April 20

The theme this year is “Celebrate the Green New Deal.” Expect education, entertainment, and eats on Valencia Street, as well as a Kids Zone.
www.earthdaystreetfest.org

Bring Your Own Big Wheel
April 21

Race down the curvy section of Vermont Street on your own big wheel with hundreds of others! Everyone can be a kid again and enjoy the pure joy of flying down a hill on three wheels.
rove.me/to/san-francisco/bring-your-own-big-wheel

Carnaval San Francisco
May 25 and 26

Celebrating 40 years, the theme is La Cultura Cura/Culture Heals. There will be two days of music, arts, and crafts on Harrison Street between 16th and 24th Streets, featuring the Grand Parade on Sunday, with beautifully decorated floats and many contingents of performers.
www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org

Union Street Spring Celebration
April 21

Who can resist an Easter Bonnet competition with ten different categories (11:30 a.m.), an egg toss (noon) and a parade that welcomes all participants (2 p.m.)? Union Street between Gough and Fillmore Streets has all of this, as well as pony rides, kids games, a climbing wall, a petting zoo, and more.

Slide Ranch Spring Fling
April 27

Venture just up the coast to beautiful Slide Ranch, which neighbors Muir Beach. Enjoy hikes, music, farm-fresh food, and up-close encounters with the farm animals—you may get to milk a goat!
www.slideranch.org

Glen Park Festival
April 28

This is a very kid-friendly neighborhood festival held just a few blocks from Glen Canyon Park. In addition to craft vendors, food, and a vibrant main stage for all ages, expect bouncy houses and fun performers in the children’s area at the end of Wilder Street. Proceeds support local children’s programs.
glenparkfestival.com

SF Cinco de Mayo
May 4

A family-friendly celebration of Mexican and Latin American culture, with food, entertainment, and vendors. It all happens on Valencia Street between 21st and 24th Streets. It is best to take BART or MUNI.
mnscsf.org/sfcincodemayo

Veronica Reilly-Granich loves all kinds of blooming flowers and regularly visits the San Francisco Botanical Garden. She is an educator living in San Francisco with her husband and two daughters, ages one and four.



Li'l Kid, Big City:
East Bay Adventures

By Christine Chen

Though I went to college at UC Berkeley, Bay Bridge traffic just fills me with dread. However, searching for warmer weather during the summer has helped me get over my bridge fear. A favorite during college, **Zachary’s Chicago Pizza** in Berkeley now has a **Smitten Ice Cream** across the street! For train lovers, further east, **Tilden Park** has an authentic miniature live steam train to ride on weekends and a merry-go-round, both free for those under 2. **Tilden Little Farm** is a free petting zoo where kids can bring celery or lettuce to feed to the animals. **Habitot Children’s Museum** in downtown Berkeley has lots of little kid exhibits as well as drop-in classes, camps, and seasonal workshops. For members, three toys can be checked out at a time from the toy library. The **Oakland Zoo** offers the opportunity to get closer to animals than the San Francisco Zoo, particularly the giraffes and elephants. The free gondola takes you up to an indoor and outdoor play area, café, and the newly opened California Trail, which is a big hit with kids. And your SF Zoo membership gets you half off admission! Before braving Legoland or Disneyland, try **Children’s Fairyland** on the shores of Lake Merritt, a cute introduction to an amusement park. Filled with familiar storybook sets, gentle rides, animals, and a garden, it is perfect for toddlers. For lunch or snacks, **Perch Coffee House** is a few blocks away and has a nice play area. ❖

Christine is a mother to a 5-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter, who both love trains, bridges, tunnels, and animals.

Get Your Goat

By Jennifer Sato

Hari Om. Hari Om. Hari...wait, is that a goat standing on me?! No, you aren’t dreaming or having an otherworldly experience at a petting zoo; you have just stepped into the popular craze known as goat yoga. During goat yoga, chances are a miniature or baby goat will come up to you while you are in cat pose and sniff your hair, lick your shoelaces, or snuggle.

Original Goat Yoga first started at founder Lainey Morse’s farm in Albany, Oregon, in 2016. Morse had been going through a tough time, having recently endured an autoimmune disease diagnosis and a divorce. Spending time with her goats in nature was a “wonderful distraction,” says Morse. During a birthday party at her farm, a yoga instructor friend suggested holding a session alongside the goats. The serenity of the goats and their natural curiosity and calm demeanor blended beautifully with the class.

More locally, City Grazing is a San Francisco-based nonprofit that provides sustainable land management through goat grazing. In 2017, City Grazing partnered with Deborah Burkman Yoga to form YoGoats! “The goats give people this amazing sense of well-being,” Genevieve Church, executive director, says. “Goats are curious before they are afraid, they lead with curiosity...it’s what makes goat yoga a good fit.”

If you’re interested in trying this unique experience, it typically includes approximately 1 hour of yoga, with 10 to 15 goats and 15 to 30 people of all fitness levels. Morgan Hill Original Goat Yoga is \$50 per mini retreat (sfbay.goatyoga.net). YoGoats! in San Francisco Bayview is \$35-40 (yogoats.org). Lemos Farm in Half Moon Bay is \$31.21 per session, ages 10 and up (www.lemosfarm.com/goat-yoga). ❖

Jennifer Sato is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Certified Nutrition Support Clinician at Nutrition for Moms (www.nutritionformoms.org).



Photo courtesy of Lemos Farm

Ask the Expert

Training the Family Dog

With Dominika Knossalla



Dominika Knossalla specializes in puppies, high-energy dogs, fearful pups, and reactive dogs, frequently working with new and expecting parents. Her boy and girl twins are 3 years old, and she has a furry baby named Lola. She graduated with honors from the SF SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers (2008). Find her online at lolasplanet.com

Why do people use your services, how long does dog training usually last, and how are the dogs' families typically involved?

People come to me when they get a puppy or adopt a new dog, often to improve their dog's obedience and/or address a behavioral issue: barking at dogs or people, jumping, not coming when called, resource guarding, before having a baby, and once they have a baby. People also come after problems arise when a baby starts crawling or walking.

The number of sessions depends on the issues, the family's availability to train on their own, and budget. For day training, I train on my own during the week (two to five times a week) and we do transfer sessions every week or every other week. I show you everything your dog has been learning, teach you how to ask for and reinforce new behaviors, and what to do if an unwanted behavior reemerges.

What advice do you have for families who are preparing their dogs to welcome a new baby into the household?

Bringing your baby home should ideally be the only new "thing" in your pup's life. The second trimester of pregnancy is the best time to begin preparations. Start with acclimating your dog to various styles of separation. Despite being "around" more when the baby arrives, you will have less time to give to your dog. Baby gates, crates, and tethering are reliable ways to separate your dog from the area you and the baby will be primarily using. You won't be separating your dog at all times, but sometimes having your dog in a different room or part of the house will be necessary. Make sure your dog is fine sleeping in a different room and not on your bed. Decide whether your pup will be allowed in the nursery. My daughter turned out to be allergic to dogs. Luckily, I didn't have to quit my job, but dogs are not allowed in the kids' room.

Help your dog feel comfortable with all the new objects and sounds he will have to encounter. Introduce your dog to new

baby equipment (the swing, Mamaroo, Rock 'n Play, Snoo, bouncer, mobile, etc.). Play newborn sounds at a low level.

In terms of training, focus on anti-jumping exercises, address (demand) barking and teach placement cues, such as "go to bed," "on/off," and "away." Other useful cues are "leave it," "stay," and "drop it."

As weird as it may feel, it's best to practice stroller walks before the baby comes to acclimate your dog and train your dog to walk on a loose leash with the stroller. If your stroller doesn't come with a short leash for your hand, buy one separately. This is very useful when you are sleep deprived and have a dog with you.

Do you ever encounter dogs whose problematic behaviors can't be resolved, and in those cases, how can families make rehoming a positive experience?

Unfortunately, not all dogs can exist safely around children. It's often a very heartbreaking decision for the family. In most cases, the dog is rehomed early on, when the child starts crawling or walking, sometimes sooner. Sometimes rehoming occurs later when a second child is born and caring for a dog with behavioral issues is too much. It's better to rehome your pet before an accident happens to ensure you find her a great home. After a bite occurs, you'll have to rush and find your pet any home. With all the families that I've worked with who ultimately made this decision, it was out of deep love for their pet. They are loving and caring parents who want their furry child to live a happy life, which might mean finding a new, loving home.

The second trimester of pregnancy is the best time to begin preparations.

Start with acclimating your dog to various styles of separation.

Are there specific breeds of dog that are better suited for families with children, or is that a myth?

There are certain breeds that are less suitable for a family with young children, e.g., herding dogs, guard dogs, even working line dogs or puppies, especially large and giant breed puppies. I would focus more on choosing a dog that doesn't require endless hours of exercise. If you adopt, choose a well-socialized dog without handling or guarding issues that can be left alone or easily separated from family members. Choose one with no previous aggression history towards dogs or people. ❖

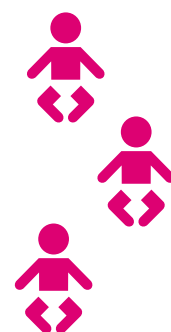
GGMG AT WORK

Community Outreach

Donate to our Diaper Drive!

Help babies who don't have access to clean diapers get a healthier start in life.

- If a family can't afford diapers, a baby may spend extended periods of time in a soiled or even reused diaper. This can lead to serious health problems for baby and disease outbreaks for entire communities.
- A supply of clean diapers is required to attend most childcare programs. Without diapers, toddlers don't get a fair start to their education.
- When toddlers can't go to childcare programs, adults remain under-employed. Something as basic as a diaper can actually have a big impact on a family's ability to become financially self-sufficient.



This is why GGMG is hosting a diaper drive this spring in support of Help a Mother Out® (HAMO), a nonprofit organization that works to improve baby and family well-being by increasing access to diapers. HAMO distributes diapers to families in need through a network of social service partners including voluntary home visit programs, facilitated parent support groups, family resource centers, and public health departments.

Last year we donated 3,800 diapers! Let's make this year even better for families in need by collecting 5,000 diapers for HAMO.

Please drop off open or unopened packs of diapers* at the Spring Fling on May 5 (see page 28). We will post additional drop-off locations on the GGMG forums. The drive runs through the end of May. You can also email us for locations at communityoutreach@ggmg.org.

*HAMO is most in need of sizes 4, 5, and 6 but accepts any size.

Contest



Soothe away winter blues with one of our relaxing spring prizes: a 30-minute massage at East-West Integrative Medicine Clinic (\$60 value) or a pampering, full-size Arbonne Detox Body Wash and Lotion set (\$75 value).

East-West Integrative Medical Clinic (eastwestsf.com) offers healing therapies at three San Francisco locations: Glen Park, Bernal Heights, and Downtown. Its highly trained practitioners provide consultations and treatments in a safe, friendly environment. East-West will provide the contest winner a gift certificate redeemable by appointment.



Swiss company Arbonne is committed to helping people transform their lives by offering 450+ pure, safe, and beneficial products, and a business that allows them to design the lives they have always wanted. Arbonne Executive District Manager Nicole Friedenberg (nicolefriedenberg.arbonne.com) will provide the contest winner Arbonne's Rescue and Renew Detox Body Wash and Lotion.

Enter the contest by emailing contest@ggmg.org with "Relax" in the subject line by April 30, 2019. Your contest entry will automatically enter you for a chance to win both prizes, with a different person winning each prize. Winners are selected at random.

Congratulations to **Erin Dobranz McGregor**, winner of the February contest prize, a consultation and haircut with Caitlin Boehm at Grey Salon.

Outside Is Where I Want to Be

By Chris Giorni

Adventuring is good. Adventuring fuels the human spirit. Kids are born to be adventurers. I’m 51 on the outside and 10 on the inside. I not only love adventuring—I also need it. It is my medicine.

I started playing in the dirt from birth, I think. My college nickname was, in fact, “Dirt.” I had every pet imaginable growing up: hamsters, snakes, lizards, frogs, guinea pigs... and even more animal friends in the backyards, parks, and forests that I would frequent. Luckily for me, my mom and dad loved all the animals too. My parents split when I was 3, but each supported and nurtured a passion for adventure in me. My mom and I had all the pets at home. Sometimes they escaped, and we would look for them together. My dad would take me on hiking, camping, and fishing trips often (my mom would too). I was off-leash in Golden Gate Park from the 4th grade on, finding every single-track trail off the beaten path to explore. I relished in the wide open woods as my personal wilderness sanctuary. I found guidance, kindness, and camaraderie at the Josephine D. Randall Junior Museum Explorers Club program in Corona Heights. I even went to my high school prom with a friend I made while taking care of the museum’s chickens, guinea pigs, and raccoons.

One of my first and favorite backpacking trips was to the Young Lakes just outside of Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite. Just before we started hiking, my dad and I got a sip of bubbling, sparkling, sulfur-tasting water from a nearby spring, and then we hit the trail. I carried my dad’s old canvas/leather backpack with my little sleeping bag attached to the bottom. My dad carried most of the stuff in his forest green Kelty external frame backpack. I remember the smells of the evergreen forest, the granite outcrops, and the clear, cold water of the lakes. I remember waking up in the middle of the night, freezing and thirsty. My dad said, “Switch sleeping bags with me.” He had a warm, down-feather bag. I was so happy! I took a big drink of ice cold water from his water bottle. It tasted like the best water in



Today, more than ever we need to make it a priority to take our kids outside, to let them have free play.

the world. We hiked and fished and hiked and fished and ate, ate, and ate trail food for the rest of the weekend. But I will never forget how good that water tasted in the middle of the night after a full day of hiking and how at peace I felt.

Today, more than ever, we need to make it a priority to take our kids outside to let them have free play. At Tree Frog Treks (TFT) summer camp we say: “Build a Fort. Climb a Tree. Hold a Bug. Smell the Sea.” Free play can be anywhere outside, anytime. Our TFT mantra is “Take a Green 15”: a 15-minute walk, cell phone off, on grass or ground. It will enliven your senses and help temper our 21st-century fast pace of city life. One day spent exploring can sustain you for a week. A week exploring nature can sustain you for the rest of the year. Positive nature experiences can reduce stress, help one focus and be more creative, and treat depression. Look up, look around, and see what can be found: an Anna’s hummingbird making its metallic trill, a red-tailed hawk soaring overhead, or a new friend walking by, waiting for you to say hi!

I live in Bernal Heights and take my kids up and over the hill to look for creepy crawly friends and the occasional Wile E. Coyote. We will drop down the hill to Heron’s Head Marsh to collect green crabs for observation and release. I love Aquatic Park below Ghirardelli Square. Get out and get dirty anywhere that is easy for you: Land’s End above the Cliff House is like entering the Marin headlands here in SF; the SF Botanical Garden is awesome—go to the kids’ garden area in the back!; Yosemite Marsh at McLaren Park (Bacon and Oxford Streets) has a great view of Mount Diablo; or just sit outside near your home with your senses tuned in and your cell phone off for just five minutes. Unplug, switch to nature, and reconnect. Re-wild yourself. Re-build patience, resilience, and contentment. ❖

Chris is the founder of Tree Frog Treks—celebrating 20 years of loving frogs and getting dirty. A zoology graduate of Cal and Ecology/Systematics MA from SF State University, he enjoys adventuring in SF and always chooses green time over screen time.

MEMBER PROFILE: Tiila Abbitt

Photograph by Katya Mizrahi Photography

Tiila Abbitt is the founder of clean cosmetics brand Aether Beauty (aetherbeautyco.com). She’s also a mom of two in San Francisco. Tiila recently spoke with Lynn Perkins, CEO of UrbanSitter, about launching her business, sustainability tips, and making quality time for her kids.



WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

For seven years, I was the head of product development for accessories and makeup collaborations for Sephora. I started to feel a disconnect between formulating conventional cosmetics but living an organic lifestyle with my kids, now ages 3 and 6. I tried a variety of clean beauty products but found they lacked efficacy, innovation, and interesting shades. I knew I could do better!

WHAT MAKES YOUR PRODUCTS UNIQUE?

They’re not only clean (I ban over 1,400 ingredients) but vegan and cruelty-free with organic, fair- trade, and sustainably sourced ingredients. The packaging is 100 percent recyclable without mirrors or magnets, which are unrecyclable. I won an award for the first zero-waste eyeshadow palette in the industry.

WHAT’S BEEN THE BEST PART ABOUT HAVING A BUSINESS?

Having a business is challenging and the work is never-ending, but the upside is great. My clients are incredibly supportive and are my biggest cheerleaders for success. Since starting in June 2018, I’ve launched at Credo Beauty, The Detox Market, Sephora, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Anthropologie, and retailers across the U.S., Canada, and the Asia-Pacific region.

WHAT’S NEXT FOR AETHER BEAUTY?

Right now, we offer just two eyeshadow palettes. This year, we’ll add more eye palettes, cheek palettes, highlighters, liquid lipsticks, and liquid eyeshadows. By 2021, I’ll have a full line of 45-55 products.

WHEN YOU HAVE TIME FOR YOURSELF, WHERE WOULD WE FIND YOU?

Finding alone time these days is rare for me with small children and a business! Acupuncture and sound healing classes are my go-to for de-stressing and healing my body, mind, and spirit.

WHEN YOU HAVE ALONE TIME WITH ONE OF YOUR CHILDREN, HOW DO YOU SPEND IT?

My son is 3 years old and wild, so going to the park, swim class, or anywhere he can run around is our go-to. My daughter is an entrepreneur and creative spirit at 6 years old. We have a Meyer lemon tree, and she likes to sell them outside our house in Noe Valley on farmers’ market days.

WHAT ARE EASY WAYS FOR MOMS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY?

Try bringing your own coffee mug and bags and refusing single-use plastics like individually wrapped snacks and cheap goodie bag toys. Purchasing snacks in bulk and using washable cloth bags to portion drastically reduce your daily environmental footprint. I love goodie bags where kids take home something they made at the party, like a t-shirt or craft.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A VEGETARIAN AT AGE 14, AND HOW CAN PARENTS SUPPORT KIDS INTERESTED IN VEGETARIANISM?

I think it was when I realized how poorly the food industry treats animals. My kids are both pescatarians, and my husband is a carnivore, but we all eat vegetarian at home since I’m the cook. I think parents should support their kids’ beliefs and be open to trying new things but also teach them to be respectful of others’ choices. Every person should make his or her own personal choice when it comes to food.

WHO SERVES YOUR FAVORITE VEGETARIAN FARE IN SAN FRANCISCO?

I love Al’s Place. Their vegetarian options are incredibly creative with innovative flavors and textures. Their tasting menu is amazing and reasonably priced. ❖

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

BOOKS for Kids Animals

By Laure Latham

Animals, whether real or imaginary, are an amazing part of our world and of our children's world. From the farm to aquariums, the zoo to the hills, animals are everywhere for our families to observe. In these books, children can learn about animals, and they will start to look at the world differently.

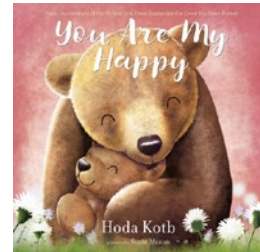


Peek-a-Baby Ocean

Written and illustrated by Mike Orodan

Baby animals are hiding in the ocean, and your little ones can find them by lifting the flaps and looking for the babies of each species. Beautifully illustrated, this book includes educational facts about each ocean animal.

It also introduces babies to the wonderful world of marine wildlife in rhymes and makes for a perfect read before a trip to the aquarium. **Ages: 0 to 2 years**

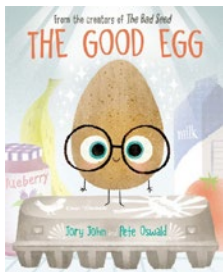


You Are My Happy

Written by Hoda Kotb, illustrated by Suzie Mason

Hoda Kotb's daily bedtime routine with her 2-year-old daughter inspired this book. At bedtime, a mama bear and a cub cuddle and reflect on all the things that have

made them happy that day. Whether it's splashing together in the river or looking at butterflies, the things that make them the happiest are actually the little things in life. This book will inspire your bedtime rituals and make that bedtime cuddle extra special. **Ages: 3 to 6 years**



The Good Egg

Written by Jory John, illustrated by Pete Oswald

Keeping your friends happy. Helping neighbors. Rescuing cats. Being a good egg is tough work and can be very stressful if you don't start looking out for yourself. The book's main character, a perfectionist egg, comes to realize that it's impossible to do well on all fronts without starting to crack around the shell. The book's message of self-care is relevant in our society and the egg-cellent puns will make school-age readers very happy. **Ages: 5 to 8 years**

The Night Tiger

Written by Yangsze Choo

In Malaysia in the 1930s, a girl who works as a dance hostess is given a mummified finger in a glass bottle. She needs to find the body it belongs to and bury it. At the same time, an 11-year-old boy's master dies and makes one last request of his Chinese houseboy: that he find his severed finger, lost years ago in an accident, and reunite it with his body. Exploring Malaysian folklore, a tale of were-tiger ensues. Great reading for tweens and adults alike. **Ages: 8 to 12 years**

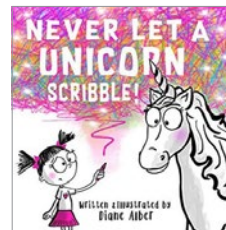


Never Let a Unicorn Scribble!

Written and illustrated by Diane Alber

Even if you don't have a unicorn at home, you will guess that unicorns and scribbling don't mix. That's not, however, the opinion of one determined little girl who thinks that scribbles are the best and that unicorns shouldn't miss out on the fun. The trouble is—no fingers. How do you make a unicorn scribble without fingers? Here comes the creative part, and you'll have to read the book to know what happens. There's also a National Scribble Day for scribblers of all ages to celebrate.

Ages: 4 to 7 years



Laure is the author of the mommy blog Frog Mom (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 find her on social media @frogmomblog.

BOOKS for Parents

By Gail Cornwall

You know what's wild? Women giving up their sexuality after having kids. I mean, whose bright idea was *that*? These four books touch on the topic from different angles.

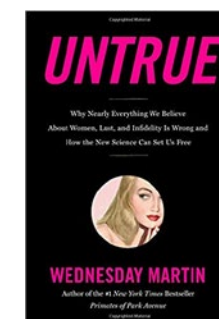
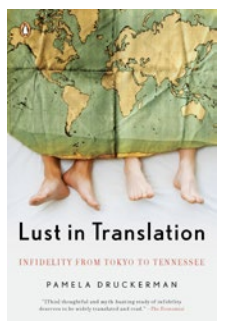


Vagina: A New Biography

Naomi Wolf says tantra is “a form of applied neuroscience.” The vagina is wired to the brain, and orgasms leave women more creative, confident, and sociable, while a woman deprived of sexual satisfaction will find life increasingly meaningless, intimidating, and joyless. Orgasms, however, require foreplay, and “our culture's conventional model...is quick, goal-oriented, [and] linear.” Though Wolf's *Vagina* is rather dry and takes quite a long time to finish, her analysis of historic and modern relationships is fascinating, despite some scientific and feminist missteps. And I, for one, am not going to argue with her conclusion that “sexual or romantic ‘extras’”—such as flowers and, say, eye contact—“are in fact physically and emotionally fundamental to women's vibrancy.”

Lust in Translation: Infidelity from Tokyo to Tennessee

Pamela Druckerman, author of *Bringing Up Bébé*, takes another gripping yet unscientific world tour—this time of adultery. Her conclusion? That the American response to an affair—“panicky confrontations, our knee-jerk threats of divorce, our faith in the redemptive power of marriage counseling, and even our assumption that honesty is the highest value of coupledness”—is cultural. “Societies have their own rules on who can cheat, and for what reasons.” For a married Japanese woman with a lover, “feeling guilty hadn't occurred to her, since she was meeting her obligations to her family.” Though the numbers Druckerman cites are now outdated and her analysis is admittedly both anecdotal and reductionist, it's all riveting (e.g., “In an attitudes survey done in 1994, nearly 40 percent of Russians said affairs are ‘not at all’ wrong or ‘only sometimes’ wrong—compared to 6 percent of Americans answering similarly”).



Untrue: Why Nearly Everything We Believe About Women, Lust, and Infidelity Is Wrong and How the New Science Can Set Us Free

Wednesday Martin, of *Primates of Park Avenue* fame, writes: “Relinquish your libido, or tame it, for stability. Somehow we presume this is a developmental imperative of sorts, the hallmark of maturity and health, and that it will be easier for women, that it comes ‘naturally’ to them.” But “biological factors, social control, cultural context, ecologies...all these factors and more” influence our concept of female sexuality. Martin strikes a good balance with *Untrue*, more readable than Wolf and less fluffy than Druckerman. “Couples therapy itself was not really even a ‘thing’ until recently (there were only three thousand family and marital therapists in the US in 1970, whereas by May 2017, the official figure was nearly forty-three thousand),” reads a representative line from this worthwhile and eye-opening read.

Good Sex: Getting Off Without Checking Out

Whereas Martin, Druckerman, and Wolf take an observer's eye, Jessica Graham in *Good Sex* offers personal reflections and practical advice on how to get more out of getting some. “If we put our sexuality in a shoebox under the bed, we are putting a part of ourselves in there too,” she begins. She describes being cut off from one's body during sex, disappearing in one way or another—and how, precisely, to use mindfulness to achieve “endless possibility, surprise, and awe” during sex in a long-term relationship. Push past qualms owing to the new-agey feel, and you'll access the O'ly grail that the other authors and their interviewees are after.



Gail is a former public school teacher and recovering lawyer who now works as a stay-at-home mother and freelance writer in San Francisco. You can find her on Facebook (@gailisalwayswrite) and Twitter (@gailcornwall), or read more at gailcornwall.com.

From Womb to World

How San Francisco Mamas Reclaimed Their Wild Side

By Jami Grich

Few things in life have the potential to strip a woman of her wild side like becoming a parent. When I asked SF mamas what they did to reclaim their full aliveness or their wild side after becoming a parent, they talked about reclaiming themselves, their relationships, their bodies, their minds, their creativity, and their sex lives. Some took on monumental personal challenges, others took advantage of San Francisco offerings, and others found ways to enjoy the simple things in life. Below are their responses (along with a few exceptional quotes from the book *Sexy Mamas: Keeping Your Sex Life Alive While Raising Kids*).



"Ate popcorn and M&Ms for dinner just because I could!"

"My husband and I kept skydiving...it always stoked the passion between us, so we went back when our daughter was 7 weeks old. Now she's 6 and she loves the drop zone...win win!"

"I started pole dancing...lots of hair tossing and booty music makes me feel alive. Plus impromptu silly dancing with my 1-year-old."

"I never gave up my child-free friends. I go out with them every Saturday night."

"I went to Burning Man...I got some ya-yas out, expressed milk in the

desert, and returned a happier, healthier, more grateful and whole woman and mother."

Reclaiming Your Self

"I took up triathlons. I feel like a beast and my kids love it when I bring my medals home to them. Plus, after experiencing childbirth, what's a 7-hour race?"

"Streaking on Crissy Beach on Mother's Day at 7 a.m. Also, dancing at Day Breakers [morning dance party]...I'm up at 6 a.m. anyway. I might as well be dancing!"

"Four months postpartum I squeezed into my wetsuit with milk-filled boobs for just an hour of surf before I had to feed again. It was the most glorious hour, even if my nips burned and my arms were like spaghetti, because I got to bob in the ocean...alone."

"Believe it or not, getting sober after I had my first son was the biggest reclamation of my wild side. After growing up in a very repressed home, allowing myself and my kids permission to feel a full range of emotion has connected me to my aliveness on a whole new level."

"I went to a Widespread Panic show when my baby was 6 weeks old. I had so much fun that I didn't even care that my milk was leaking right through my shirt!"

"I take a day off work to go on hikes at Land's End or Presidio by myself. Nature has a real zen and calming effect."

"I invented early morning meetings at work and was out of the house everyday by 6:30 a.m. It gave me almost two hours each morning by myself...not wild at all but completely glorious."

"I studied and passed the level 1 sommelier exam."

Reclaiming Your Relationship/Sex Life

"Weekend morning babysitters. My husband and I always preferred morning sex, so we got a sitter to take the baby out of the house...best thing we ever did!"

"This is probably TMI, but we reconnected by taking classes at the Somatica Institute" [for sex coaching.]

"We got creative about sex. The baby was in our bed, so we used the shower, the kitchen, the balcony...it reminded me of being 18 or 19 and still living at home...no place was off limits!"

"My husband came up with something we call 'the booty call' and it's great. We go to sleep (because we really need it), and he wakes up in the middle of the night and starts to fondle me and whisper to me, which leads to wonderful dreamlike sex."

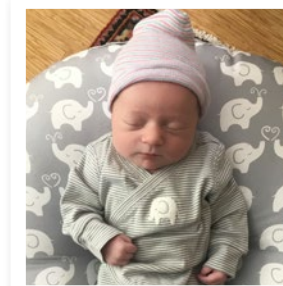
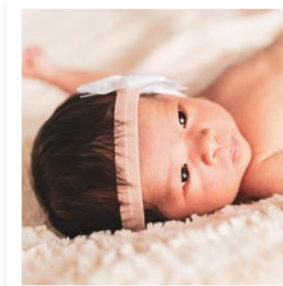
"We put ourselves first...put our relationship on the front burner. That took a while to sink in — realizing that we can't be good parents if we are not a good couple and partnership. Sometimes it's harder to be a wife than to be a mom."

Also inspiring were mamas such as the one quoted below, who accepted her less-than-fully-alive selves (lack of libido) for a time: *"I just don't sweat it. I'm in my marriage for the long haul, so short-term lapses in romance (and I consider a year or two to be short-term) are no big deal."* ♦

Jami, the skydiving mama quoted in the article, helps couples reclaim their wild sides in her private practice. She sends a big thank you to all you GGMG mamas who shared their stories!

GGMG

New Arrivals



Laura E. **Baby Iona Sage**
Nina O. **Baby Wilfred Atticus**
Vickie T. **Baby Elia Zong-Lin**



Congratulations to **Laura E.!** She will be pampering her little one with products from Babyganics. These plant-derived, tear-free, non-allergenic cleansers and lotions clean and protect skin from head to toe.

To announce your new arrival in the magazine and for a chance to win a mini session from **Mini Anna Photography**, fill out the form at <http://tinyurl.com/ggmgnNewArrivals>. Check out Anna's portfolio at www.minianna.com.

Volunteer of the Month

Congratulations to **Marcie Longoria-Chardavoine**, our January volunteer of the month! Marcie volunteers for the Diversity & Inclusion Committee.

Marcie and husband, Francois, are parents to Michael (3) and persnickety tuxedo female cat Domino (6).



MARCIE, WE WANT TO KNOW...

Your favorite **restaurant**: House of Prime Rib

Your favorite **parenting advice**: It gets better and it gets worse

Your favorite **pastimes**: Reading and container gardening

Your favorite **films**: *The Fifth Element* and *Pride & Prejudice*

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



Animal House

*The unconditional love offered by pets is great for our health and hearts.
But are you really ready to add a fur baby to your family?*

By Stephanie AuWerter

Photographs by Mini Anna Photography

There's the late-night barfing. Frustrating disciplinary issues. Panicked emergency room visits. And the ill-timed potty mistakes. I'm talking about pets. And while they can be expensive, time consuming, at times inadvertently disgusting, and perhaps destructive (half-eaten shoes and shredded couches are often part of the deal), many of us would have it no other way: 68 percent of U.S. households have a pet, according to the American Pet Products Association. Full disclosure: I am deeply in the pro-pet camp. As I write this, my dog sits beside me and my cat is in my lap. A surprise hairball

squishing under my foot or the secret poop discovered in the playroom is, I believe, just a small price to pay for the unconditional love these two give to our family. It's not surprising to me that 91 percent of pet owners view their pet as a family member, according to The Harris Poll, and that 57 percent frequently sleep with their pets. (Guilty as charged: my cat and I typically share a pillow.) But pet ownership isn't for everyone. Roughly 6.5 million pets enter animal shelters each year, according to the the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Pets are typically relinquished due to behavior problems,

unmanageable size, or pet health issues. To avoid this soul-crushing experience, careful consideration is needed before bringing a fur baby home. Are you ready to become a pet parent? Here's what to consider: **Pet parameters** For starters, do *you* really want a pet? (Something to consider: 25 percent of women say their pet is a better listener than their husband, according to an Associated Press-Petside.com poll.) Getting a pet because your child asks for one—or because you can't resist the adorable

pet-as-a-Christmas-gift idea—is a mistake. While a child may promise to care for a pet, chances are, if you are the primary caregiver in your household, much (or all) of the pet care will fall on your shoulders. Pets take up time and money. Dog owners typically spend somewhere between \$1,500 and \$2,000 in their first year of ownership alone; cat families spend close to \$1,200, according to the ASPCA. (Think food, collars, travel carriers, grooming, etc.) Adopting an animal from a shelter is one way to reduce initial costs, as shelter animals are often already spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped. But ongoing wellness visits and health expenses as a pet ages (recently we spent \$750 to deal with our cat's dental problems) can be significant. Make sure you're in it for the long haul, too (hopefully at least 10 to 15 years). For young families, this time period can involve a lot change: moves, siblings being born, and job switches. Not to mention a lot of

late-night walks, trips to the vet, and games of fetch. In addition to a long day that likely includes work, kids, and chores, does your family have the bandwidth to accommodate a pet? If your pet-o-logical clock is still ticking, the ASPCA offers these tips on picking the right pet:

- Puppies are fun, but they're a lot of work, too. Do you have the time to socialize, potty train, and keep a watchful eye on a new pup? Older animals typically have the potty issues worked out, sleep through the night, and are guaranteed in size.
- Make sure you get a dog that fits your lifestyle. Sure, Border Collies are cute, but are you able to give one the daily exercise it needs?
- All family members should participate in the search for the right pet. Spend time with a potential pet before committing, ask lots of questions, and make sure the pet is kid-friendly.

When bringing a new pet home, go slow, says Kat Huang, humane education supervisor at the San Francisco SPCA. Give the pet quiet time to explore the new space. Keep the dog leashed around your kids at first to keep it from jumping up or exploring whether your child is a chew toy with those sharp puppy teeth. Be sure to model the behavior you want your kids to have around the pet.

Pet perks

Pets can deliver some awesome health benefits. That's not a reason to get a pet, obviously, but it's a nice addition to the cuddles, amusement, and utter devotion that pets provide. One benefit is the intriguing connection between pets and the reduction of asthma and allergies in children. Studies show that young children who have a dog or cat in their home—particularly at birth and during their early years—are less likely to have respiratory allergies and asthma, says Dr. James Gern, a

Teaching Dog (and Cat) Safety

Here's how to teach kids to be safe around animals:

- If a dog you don't know is off-leash and approaches you, stand like a tree. Hold your hands at your side and look away. Stay still should the dog sniff you. Once the dog has moved away, tell an adult.
- If you see a leashed dog you'd like to greet, first ask your grown-up, who can ask the owner if it's okay. Always have permission before approaching an unknown dog.
- Know how to make a dog introduction: make a fist and let the dog smell your hand. A fist protects your fingers and will help put the dog at ease. Once the greeting is over, the best place to pet most dogs is on the back, but confirm this with the owner first.
- Know what a nervous dog looks like. Ears back, tail tucked under, cowering, shaking, raised fur along the back, and of course growling are clear warning signs. More subtle ones include lip-licking with no food nearby and giving you a "whale eye" (when you can see the whites of a dog's eyes in a crescent moon shape). Any combination means stay away, don't pet me right now!
- Most dog bites happen at home with a dog you know. So practice good doggie manners: don't wake up a sleeping dog, don't play tug-of-war games with your dog, and never pull anything out of a dog's mouth. Give treats using a flat hand or by putting the treat on the ground.
- Cats have their own ways of saying Do Not Disturb. A hiss is the obvious one, but a swishing tail is also a sign that it wants to be left alone. Let a cat come to you: make a fist and let the cat have a sniff. You know you've won the cat over if it rubs its head on you, which means you've been marked with her scent. Thank her with a gentle chin scratch.

Source: Kat Huang, Humane Education Supervisor, San Francisco SPCA.



pediatric allergist at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. These effects may be strongest when the pet has access to the outdoors and green space, allowing it to track into your home good bacteria that fire up the immune system. Gern’s advice? “Have contact with animals and roll in the dirt!” And know that a big slurpy dog lick to the face may be good for the body as well as the soul.

A surprise hairball squishing under my foot or the secret poop discovered in the playroom is, I believe, just a small price to pay for the unconditional love these two give to our family.

Pets can also be a gender-neutral way for children to take on caretaking roles. Studies show that while young girls and boys often see taking care of children as a motherly role, that’s not the case when it comes to caring for animals, says Gail Melson, professor emerita at Purdue University and author of the *Psychology Today* blog *Why the Wild Things Are*. Pets allow boys to take on the role of caretaker and nurturer. They also encourage empathy in both boys and girls, as pets intrinsically require one to think about the



pet’s needs over one’s own desires. (Just try being late on feeding your cat...you’ll see.)

When a pet dies

For many children, their first experience with death arrives via the death of a pet. As painful as that is, it’s also an opportunity to help children begin to understand death and accept it as part of life, says Adam Clark, a licensed clinical social worker who focuses on pet loss in Lakewood, Colorado.

When a pet dies, talk about it using simple, straightforward language, says Clark. Saying a dog has been “put to sleep” or “gone away,” for example, can be frightening and confusing

to a small child. Likewise, don’t be afraid to share your own grief. Hiding your emotions—perhaps because you want to protect your child—can make a child feel alone in their grief. “Be vulnerable,” says Clark. Many children’s books also address the death of a pet and can ease hard conversations.

If tough decisions need to be made, like euthanizing a pet, talk to your child about the decision in an age-appropriate way. Children want to understand how these decisions are made and why, says Joshua Russell, assistant professor of animal behavior, ecology, and conservation at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York.

Then allow children a process by which to grieve. Offering some sort of memorial service that falls within your family’s culture and traditions can help. This could be something simple like planting a tree, gathering together to tell stories, drawing pictures, or creating a memory box. Look for physical signs of grief as well. Younger children may suddenly return to bedwetting or complain of a tummy ache. Be aware that a child’s grief response can be delayed or their grief may get worse over time.

With time, support, and love, children will accept a pet’s death. And the memories of that pet will stay with them forever. ❖

Stephanie is a freelance writer and editor who on any given day is covered in pet fur.



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Siblings



Big Love & Big Feelings

Dealing with day-to-day struggles and encouraging a positive relationship between siblings

By Tara Hardesty

Photographs by Marie Hamonic Photography

As a mom, I don't doubt myself often. I realize that I'm learning every day and that, while I likely could be doing many things better, I love my children and spend a lot of time with them, which is what I believe really matters.

However, there is one area that gives me pause on a daily basis. Sibling rivalry is my stumper, with "how do I deal with this?" running through my head more times than I can count. I have two boys, ages 5 and 2.5, and while they are mostly good with each other, when they get into a tangle, have sharing issues, or get too physical "accidentally," I find myself completely at a loss.

I'm no stranger to sibling relationships or rivalry. I'm the youngest of five (four girls and a boy), and chaos was the name of the game growing up in my house. My parents, also hailing from large families, knew how to work with us and kept us all safe and learning. Somehow, we not only survived, but we also thrived and, as a result, have close relationships as adults.

Being part of a big family is a gift. My siblings, more than any other factor, influenced who I am today. Being a sibling means that before you even open the door to head out into your external life, you are exposed to a wide variety of lessons and challenges. Sharing, empathizing, watching out for each other, teamwork, conflict

resolution, and basic survival skills are all on the menu on an average day in a big family. I joke with my older sisters that I still remember a game they played which consisted of them dangling me over a toilet by my ankles threatening to flush my face. I can still recall the swirling water and white porcelain and swear that the toilet in my parents' bathroom was bigger than normal, but it was probably just my face's proximity to the bowl. I adore my sisters, and while their toilet game may sound awful to some, others will nod their heads in understanding. Play gets creative with a big brood, and my siblings were no different. We engaged with each other and stuck together, and at times, we expressed emotions that were not all warm and fuzzy.

Now I am in the trenches as a mom, and I find myself needing more information, tactical advice that will help me deal not only with how to encourage a positive relationship between my boys but also how to deal with the day-to-day struggles (he took my toy; he pushed me; he's not YOUR daddy, he's MY daddy).

Insights from the field

Thankfully, there are many experts in this field—not just accomplished authors, child development experts, and psychologists, but mothers

who have walked this path before and have sage words for those who may be struggling or in the trenches. To gather some of this wisdom, I reached out to Bay Area moms and my own family members, asking questions about how sibling issues were handled by parents and how interviewees handle issues with their own children. Some parents emphasize their reliance on communication and family discussion to address sibling issues. Cristy, mom of four and grandmother of one, says, "We had a few ways to work with our children when they were having trouble, starting when the youngest was around 4... I asked how they thought the other person felt about what was done...and whatever they said we talked about it in a non-judgmental way, and eventually we would get to the root of the problem." She also noted that making each sibling feel important on his own was critical to sibling success. "We also had a kid of the week," says Cristy. "That child got to lead, sit in the front seat, go first out the door, be first to pick a book...he also got the middle cinnamon roll, which was the highlight of the week. This gave each child a time to feel special. Letting him have his own space was also key."

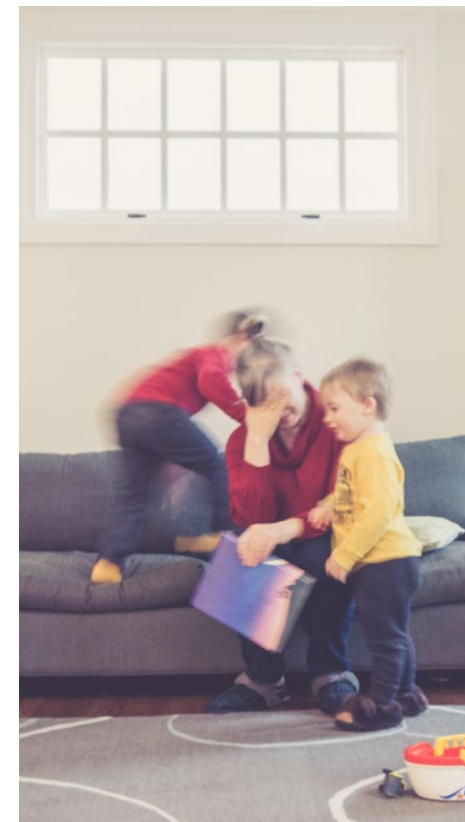
Taking opportunities to teach and grow as a team is a strategy used by some. "My children bickered, but it wasn't a rivalry as much as it was little fights," said Julie, mother of four and grandmother of two. "Once they were a little older, when they fought, we would sit down with all four of our kids, not just the ones impacted, so that there could be a lesson for those that weren't involved. We often had them look at each other and explained to them that they aren't always going to like each other or the things each did, but they are family and there is no one else on earth that will understand you the way your siblings do." At a certain age, parents can empower siblings to work it out on their own. "When there was too much arguing, we'd make them stay in a room together to talk, letting them know it should be resolved before they come out. We firmly believed and taught our kids this, that they need to take care of each other and work out their issues."

Siblings often have very different personalities, making everyday issues more

challenging. Missy, mom and grandmother of two, recalls her own childhood. "My sister and I were only 13 months apart and very different. We were monsters. I remember our

Take each of them as individuals. Sometimes the best thing is to not interfere...siblings usually figure it out.

mom made us hug each other and encouraged sharing. She tried to stay peaceful with us, which helped because when she was calm, it helped us stay calm."



Managing competitive personalities is challenging. Julia, a mother of two, recalls how her mom managed the relationship between her and her sister. "I shared a room with my sister throughout childhood, and she and I were both very competitive throughout our youth (and still are), but we are also very different, and my parents always found a way to support/praise/engage with us equally and in different ways." Driving home the message of family and unity, in whatever way works, will help siblings understand they are in it together. "I honestly wish I knew their magic sauce, but I think it came down to their ability to

parent differently to each of us while also insisting on a lot of annoying family outings, road trips, and mandatory family dinners. We are not perfect by any means and being

the middle child, I still have issues living in the shadows of my sister at times, but I am grateful for their focus on the importance of family."

Recognizing children as individuals is essential. Laura, a mother of two, adheres to the best advice she has received regarding siblings, "Take each of them as individuals. Sometimes the best thing is to not interfere... siblings usually figure it out."

Mother of three Lynn stresses the importance of one-on-one time. "I think one of the things that helps sibling rivalry is one-on-one time with a parent so that one doesn't feel he is not 'the favorite.' Even with three grown children, I don't feel like I know the answer. I feel like sibling relationships change over time, especially with the odd numbers."

And when all else fails, turn to humor. A mom from the GGMG forums shared, "This isn't advice but it made me laugh when someone said it to me when I had my second. 'When you have siblings, someone's always crying, and usually it's you.'"

From the experts

One book is almost universally known and has received a lot of attention amongst a large volume of literature devoted to sibling rivalry and communication. It was sold out for a period of time, which is a testament to its staying power, considering it was originally published in 1987 with updates in 2012. *Siblings Without Rivalry*, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, is a go-to resource for anyone looking for ideas on how to handle a wide variety of sibling issues. And it incorporates humor, which is even more appealing to the exasperated parent.

Among the book's many great insights is one section that offers a memorably unique parallel to what it must be like to have a sibling thrust into your world. Faber and Mazlish write, "Imagine that a spouse puts



his arm around you and says, ‘Honey, I love you so much and you’re so wonderful that I’ve decided to have another wife just like you.’” The book continues the exercise, drawing several parallels between the arrival of a new sibling and another wife. When I reached this section of the book, I stopped and read the exercises aloud to my husband. All of the exercises draw on the question about imagining your husband is bringing home another wife. “When the new wife finally arrives, you see that she’s very young and kind of cute. When the three of you are out together, people say hello to you politely, but exclaim ecstatically over the newcomer. ‘Isn’t she adorable! Hello sweetheart...You are precious!’ Then they turn to you and ask, ‘How do you like the new wife?’” We took a few minutes to imagine our reaction for each question asked. While the way this exercise is imagined was hysterical, it was also thought-provoking and has had a lasting impact on us both as we work with our boys on their conflicts.

Tips to keep in mind

Valuable tips from experts abound, and many focus on counteracting conflicts and struggles by creating opportunities for positive interactions:

- If they are happy and playing together, leave them alone.
- Having a particularly rough day? Find activities that both kids (and you) love and use those to shift the mood or to redirect.
- Add ways for your children to express their feelings about each other’s day-to-day routines, such as bedtime or conversations over family dinner.
- Resist taking sides—try to observe and hear what is happening during a conflict and encourage them to find solutions and express themselves.
- Are there activities that your kids enjoy doing together? If so, encourage those activities more often.
- Encourage caring for each other, have them check on each other if someone is hurt, or support each other in daily tasks like cleaning up or brushing teeth.
- Work together as a family—find projects that the whole family can do and eventually ones that siblings can do together.

The other day my 5-year-old was playing happily next to my younger son. Suddenly, I heard my 5-year-old say “Stop it!” over and over again. I looked over to see that my younger son, probably frustrated that he was getting no attention from his brother, had started hitting. I watched for a few moments

and then the inevitable came: “Mom, he won’t stop hitting me.” This was about the tenth time I’d dealt with this scenario (or so it seemed), so I tried a new approach. I told my 5-year-old that the next time his brother hit him to wrap his arms around him in a giant bear hug and tell him he loved him. Within moments, another hit, and my older son did just what I’d suggested. It took a moment, but eventually, the situation seemed defused, and both carried on playing.

Despite being a woman in my 40s, my siblings still look at me as their “baby sister.” And that’s okay with me. We are a tight bunch and work hard to stay connected through busy schedules and big life changes. Every day I feel thankful that my mom and dad fostered the connections between us, through all the ups and downs. I’m hopeful that 35-plus years down the road my boys, wherever they may live and whatever type of lives they create for themselves, will be close and feel grateful to have each other. ❖

Tara is the owner of The Marketing Method Group, Inc., a boutique marketing firm in San Francisco. When she’s not working or parenting her 2- and 5-year-old sons, she enjoys writing freelance about things she is passionate about, the hairy underbelly of life, motherhood, and entrepreneurship.



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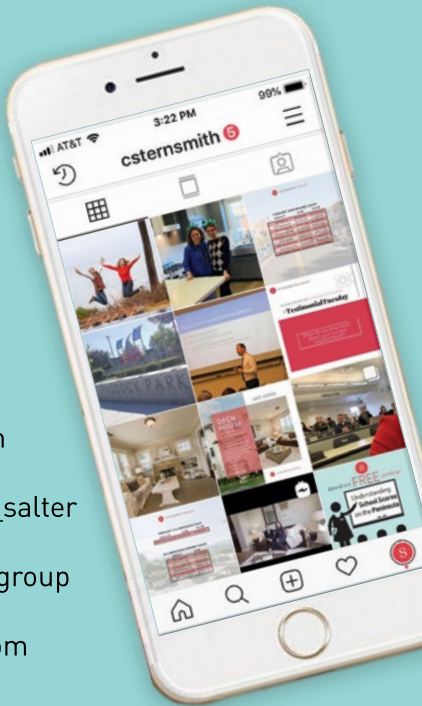
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Hear Me Roar: The Mama Bear in All of Us

How motherhood awakens your inner beast

By Jennifer Kuhr Butterfoss



Photo by K. Sienk Photography

My inbox is constantly flooded with emails from mama bears. These are the mothers who are vigilant about checking in and following up on their children’s well-being, particularly if a child is from a marginalized group or has special needs. Since becoming a mother myself, my empathic brain has grown exponentially, and I am much more attuned to the needs of the parents I serve as a school site administrator. While I can never fully understand the individual struggles faced by families dealing with vulnerabilities I will never know, I still

picture my own daughter when families open up about what brings them to my office. It brings about a primal urgency I’d never experienced pre-motherhood. When families come to me with reports and screenshots of cyberbullying, each hurtful meme on Instagram against their child is a hurtful meme railing against my own. When they report that their child is being mistreated or overlooked because of the color of her skin, or that a child’s 504 medical plan isn’t being followed, I can’t help but picture what it might feel like if they were talking about my own two children.

Well-known are the deeply intense and personal changes that occur when becoming a mother or father for the first time: the crushing power such a tiny person can have over your most primal emotions, the intense and endless love never fully understood until that moment, the anxiety that conjures up every worst-case scenario happening to the ones you love. Stories abound of amazing feats of strength shown by mothers saving their own children in moments of crisis: lifting cars, prying open the jaws of a wild animal, using their own bodies as shields in

the most dire of accidents and emergencies. Angela Cavallo of Lawrenceville, Georgia, lifted a 1964 Chevy Impala off her teenage son. Chelsi Camp of Alvin, Texas, went as far as biting off the ear of a neighbor’s pitbull attacking her small daughter.

Many people attribute the extra special strength, protective urges, and heightened instincts to a quality colloquially known as the “mama bear” instinct. A mama bear is a mom who can be cuddly and lovable but also unleashes a ferocious side when it’s necessary to protect her cubs. It can refer to a biological mom, adoptive mom, or the head of a group.

What exactly is the mama bear instinct, and is it a superpower, a curse, or just plain survival instinct? How does the mama bear instinct amplify for mothers of children representing a more vulnerable group? What resources are there to support all the mama bears out there in their advocacy and urgency to fight for their children?

The neuroscience

Journalist Katherine Ellison explores how motherhood can give women special superpowers in her book *The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes Us Smarter*. Ellison argues that mothers are more perceptive and emotionally intelligent, traits that help us care and protect our young to the best of our ability. Citing many different studies exploring how mothers’ brains change and develop through pregnancy, childbirth, and beyond, Ellison explains the science demonstrating the many positive cognitive effects of having a child. Researchers from the Autonomous University of Barcelona scanned the brains of a group of women before and after they gave birth. In their findings, they found the volume of gray matter in the mothers’ brains changed dramatically, particularly in regions used for experiencing empathy, which is key in raising children. The more brain change noted in a mother’s brain, the higher she scored on measures of empathy. The changes in most brain regions remained two years later.

What about in moments of crisis? There are plenty of stories out there of mothers showing superhuman strength in the event of an emergency, being able to commit rare feats of strength like lifting a car off a child or



fighting off a large animal attack. Donna McNamee and Abigail Sicolo of England are the two superhero moms who allegedly lifted a 1.1 ton car off an 8-year-old neighbor’s body. Research into this phenomenon, known as “hysterical strength,” is scarce, as subjects often exist in anecdotes and situations impossible to recreate. There are some studies that show the amount of adrenaline cannot reach the muscles required in such a

begun to stir her own advocacy to better protect and serve other children suffering from the same afflictions. “Last year I saw scene in a movie where a child was being bullied for his food allergy, and something really stirred in me. The possibility of my son experiencing food allergy bullying is a fear of mine based on dangerous incidents I’ve heard about in the news,” offered Wong-Thomson. Food bullying is where a

A mama bear is a mom who can be cuddly and lovable but also unleashes a ferocious side when it’s necessary to protect her cubs.

feat of strength in such a short amount of time. According to Jeff Wise, author of *Extreme Fear: The Science of Your Mind in Danger*, another explanation is the presence of endocannabinoids and opioids in the brain, two chemicals released under acute stress that deaden fear. A mother might be able to commit an act of superhuman and physically dangerous strength because her sense of fear is temporarily halted.

When mama’s roar helps other cubs

Laura Wong-Thomson, mother to a 4-year-old, reflected on how having a son with a severe nut and dairy allergy has

person knowingly exposes another person with a severe allergy to a food in a deliberate attempt to incite a severe reaction. Several disturbing, real-life examples include incidents of children smearing a classmate’s mouth with peanut butter, waving nuts in his face, or force-feeding another child cheese. “I ended up writing about it for San Francisco Moms Blog to try to raise awareness,” said Wong-Thomson. “The article got the attention of a writer for a big Japanese newspaper, and she asked to interview me. Sometimes as moms we don’t have the time or energy to take a stand for everything we believe in, but our message often gets amplified when we do.”

More widespread advocacy and awareness initiatives exist as well, initiated by moms just like Laura Wong-Thomson, such as the No Appetite for Bullying Campaign. The organization aims to be a voice for children who experience food allergies and food allergy-related bullying, which affects 1 in 13 children in the United States. The organization states that “when [bullying] is targeted at children and teenagers with food allergies, it can escalate from emotional and physical to life threatening.”

When asked about the mama bear in herself, Laura responded, “I think being a mama bear is less that we feel protective of our own kids, and more so that we see all children everywhere as other cubs. It’s sensing that the snarky kid at the playground probably just wants some attention and someone to play with. It’s stopping another kid from running through the playground gate. It’s telling the kid who is asking for some of your food that you need to ask their mama first. Having a child with serious food allergies has reminded me that all mama bears have their own struggles and stories to tell. There’s so much we can learn from each other to better understand each other, and learn how we can lighten each other’s load.”

Real life self-proclaimed mama bears

There’s a group of moms of LGBTQ youth who refer to themselves as the mama bears. Joined together in a private Facebook Group started by Liz Dyer, mother to two sons, the purpose of the group is to connect mothers with deep ties to the church who have children that identify as LGBTQ so they can support one another. They aim to protect their children from some of the anti-gay rhetoric found in some Christian doctrines

and circles. They continue to raise awareness and help other families navigate the complexities of faith and family when the identity of one family member may be in conflict with what the family’s chosen faith might be.

When Liz Dyer’s son came out of the closet just one year into college, she was devastated and went on to react in ways she now reflects publicly on her blog that she is embarrassed and ashamed to admit. She shares her story with an openness and authenticity that would bring any fellow mother to tears. She implores, “My initial



reaction could have caused me to lose my son forever. Nick could have decided he didn’t want to have anything to do with me or, worse, he may have been driven to harm himself. Many young people have attempted to take their own life when rejected by a parent because of their sexual orientation—some have sadly succeeded. So, if you are a parent and reading this, I urge you to put your relationship with your child and your love for your child above everything else. DO NOT RISK LOSING YOUR CHILD FOREVER.”

With the success of both her blog and the private Facebook group, another spin-off group has formed known as “Serendipity-dodah mama bears to the Rescue.” This group is made up of the self-proclaimed

mama bears who are willing and able to do small acts of kindness for LGBTQ people who need connection, care, or assistance. Some of the things the mama bears will do for complete strangers who seek their assistance include typical maternal acts that might be denied to an LGBTQ person from their own biological mothers due to frayed relationships. These mama bears commit to attending weddings, offering their homes up for the holidays, going on hospital visits, and just generally providing a loving presence where needed.

The other day while I was waiting for my daughter in ballet class, a casual conversation with a fellow ballet mom led the two of us to the discovery that her son was experiencing very similar medical symptoms to the affliction of my own daughter. After an hour of furiously rattling off every resource, book, specialist, and support group I could think of, I returned home with my tiny ballerina, hopped on my email, and immediately sent this mother every link I promised. In my furious and passionate typing, I realized how

the information is so readily off the tip of my own tongue and yet has taken the last three years of painstaking Internet searches, cross-country flights, and doctors’ visits to uncover real solutions to a rare and complicated issue where there is very little research. Could it be time to put my passion for writing and my empathetic mama bear super brain to use and help protect and advocate for other cubs? I can feel the inner roar rumbling. ❖

Jennifer is a mama bear to cubs Lilly and James Duke. When she is not roaring on behalf of her most vulnerable students in San Francisco Unified School District, she is plotting and scheming her next blog that can help other school leaders and parents. Find her at jenniferkuhrbutterfoss.com.



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COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT: JUST FOR MOMS



Who are your current volunteers?
Michelle Tom, Shelley Wu, Lupe Amador, Phyllis Timoll, Theresa Kelly

Describe the personality of your committee in three words.
Fun, creative, sisterhood

What types of activities do you undertake?
Our goal is whatever gets moms together to collaborate, connect, and relax.

How do you know when you are making a difference?
Feedback and, of course, attendance at events. Some events are so popular we hold them annually.

What are some typical JFM events?
Mani-pedi dates, Nob Hill Spa day, a self-defense workshop, shopping events, and wine tasting.

What’s next for your committee?
High tea, cannabis education, konmari. Check the ggmg.org calendar for details.

How can interested GGMG members get involved with Just for Moms?
Email us your interest and event ideas, and let’s have a chat!

SOCIAL EVENTS



Sunday, May 5
10am - 1pm
Randall Museum

giveaways
face painting
bouncy house

Free for all members +
immediate family



PARTNERSHIPS

Looking for a way to use your skills to give back to the GGMG community? Consider joining the GGMG Partnerships Committee! We work with local businesses to bring exclusive deals to our members through two programs—Partners and Friends. The Partners Program offers strategic benefits for GGMG members on an annual basis with partners including JCCSF, UrbanSitter, Recess Collective, and Peekadoodle. Through our Friends Program, we work with local companies to obtain substantial promotions and discounts for members, on a limited-time or ongoing basis. Find all current discounts and benefits for GGMG members in the “member perks” section of the GGMG website. Look for our new monthly GGMG Member Perks email highlighting many of these great deals! If you are interested in joining our committee, please contact Director of Partnerships Erin Cahill at partnerships@ggmg.org. We look forward to bringing you even more discounts and savings in 2019!

MEMBER SUPPORT

Say YES to Help

There is a reason that the *Avengers* and *Incredibles* win at the end of their movies, and it’s not simply to make more money at the box office. In each of these wildly successful franchises, a key takeaway is that superheroes can’t win on their own; they need their teams. We might fancy ourselves Elastigirl or Wonder Woman, but even they are most successful with a little help from their friends. It’s time to start saying YES to help, outsourcing included. Even the smallest gestures can go a long way.

- Does your neighbor want to carry your stroller up two flights of stairs? Does your colleague want to take on that annoying project detail? Yes and yes!
- Sometimes it’s hard to say yes when you believe you could do it better. A partner or in-law offers to fold laundry “their way”? Decide if time or perfect sheet organization is more valuable to you.
- Don’t underestimate outsourcing: store-bought baked goods or a ready-made veggie tray fill bellies while a handyman can tackle that nagging home repair job.

GGMG is here to support you too. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to us at member.support@ggmg.org if you need a hand!

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Social Media Committee is excited to welcome its newest member, Amanda Rabideau. Among other things, Amanda will be taking over the GGMG Instagram account. Like what you’re seeing? Want more of something? Have an idea for something new? Shoot her a message at socialmedia@ggmg.org!

Speaking of Instagram...last month, we hit a huge milestone: we reached 1,000 followers on Instagram!! Woot! Many thanks to all of you for your support.

We’re thrilled that more and more volunteers have been reaching out to us with requests for social media coverage. A reminder to all that requests for publicity on social media should be submitted to socialmedia@ggmg.org at least one week before the event to be promoted. All requests should include the following:

- the exact wording to be used for the brief description;
- for events, the name of the event, date, times, location, and any link to the GGMG calendar, Eventbrite, etc.;
- any images to be used.

All of this will help us help you. We’ll make sure your post is taken care of, on the appropriate channel, within 72 hours of receipt.

Remember to “like” us on Facebook and Instagram @ggmgfsf. And if you attend our events, don’t forget to tag us in your pictures and include the hashtag #ggmgfsf. We may just repost your content!



CAREERS & ENTREPRENEURS



Ever thought about starting your own podcast? Join Paula Jenkins, host of the podcast *Jump Start Your Joy*, for a fun, interactive webinar on May 3 from 12 to 1 p.m. on how to start your very own podcast. Paula started her show while her son was in preschool and she worked full time, and she’s eager to share how you can juggle a podcast while living a full life. We will explain why it’s a great time to start a show, the fun and creativity involved in podcasting, and how it’s an effective way to network. You’ll learn about the equipment and software needed (it’s not as much as you think) and get tips on naming a show and finding guests to interviews. We’ll close with a brainstorm around your chosen topic. Register via the GGMG calendar.

Paula launched *Jump Start Your Joy* in 2015, which has been on *New & Noteworthy* and *What’s Hot* on iTunes and now ranks in the Top 200 in the Personal Journals category. In its fourth season, the podcast has hosted guests such as actress Alison Arngrim of “Little House on the Prairie,” Danny Wood of *New Kids on the Block*, Holly Becker of *decor8*, Dave Asprey of *Bulletproof Coffee*, and Fred LeBlanc of the band *Cowboy Mouth*.

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KIDS ACTIVITIES

Springtime Egg and Scavenger Hunt at Midtown Terrace Playground

By popular demand, the Springtime Egg and Scavenger Hunt is back this year, and we're looking forward to seeing you all! We'll have two separate egg "hunts" split by age: Pre-K (4 and under) and K & up (5 and above). We will also have a nature-themed scavenger hunt, which will be open to all kids. There will be snacks, drinks, and some prizes. Please note that the eggs will be filled with stickers and non-allergenic food items such as fruit gummies. Come on out with the family and join us for a fun-filled morning.

DATE: Saturday, April 13
TIME: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
PLACE: Clarendon Ave. and Olympia Way
COST: FREE

CAREERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

Monthly Downtown Networking Lunch

Join us for our monthly lunch to get to know other moms. Please look for the "GGMG Moms Downtown Lunch Group" sign on the table to find us. We look forward to seeing you there. Everyone is welcome, from pregnant moms to working moms to stay-at-home moms and everyone in between!

DATE: Tuesday, April 9
TIME: 12 p.m.
PLACE: 100 California St.
COST: FREE

DATE: Wednesday, May 8
TIME: 12 p.m.
PLACE: 218 Montgomery St.
COST: FREE

How to Start a Podcast

Join Paula Jenkins, host of the successful podcast Jump Start Your Joy, for an interactive webinar on how to launch your very own podcast. Starting a podcast can be a great way to network in your field and it's also a lot of fun! More details can be found in the Careers and Entrepreneurs column on page 29.

DATE: Friday, May 3
TIME: Noon to 1 p.m.
PLACE: Webinar
COST: FREE

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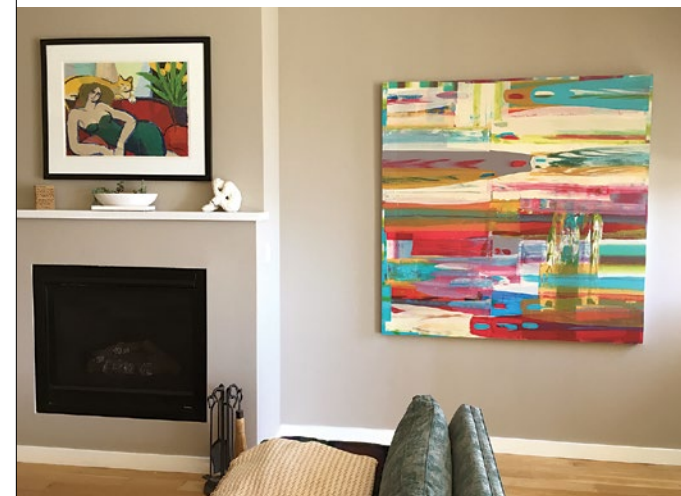


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NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS

The GGMG neighborhood meetups committee is always looking for ambassadors!

Becoming one of our neighborhood ambassadors is the best way to meet other moms in the neighborhood and form a support group. You can host playgroups and activities for your little one(s) to meet some new friends, lead events just for moms, or organize events for the whole family.

Being an ambassador is easy and fun. Just do what you like to do and invite a few others to join you, on your schedule. Love reading? Host a book club! Enjoy a little vino after a hard day of parenting? Host a wine night! Looking for something new for your little one to do? Host a kids yoga session! More ideas? Then you should definitely join us! And what's more, GGMG has funds to help support you and your event.

Volunteers also enjoy the following benefits:

- Additional 3-pass card to KinderFunKlub at JCCSF!
- 2-month free trial membership to Recess Collective!
- FREE membership to UrbanSitter and \$100 credit toward babysitter payments!
- Annual GGMG membership reimbursement after one year of service.
- Eligibility to become Volunteer of the Month. The winner enjoys a free massage from International Orange, worth \$200.
- Invitation to annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.
- Eligibility to become Volunteer of the Year. The winner enjoys a top award and, most importantly, your effort is recognized by the whole GGMG community!

Please contact Viona Seshadri at viona.seshadri@gmail.com if you'd like to know more!

Children’s Yoga & Music Class

It’s “Yosic” time for babies, toddlers & preschool-ers! Join us for Yoga & Music for kids 12 months and up.

Kids Yoga is a playful way to help children to develop their sensory regulation skills and strengthen their muscles. During the class, we will practice yoga poses along with the music. Fun games and yoga stories are incorporated. Balancing boards are provided to help children improve their balance while they are having fun. Instructor Eleandra is originally from Brazil and her “Yosic” class at Chant Yoga Studio is a favorite among kids and parents in the Castro neighborhood. Spots are limited. Please RSVP and bring a yoga mat and water to the class.

The class takes place in different neighborhoods. Check the calendar for upcoming dates.

Mandarin Music and Playgroup for Babies and Toddlers

Come join us for a 50 minute Mandarin class incorporating music, stories, and multi-sensory activities. We will sing playful songs and listen to stories on fun topics such as animals, numbers, and the supermarket! Background in Mandarin is NOT required.

This class is for children ages 6 months to 4 years old with an adult caretaker. Participants will learn basic conversational Mandarin. The class is led by Emma, a native Mandarin speaker and California-certified Mandarin teacher who is committed to providing children with a fun Mandarin learning experience.

The class takes place in different neighborhoods. Check the calendar for upcoming dates.



Mandarin Arts & Crafts Class for Ages 2.5-5 Years

Children will be immersed in conversational Mandarin and art. The class is multi-disciplinary, integrating images, stories, occasional short screen time and various materials. Children will explore different techniques and materials to create their artwork such as collage, painting, handicrafts, and drawing.

One of our goals is to initiate the authentic use of conversational Mandarin among teacher and kids, the bilingual environment encourages kids who do not have Mandarin background to pick up new Mandarin vocabulary as well. The class is led by Emma, a native Mandarin speaker and California certified Mandarin teacher who is committed to providing children with a fun Mandarin learning experience.

The class takes place in different neighborhoods. Check the calendar for upcoming dates.

Junghsin Fitness

Come out for an amazing workout with fellow moms and their babies/kiddos. Free childcare provided!

Lily’s class (which is prenatal-friendly) draws on inspiration from power yoga flow and pilates movements and keeps you going with low-impact cardio and martial-arts-inspired moves unique to Junghsin Fitness. Babies and kids are welcome!

Lightly-weighted martial arts swords will be provided for use during the class to kick it up a notch while keeping the workout low-impact and safe for the pelvic floor. All levels welcome (modifications will be shown if needed). Spots are limited. Please check the GGMG calendar for event dates and times and to RSVP. Please bring a yoga mat, water, snacks, and a blanket for little ones (scooters or toys for bigger kids).

The class takes place in different neighborhoods in an outdoor area. Check the calendar for upcoming dates.

Gentle Restorative Yoga & Meditation at Yoga Mayu

So many of us give generously to our families, our loved ones, and our clients, without taking time to do the same for ourselves.

We invite you to gift yourself two hours of gentle, restorative yoga and meditation to connect with your breath, care for your body, and recharge your whole system so that you can show up energized with continued generosity for others. The event will start at 1:30 p.m., providing time for GGMG mamas in the neighborhood to connect and decompress before the 2-hour seminar, which ends at 4 p.m. Tea and light snacks will be provided. Space is limited and registration closes on March 24. Please check the GGMG calendar and RSVP early. For questions, email Lily Brotherton at lily.m.brotherton@gmail.com.

DATE: Sunday, March 31
TIME: 2 to 4 p.m.
PLACE: 4159 24th St.
COST: \$20 (original price \$45)

Book Club Event at Tofino Wines!

Come and join us for a relaxing evening of good conversation (even if you didn’t read the book!). We are meeting at a nice wine bar to discuss *Circe*, a novel by Madeline Miller. The book has been described as “an epic spanning thousands of years that’s also a keep-you-up-all-night page turner” (Ann Patchett, Author of *Commonwealth*). It was named one of the “Best Books of 2018” by NPR, The Washington Post, Buzzfeed, Refinery 29 and more. A great group of moms joined the January event, and we look forward to meeting even more GGMG book-lovers! All neighborhoods are welcome. Please visit the GGMG calendar to RSVP, or contact Caitlin Callaghan (caitlin.callaghan@gmail.com) with questions.

DATE: Wednesday, April 24
TIME: 7 to 9 p.m.
PLACE: 2696 Geary Blvd.
COST: FREE (light snacks will be provided)

Mother’s Day Tea Party at SIP Tea Room

Please join GGMG for a Mother’s Day tea party at SIP Tea Room. We will honor you, me, and all the women who take the time to nurture and oversee the well-being and development of other human beings, often sacrificing our own needs, dreams, and sleep. We are trying our very best every day to make this world a better place! Mother’s Day should be every day, so let’s celebrate! Traditional English afternoon tea includes a choice of two tea sandwiches, coleslaw, a freshly baked scone, SIP clotted cream, strawberry preserves, lemon curd, and assorted sweets, served with a large pot of tea. Please check the GGMG calendar to RSVP.

DATE: Sunday, May 5
TIME: 3 to 5 p.m.
PLACE: 721 Lincoln Way
COST: \$15; includes a traditional English afternoon tea service

Weekly Playgroup at Sunnyside Playground

Come out and join Beth and Lukas (3) for a fun playdate at Sunnyside playground at 10 a.m. on Mondays. We may alternate playgrounds with Glen Park. Please email ejansson79@gmail.com if you’re interested in joining!

DATE: Mondays
TIME: 10 a.m.
PLACE: 945 Teresita Blvd.
Please meet at the playground at the bottom; if you’re up at the clubhouse, come down the hill.
COST: FREE

LGBTQ Family Monthly Meet-Up at Community Well

Whether it’s busting out the ball pit, singing songs with local visiting musicians, or having a dance party, the LGBTQ family group knows how to have fun! Queer families can join us every first Saturday of the month. We provide a safe space for queer families to meet, play, and discuss topics that are unique to the LGBTQ community.

We meet at Community Well; it’s a great community space that has everything needed for babies, including changing tables, a compostable diaper system, lots of space and toys for the kids, and a ball pit! Please visit the GGMG calendar to RSVP.

DATE: First Saturday of the month
TIME: 3 to 5 p.m.
PLACE: 78 Ocean Ave.
COST: FREE





SPRING CLEANING TIP

Consider donating your goods to Community Thrift in the Mission, where you'll have the option to choose a local non-profit as a beneficiary of the proceeds. We recommend Asian Women's Shelter and LYRIC, two organizations close to our hearts.

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MORE FUN TOGETHER

GGMG & the JCCSF are partnering for another year of exciting member benefits

Your Golden Gate Mothers Group membership opens the door to activities for you and your child, and our partnership with the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco enhances those benefits even further. GGMG members receive exclusive discounts on a variety of their programs. Visit jccsf.org/ggmg to discover all the exciting activities happening at the JCCSF!

JCCSF SUMMER CAMP

Another exciting summer of camp is ready to go, where preschoolers to teens explore a wide variety of camps and make exciting new memories. Whether it's robotics or gymnastics, performing or volunteering, the JCCSF caters to your camper's unique passions and thirst for discovery.

Summer camps run June 5 – August 15 and GGMG members get 10% off any JCCSF camp (valid for up to four weeks of camp per child). Register today at jccsf.org/camp!

New! We're offering camp in an additional location at the Brandeis School of San Francisco in the Park Merced area of SF.

HOW TO REDEEM

- Register in person at the JCCSF with proof of GGMG membership. Bring a recent copy of the GGMG Magazine showing your name and address
- Or send a screenshot of your GGMG member account page to Genine Tyson, Youth & Family Administrator, gtyson@jccsf.org

For questions about camp or registration call 415.276.1537 or email camp@jccsf.org

GGMG members are eligible for the above discounts through February 28, 2020

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO
3200 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94118

415.292.1200

jccsf.org/ggmg



I ♥ Mom

Nude in France

By Christine D'Alessandro

He was at it again. My son was running around the house naked with his friend in tow, as the two were getting ready to take a shower. Here they were, uninhibited, unrestrained, with no worry in the world, comfortable with their nudity and enjoying the moment with loud yelps and squeals of joy. It made me think of the society we live in. Particularly how we don't encourage nudity, and how some people would frown upon a moment like this happening in their home with another friend, worrying about what the other parents may think or not being comfortable with it at all. What if this happened outside of the home, like in a backyard, a pool party, or at a water park? Imagine a bunch of kids running around naked playing and having fun!

When I was 12 years old, my parents trustingly sent me to Béziers, France, to spend a month with a family they had never met. Since almost everyone is off during the summer in France, the family had plans to go on their summer vacation and bring me along. The parents sat me down at the end of the week and explained to me that they were going to go to a beach camp and asked if I had ever camped on a beach in a tent for a few days. Just as I was digesting the idea of sleeping on a beach



Sleeping Venus, Titian Giorgione, 1510

While everyone around me frolicked all over, unencumbered by clothes or self-doubt, I nervously mulled over whether I'd ever feel free enough to be like them.

(something I had never done before) versus indoors on a comfortable bed, they proceeded to tell me that they were going to a nudist beach camp.

When we arrived, there was the hustle and bustle of greeting the people they always saw when they came to this camp and introducing me to everyone. Initially, I kept my eyes fixated on their faces because it was too much to handle seeing anything

else. They were all naked. They were, also, all very kind, respectful, and welcoming. It took me a few hours to digest the environment I was in. I was to share a tent with the family's two boys, aged 12 and 8. They, too, were naked. So there I was, in a red one-piece bathing suit, standing out amongst a sea of nude bodies.

When it was time for lunch and dinner, we gathered around picnic tables and everyone—except me—ate in the nude. And so the rest of my first day went: nude cooking, nude eating,

playing nude petanque—even sleeping nude. I had no choice but to wrap my mind around seeing the naked bodies of men, women, and children at all times. After all, I was to be there for another 3 weeks.

I quickly became known as “the girl in the red bathing suit,” or *la fille dans le maillot de bain rouge*. I splashed in the water and played with friends, but never once stripped off my suit. I was too self-conscious of my changing body, hyper aware of puberty setting in.

While everyone around me frolicked all over, unencumbered by clothes or self-doubt, I nervously mulled over whether I'd ever feel free enough to be like them.

So when I saw my son basking in his own nudity at the tender age of 8, I once again found myself wondering what it would have been like to step out of my red bathing suit and experience the freedom of being around other people doing the same thing. I hope my son always feels that sense of comfort with his body, that he never feels shame in his own skin. I know at some point it's likely to change, but right now, he's enjoying running around naked and that's how it's going to stay in our house. ♦

Christine is a family psychologist, traveler, storyteller, and mother to an active 8-year-old son. She continues to discover the world, and explore other cultures and traditions as she creates memorable experiences for herself and her family.



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