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A PARENTMAP SERIES



ParentMap
FEBRUARY 2015



Continental divide

In the work-family juggle, American parents are playing a different ball game than our European counterparts

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- **Tag-along two:** We've got tips for parenting a new baby with a toddler in tow!
- **Ewwwww!** Your insider's guide to the grossest ailments your kid will ever have

COVER: MAKING IT WORK LOGO BY AMY CHINN; COVER DESIGN BY EMILY JOHNSON



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dear reader

In the month of love, family values first

“Early life lasts a lifetime.”

Dr. Stephen Bezruchka, University of Washington School of Public Health

W

hat are your family values?

Last year, we talked deeply about our own family values, and our biggest fears as parents, and then we brought you our bold “Just Ask” gun-safety awareness campaign. You dedicated your most precious resources of time and money to help fight the insane gun violence in our communities, and we won! We moved the sanity needle in November 2014 with the passage of I-594. We’re not done, but we’re off to a great start.

This year, we are putting the spotlight on another issue critical to families: Are you perpetually feeling as most American parents do — that you are unable to spend as much time with your little ones as you wish you could? Do you fear you don’t have sufficient sick time, and little flexibility to care for your ailing baby? Did you have to fight for maternity and/or paternity leave?

You are not alone!

You, our readers, responded in droves (thousands strong) to our recent work/life balance survey and expressed consistent anguish about your community and nation’s lack of policies in support of your work/life balance aspirations.

Our nation has to close the “Continental divide” (p.17) between the U.S. and Germany’s (or substitute almost any Western European country) work/life policies. Germany’s family/life stats will cause you more severe heartburn than eating too much wiener schnitzel! Our feature kicks off our 2015 content mission: *Making It Work*. With our yearlong special series (look for the logo in print and online), we’re going to explore both challenges and solutions and keep a bold conversation going across all our channels at ParentMap. Tweet or Facebook us using #MakingItWork with your thoughts and concerns around the intersection of work and family — we want to hear from you and share your stories.

Our success is your success. Together we can move our legislators on issues around maternity leave, equitable wages, parental leave, and vacation time. I urge you to quickly flip to p.19 to digest the new meaning of “going Dutch” — aren’t we sick of hearing that the U.S. is the only country other than (fun as it is to say) Papua New Guinea with no nationally required paid maternity leave? It’s truly up to us: Moms (and dads!) can make anything happen.



FAST & HEALTHY PUDDING

A heart-healthy dessert that can be made in minutes? Dreams can come true! With a blend of two fruits, Fair Trade cocoa powder, a touch of honey and almond milk, this creamy pudding has purely decadent flavor and texture created from remarkably healthy ingredients. **Find the recipe and additional Healthy Kids Cook favorites at pccnaturalmarkets.com/healthykids.**



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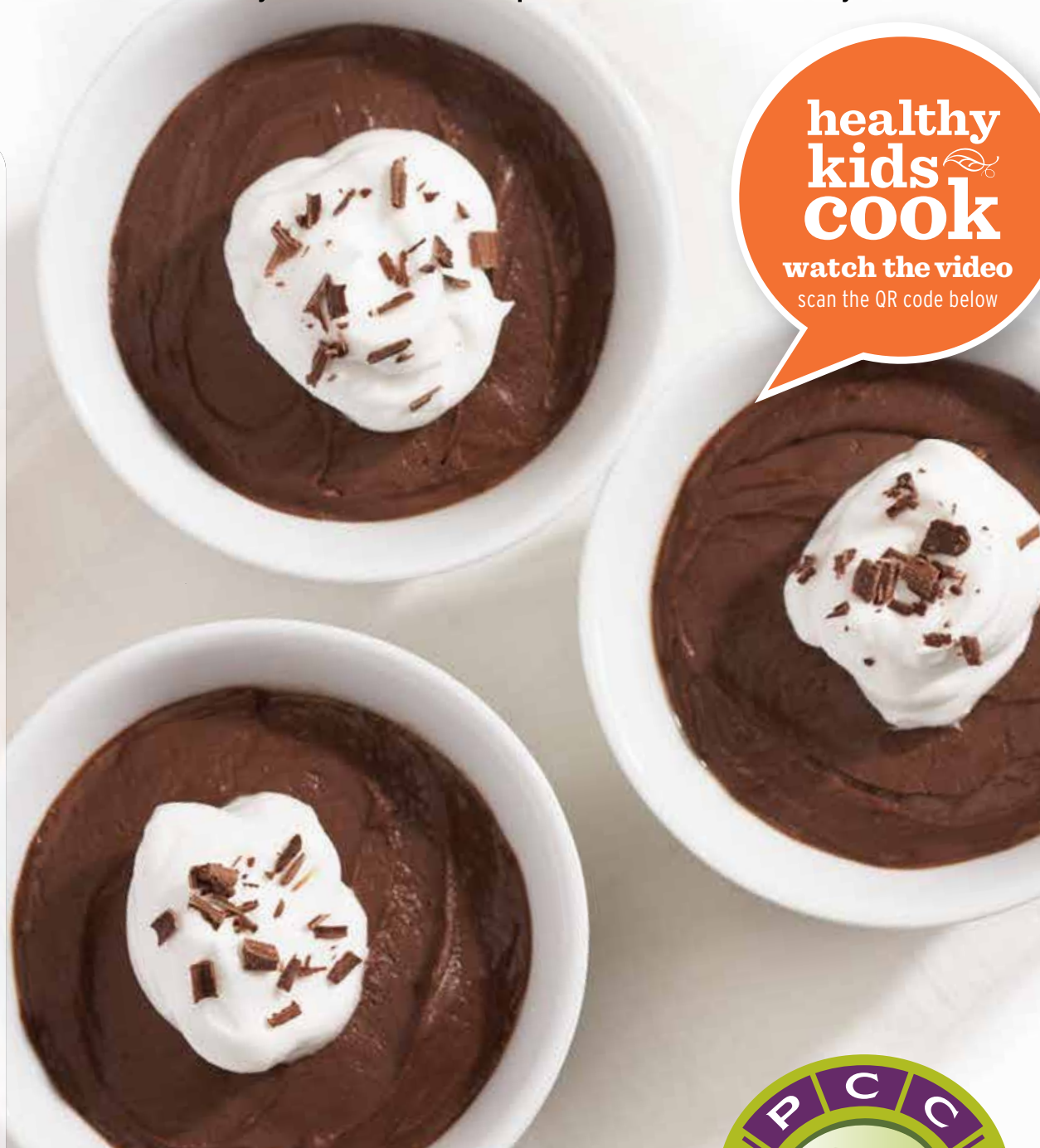


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Screen time: Be mine

Your friends and family might be far away this Valentine's Day, but thanks to our roundup of handy apps, you (or your kiddos!) can still send a card or gift with a personal touch to show how much you love them. parentmap.com/loveapps

Black history month

We've reviewed a handful of the best apps about civil rights and black history for children, preschool age to tweens and teens. Explore awesome black history facts, hear Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches, ride with Rosa Parks and more: parentmap.com/civilrightsapps.

Do date night right

Dying for a date? Low on cash money, or has the babysitter bank run dry? We have you covered, Romeo and Juliet, with our updated roundup of local parents' night out events and babysitting alternatives (the kids have fun at a local museum, play center or recreation spot, and you . . . split!). parentmap.com/nightout.



Have a goat year!

Ring in the 2015 Lunar New Year with our Chinese zodiac for kids and parents. Find out if predictions about your rabbit child are true, whether that willfulness comes from being a horse child, and more fun zodiac zaniness at parentmap.com/zodiac.



Get camp savvy

Despite the gloomy weather, it's already time to start planning your kids' awesome summer! We have all your resources at our camps headquarters (parentmap.com/camps), including a massive camps database searchable by location, age and interest, and stories about unique camps, from tots to teens. Get planning!



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ParentMap

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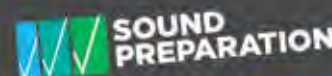


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BRAIN FUEL

parent news, snack-sized

Big babies

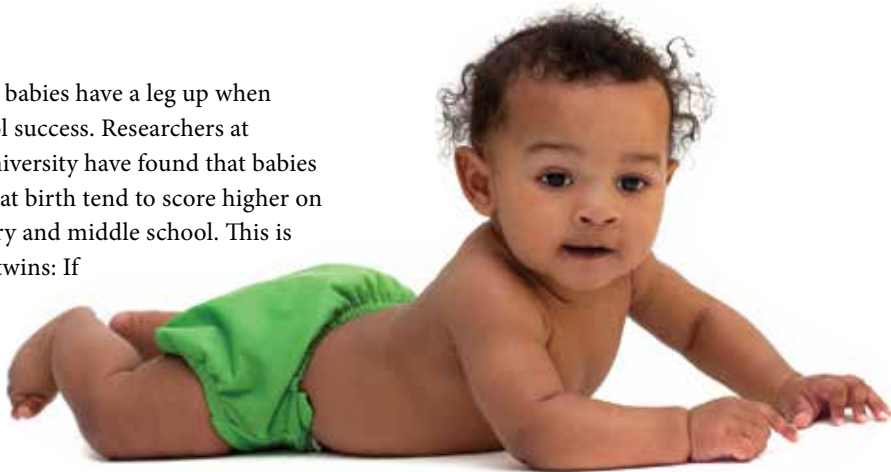
Looks like bigger babies have a leg up when it comes to school success. Researchers at Northwestern University have found that babies who weigh more at birth tend to score higher on tests in elementary and middle school. This is also true among twins: If one is heavier at birth, he is likely to go on to have higher average test scores than his smaller sib. The advantage holds up regardless of race, socioeconomic status and other factors, though researchers say this doesn't mean that children with low birth weights can never catch up.

Winning at losing

Teenagers who are the most successful at *losing* weight have something in common: They tend to do it for their own sake. A new study about obese teenagers finds that the ones who are able to significantly slim down — by an average of 30 pounds — do it for their own health, not because of peer or parental pressure. Researchers at Brigham Young University report that more than 60 percent of formerly obese teens say it was their own decision to lose weight; about 43 percent say peer acceptance was a factor.

No-brainer

You know those concussion forms you fill out so your kids can play sports? Turns out they're making a big difference — or rather, the legislation behind them is. A University of Michigan study finds that in states with concussion laws (including Washington's 2009 Zackery Lystedt Law, which requires that youth athletes suspected of sustaining a concussion be medically cleared before they are allowed back in the game, practice or training), there was a 92 percent jump in children seeking medical help for concussions, which means fewer potentially dangerous head injuries are going untreated.



Top 10 sickest states

Score one for Washington: In a study of data collected by a weirdly addictive new app, our state came out as the sixth-healthiest in the nation in 2014. Oregon, not so much; the Duck State (or whatever) was rated the sixth-sickest in the nation. These results are very reliable, since they're based on social media (!) and also an app called Sickweather (*sickweather.com*), which scans social media for reports of illness. Sickest state? Kansas. Healthiest? Idaho. Or maybe what we're actually measuring here is which state's residents complain the most on social media....

I don't remember eating that

A new study finds that eating trans fat might damage your memory. Researchers studying a sample group of men found that the ones who ate



the most trans fat remembered about 11 fewer words out of 104 than those who ate the least. "Trans fats increase the shelf life of the food, but reduce the shelf life of the person," says the study's author and sound-bite machine Beatrice Golomb, M.D., of the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine. Biggest trans-fat offenders include french fries, microwave popcorn and ice cream. Try to remember not to eat them!

On the hook for V-Day

A totally unscientific poll of readers of *Men's Health* and *Women's Health* magazines has spotted some key differences in the way men and women think about Valentine's Day. When asked, "Do you expect to have sex because it's Valentine's Day?" most men (50.1 percent) said "Yes!" while women (56.9 percent) said "No." To the question "Who is supposed to plan Valentine's Day?" most women (68.1 percent) said it should be planned together, while most men (56.9 percent) thought they were on the hook. But, good news: The vast majority of both men (85.6 percent) and women (85.0 percent) say it's not important that they receive a gift on Valentine's Day (well, unless you think sex is a gift). Meanwhile, good news for babysitters: You can charge whatever you want this Valentine's Day! The ultimate date-night movie (?) hits theaters on Feb. 13. Color me *Fifty Shades of No Way!*

— Kristen A. Russell

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INQUISITIV  **KCTS9**

Sex!

Rumors about parents rarely doing it, and how they can get back to it

By Nancy Schatz Alton

The statistics are not stacked in favor of parents being sexual. “More than 100 studies show that marital sexual satisfaction falls off after the birth of the first child and doesn’t get better until the last child leaves home,” says Diana Wiley, Ph.D., a marriage, family and sex therapist who has been practicing for 32 years (drdianawiley.com).

There are both medical and practical reasons for this dip. “We know hormonal changes occur throughout parenting years. For example, men who are highly engaged parents have lower testosterone than men who are not actively engaged,” says Serena McKenzie, N.D., a sexual medicine expert and licensed sex counselor and medical director at the Northwest Institute of Healthy Sexuality (nwhealthysexuality.com). “The child-centered parenting we tend to practice now has a higher impact on marriages. Pair this with many more two-family working homes, along with parents not having a lot of time together, and intimacy significantly deteriorates.”

The rabbit hole of not having sex grows deeper if you add in issues such as untreated depression and prescribed antidepressants, which can lower sexual interest and make it difficult to feel pleasure while having intercourse. Why bother creating space for intimacy and sex when the cards are stacked so high against that lovin’ feeling actually happening on a regular basis?

“Being intimate is an investment in your family; your relationship is really a key part of family life,” says Amy Johnson, MSW, certified sexuality educator (diligentjoy.com) and a faculty member of Great Conversations (greatconversations.com). “Single parents also need to have their emotional-intimacy needs met with self-care and friendship and connection, too.”

Some parents jump back into their sexual life with gusto after a dry spell. Teresa* and her husband decided to have sex every day for a year after having three children within a span of five years. Don’t worry: They only achieved daily intercourse for a month and a half. “It was like eating steak for dinner every night. I mean, I like steak, but I don’t need it every day,” Teresa says.

Their experiment did lead to an increase in their



sexual frequency, but Teresa believes it was their pre-sex expressions of appreciation that led to more intimacy in their relationship. Before their daily “task,” each person said thanks for one thing the other person did that day. “It’s still helpful to look for the good in what my husband is doing, and I am touched that he notices the things I do for our family. It’s hard to want to do anything with someone or have romance if you don’t feel appreciated,” she says.

Sexual therapists second the idea that couples need to appreciate each other to nurture their connection. But there are other strategies that can help parents who want to make intimacy and having sex a priority. McKenzie recommends having a medical and/or psychological evaluation so partners can make sure there are no biomechanical reasons they are not having sex. It can be hard to find a medical provider trained in the area of sexual function, so be sure to get a second opinion, if necessary.

Wiley suggests to her clients that they be more adventurous outside of the bedroom. “Try new things together: river rafting, hiking, skiing, dancing, going to a concert. This helps people boost their levels of adrenaline and testosterone, and you can see your partner with new eyes. Emotional arousal can lead to more romance and sex,” she says.

Add in more physical touching, too. “When you greet each other at the end of the day, do a 7-second kiss and a 15-second hug. That is enough time to get oxytocin released, which is nicknamed both the ‘cuddle chemical’ and the ‘love hormone.’ Releasing oxytocin starts a positive feedback loop: The more we are touched, the more we want to be touched,” says Wiley, who hosts a weekly Internet radio show

called “Love, Lust and Laughter” on Progressive Radio Network.

Recommitting to a sexual relationship is also about re-creating your identity as a sexual person, McKenzie says. “Your self-identity outside of being a parent can be a really hard [thing to consider]. Sometimes you have to look for it: Read books (*Sexy Mamas* by Cathy Winks [and Anne Semans] and *Mating in Captivity* by Esther Perel), talk to people and spend time thinking about your sexual identity. Seeing a sex therapist can give someone an objective outside

facilitator, too. So much happens in a lifetime partnership with someone, and asking how [to] maintain eroticism decade after decade takes space and time,” McKenzie says.

Creating new energy around intimacy and sex is also about communicating. “Couples need to get comfortable talking about sex. If you don’t communicate, it’s like going on a treasure hunt without any clues,” Wiley says.

In a long-term partnership, what people want during sex may change, which necessitates conversation. This is another reason people see sex therapists — to help them learn how to talk about sex. To get the conversation started with minimal help, Johnson recommends watching Al Vernacchio’s TED talk “Sex Needs a New Metaphor.” Vernacchio asks us to drop baseball and adopt pizza as a metaphor for sex.

“Getting pizza is an experience to share, and you talk about what you want even if you have been having pizza together for a long time. What’s our pleasure? There are a million kinds of pizza and a million ways to eat it, and different is good. It means you have an increased chance of a satisfying experience. There’s no winning, there are questions: Are we satisfied?” Vernacchio says in the video.

Pizza without kids. Now there’s an outing parents want to experience. ■

When not navigating parenthood, Nancy Schatz Alton uses her brainpower to write, edit and fact-check articles for websites and magazines. Find her blog at WithinTheWords.com.

*not her real name; changed for privacy issues

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special series

Helping single parents

By Hilary Benson

When Nikeya McAdory picks up her 5-year-old daughter, Dylan, from after-school care at Graham Hill Elementary School in South Seattle, she has a chubby-cheeked 1-year-old in her arms and a 9-year-old son in tow. She has come from her full-time job as a dental assistant downtown; this is her third stop before the family heads to its home in Burien for the evening.

When McAdory gets home, there will be no sharing of responsibilities. She is a single mom covering every base on her own. But there is nothing about McAdory, who has a megawatt smile, that says self-pity. Despite the challenges past and present, her focus is looking forward. "I'm working hard to move up and be a dental hygienist," she says.

The reality, though, is that McAdory needs help to make it all come together for her family. Kids Co., a nonprofit child care program at Graham Hill and 11 other school locations around the Puget Sound region, offers the family a scholarship each month for both before- and after-school care. Kids Co. (kidscompany.org) helps hundreds of families a year afford child care so that they can keep working. Cofounder Susan Brown says that in the last fiscal year, 95 percent of the single-parented children receiving scholarship support lived in homes headed by single moms.

Far from being just a holding place for kids during non-school hours, Kids Co. is one of hundreds of organizations regularly assessing, planning and improving their programs to ensure that they are of the highest quality. As *ParentMap* has reported in this series, the tool used by programs to voluntarily assess themselves and



improve is called the Youth Program Quality assessment; it was unveiled last spring by School's Out Washington (schoolsoutwashington.org).

Experts agree that children benefit by being more engaged, not just in their after-school program, but ultimately in their schoolwork as well. "No matter what your income level, every kid needs the same ability to be a kid and dig into their own interests," Brown says. In its 25 years of operation, Kids Co. has given \$1.5 million in scholarship support.

The School's Out assessment program also offers a path for improvement to groups that help families with needs beyond child care. Valley Cities (valleycities.org) provides mental health and teen support services in south King County. On a recent Friday evening, counselor Patrice Cade threw a holiday party for client families at a Federal Way community center. Two dozen adults and kids filled the room with laughter and conversation, almost entirely in Spanish. For parents like Olivia Torres, who works while raising her three young children, playing games and sharing dessert was an early holiday gift. "Sí, yes, being here is good, very good," says Torres, laughing, as she got some translation



AFTER-SCHOOL SPECIAL: Kids & Quality Programs

help from her 8-year-old daughter.

Single working mothers are disproportionately burdened by poverty, according to data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. In a 2014 policy brief, the Working Poor Families Project reported that since 2007 the economic circumstances of working mothers have deteriorated. The share of female-headed working families that are low-income increased from 54 percent in 2007 to 58 percent in 2012. And while female-headed working families make up 22 percent of all working families, they comprise 39 percent of low-income working families. Finding affordable, accessible child care is often an impediment to career advancement.

During the week of the holiday party, Cade and Valley Cities staff had spent several days assessing each other and then having outside evaluators observe their programs, such as Girls Circle, which offers middle school girls a safe environment to tackle topics such as women's health, dating safety and girl empowerment. Even with her 16 years of experience, Cade believes she benefited from the assessment process. "It forces you to take the time to evaluate where we might be lacking and where we're wonderful. When we're wonderful, then — congratulations! But then we also learn where we might need to come up." One concrete change Cade will make is allowing the girls more freedom to lead discussions and pick topics. "The things they really want to talk about are love and friends," she says.

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Hilary Benson is a veteran award-winning journalist and mother of three active children. She and her family live in the Seattle area.

Editor's note: In this series, we explore how new voluntary standards developed in Washington state are impacting the quality of after-school programs that serve about 134,000 youths. We explain what parents should seek in a program, look at research on the impact of quality care on kids' development and academics, and visit with programs and kids. After-School Special's independently reported content is funded by a journalism grant in partnership with the Raikes Foundation and School's Out Washington. See the full series at parentmap.com/afterschoolspecial.

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Q&A

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Expanding a picky eater's palate

Q: How do I convince my very, very picky kid to try other foods? My 11-year-old just won't try new foods, and he only eats a select few foods.

A: Definitely at this age, kids are asserting independence and are less likely to seek the reward of parent acknowledgment. Exerting parental pressure can backfire. I recommend this handful of tactics to try to grow your child's diet. And remember, this is an ongoing family conversation about the benefits of healthy eating, not a battle. Take heart: The vast majority of children expand their palates by the young-adult years.

1. Find out what is being taught at your son's school, and build upon that knowledge. If the science behind food interests him, make this a topic your family explores. For example, kids can learn why it's important to "eat a rainbow" of colors.

2. Find cooking classes, camps and other activities that can expose your son to healthy eating without your influence. My daughter tried a rainbow lettuce wrap on a field trip to a cooking school, and now we make them at home. You'd be surprised what kids will try when their parents are not in the room!

3. Turn peer pressure into a positive attribute. More adventurous friends — both kids and adults — can exert a good influence on your child. Reinforce this with the "adventure bite" concept, adding a sense of pride for trying new foods.

4. Engage your picky eater in meal planning. Ask him to find recipes, make a shopping list together and cook together, too. The more invested your child is in the meal before it reaches the table, the better.

5. Consider involving your family doctor in the conversation. A discussion between doctor and child could emphasize what a body needs for energy daily. This science of good eating — understanding what nutrients your son may not be getting enough of — means your son can become more motivated to find solutions. For example, a doctor suggesting a daily smoothie full of nutrients might give a child an avenue to take charge of creating healthier eating habits and trying foods he would never have eaten otherwise.

You'd be surprised what kids will try when their parents are not in the room!

How to change household sleep habits

Q: How do we get our children to sleep in their own rooms all night?

A: Parents have to figure out what the root of the problem is and not just stick a Band-Aid on the issue. Are your concerns with just getting to sleep, or actual sleep quality once they've fallen asleep? Or both?

Are they coming out because they are not yet asleep? Insomnia in kids can occur for many reasons, but in younger children, it is frequently behavioral insomnia. The child has learned to fall asleep with a set of circumstances, and she can't go to sleep on her own: "I really need mom because that's how I learned to fall asleep." Children with behavioral insomnia also tend to have difficulties putting themselves back to sleep after a normal night awakening (which can occur three to five times a night). Or is your child having abnormal night awakenings, meaning there is a medical reason for not falling asleep or for night waking, such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome?

It may be difficult for a parent to know. The first thing to do is gather data on your child's sleep habits. Start with a sleep diary that logs routines (or lack thereof), which may help determine patterns/timing of awakenings. Working with your pediatrician or a sleep specialist may be a good idea.

Every child is different, and how every family copes with those sleep problems will be different as well. Having an open conversation between parents/caregivers, defining realistic medical and behavioral expectations, and rehearsing consistent responses to undesired awakenings are keys to success. This may be facilitated by a pediatrician or a sleep specialist. Changing a family's sleep habits is a serious endeavor that will take time, education and patience, but it will be worth it for the entire household. Nearly every child can learn to sleep in their own room all night long once we understand why they are coming out.



Maida Chen, M.D., is the director of the Pediatric Sleep Disorders Center at Seattle Children's Hospital and on the faculty of the University of Washington's School of Medicine.



Mollie Greves Grow, M.D., MPH, is a general pediatrician at Seattle Children's Hospital and on the faculty of the University of Washington's School of Medicine. Grow is a nationally recognized expert in nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention.

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A PARENTMAP SERIES

Continental divide

In the **work-family juggle**, American parents are playing **a different ball game** than our European counterparts

By John de Graaf

A decade ago, when Melissa Pailthorp and John Zilavy's youngest child was a year old, the Seattle couple moved to Unterschleissenheim, a German city of 25,000 near Munich, because of Melissa's work for Microsoft. They were supposed to stay for two years.

Instead, they ended up living in Germany for eight. Life was easier there for parents with children, Pailthorp recalls. "It started with child care. It was immensely affordable [about \$200 a month] and very high quality, with professionally trained day care people." Health insurance was equally affordable, with full family coverage costing about \$600 a month.

The Seattle parents were surprised to find that mothers are given a year of maternity leave by law, at 80 percent of their salaries. And new legislation provides as much as three months of leave for fathers as well. By contrast, the United States is — besides Papua New Guinea — the only country in the world with no nationally required paid maternity leave. Only about one in seven Americans receives such leave from employers. >>

Continental divide

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Both Pailthorp and Zilavy talk of feeling safer in Germany than in the U.S., even during the three years they lived in Berlin, a big city. "It feels dangerous here," Pailthorp says. Laws regarding driving and even riding a bike are stricter in Germany, including required safety courses. "Here they call that a 'nanny state,' but I thought it was good, actually," Zilavy says. There was also peer pressure to practice safe behaviors. The first time Zilavy took his kids across the street against a red light, a group of older German women scolded him, even though there was no traffic. "And," he adds, "public transportation is very good and affordable."

A numbers story

While parenting may be as rewarding emotionally as it's ever been (and even that has been up for

debate this past year, if you read the book *All Joy and No Fun* or any of the associated Internet babble), in the U.S. today family life, for most adults, does not look like a Norman Rockwell painting. Roughly 60 percent of two-parent households with children younger than 18 have two working parents, according to a 2013 Pew Research Center report, creating an environment of near-constant logistical strategy and juggling.

In 1968, about 37 percent of working-age married women with young children were employed; in 2011, the report shows it was about 65 percent — redefining the work/life balance in dual-parent and single-mother households.

Among mothers with children younger than 18, the number saying they would prefer to work full-time has increased from 20 percent in 2007 to 32 percent in 2012, likely reflecting tough economic



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times, but also representing changing mind-sets about career.

The Pew survey, which gathered data for the report, finds that 53 percent of all working parents with minor children say it is difficult to balance the responsibilities of their job with the responsibilities of their family. Overall, 33 percent of parents with children younger than 18 say they are not spending enough time with their children (46 percent of fathers and 23 percent of mothers).

When paid work, child care and housework are combined, parents in dual-income households each put in, on average, close to 59 hours of total work time a week.

Over the past two decades, we've heard a lot about "family values" in America. But in reality, we haven't really valued families, and in particular, children. A 2013 UNICEF report, "Child Well-being in Rich Countries," ranked the U.S. 26th of 29 countries when it comes to a combination of material well-being and/or deprivation, health and safety, education, risky behaviors and housing/environmental quality. Only Lithuania, Latvia and Romania ranked lower. American children rated their own life satisfaction a bit better: In that category, we finished 23rd. Why? How are the countries that are scoring well — almost all of them in northern Europe — doing it? What are they doing differently than we are here, and how does that affect, say, Seattle parents' day-to-day challenges around childbearing, child care and career?

After years of doing my own research into European countries' policies and U.S. policies, I am still curious: In looking at how families here and in other countries make it work — or don't — what can we learn about where we want to be headed?

The value of time

Taxes, a big bugaboo for Americans, are not that much higher in Germany than here, Zilavy points out, but "you get far better value for your taxes. I

met fiscally conservative Americans who stayed in Europe because of the quality of life there." Part of that quality of life included as many as 15 annual paid holidays. "I got 30 vacation days a year by law," Pailthorp adds, "and pretty much unlimited paid sick leave, but after three days you need a doctor's note. Everyone there, from executives to assembly-line workers, takes their holidays. It's odd for anyone not to take a real vacation. We met virtually nobody who wanted to go back to the U.S." While living in Germany, the couple came to enjoy the fact that stores were closed on Sundays

so that workers had a chance to spend time with their families.

There are some downsides to the German system.

Professional women with children, for example, often feel pressure not to work, Pailthorp says. But Zilavy, who was a "house husband," ended our conversation with a ringing defense of Germany. "I can't think of anything they did

over there that didn't make more sense than what I see over here."

Since 2002, I have been active in Take Back Your Time (timeday.org), an organization whose goals include policy change in America that would ensure paid family and sick leave, and paid vacations, things almost every country on earth, rich or poor, already requires. Germany's family-leave policies, for example are not atypical. Czech and Slovak mothers can take as many as three years off when they have a child (with 28 weeks at full pay), and six years if their child is born with a disability. Swedes get 16 months at 77 percent of their salary; Danes get 52 weeks, Norwegians receive 46 weeks at 100 percent of their salary (Norway also requires that fathers take two weeks), and the U.K. provides 39 paid weeks at 90 percent of salary. France, the Netherlands and Spain offer 16 weeks of maternity leave at full pay.

Even our neighbor Canada is on the bandwagon: Mothers get 15 weeks of maternity leave and can share another 35 weeks with

fathers at 55–70 percent of pay, depending on the province.

Why do these countries do this? They understand, explains Seattle physician and University of Washington School of Public Health lecturer Stephen Bezruchka, that "early life lasts a lifetime." Parental leave results in children who are healthier, happier, better adjusted and more able to learn. Bezruchka and other experts say our refusal to pay for such leave when children are infants costs us far more later in poor health and other problems.

Going Dutch

The Netherlands, a crowded country of 16 million whose capital, Amsterdam, is now the world's most diverse city (with more than half of its population born outside Holland), ranks no. 1 in the UNICEF study by a wide margin, coming out on top in three of the five categories and in the top five on all. Its children also report the highest levels of life satisfaction. Anmarie Widener, an American who earned her doctorate at Leiden University in the Netherlands and wrote a dissertation, "Sharing the Caring," comparing family policies in the Netherlands and the U.S., is not surprised by these findings. "It's just so different being a mom there," she says.

Widener moved to Waddinxveen, a small and conservative Dutch town, when her then-husband told her he wanted to live in Europe and found an IT job there. Their daughter, Eden, was 18 months old. Widener found she could do a four-year Ph.D. program in Holland for just \$2,500, even as a nonresident. The Dutch made every effort to support their family life.

"We got child benefits, money," she explains. The benefit, called a *kinderbijslag* — about \$100 a month — was more than enough to pay for preschool for her daughter. "It surprises you, because you get nothing like this in the U.S., and you go there and even though you are a foreigner, they care about you. You really feel cared for."

Widener's son, Elijah, was born in Holland. The cost for childbirth was minimal, and for the first eight days while she was home with her child, the government provided a worker to assist her with chores. She was impressed by



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Continental divide

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the *peuterspeelzaal*, or preschool, her children attended. “It was very social and all about learning to cooperate and interact. Mothers volunteered a lot of time there as well,” Widener recalls. Through early elementary school, children are escorted to school by their parents on bikes, and after that, the children ride by themselves or walk. The schools are close to where the children live, and most go home for lunch.

In addition to being happy, “The kids were not spoiled at all,” Widener told me. “They were polite, helpful. I never met a Dutch child I didn’t like. The kids didn’t have a lot of things — bikes, of course — but nothing ostentatious. The Dutch frown on conspicuous consumption. We had some friends who had a big-screen TV and actually seemed a bit ashamed of it. ‘This is really American of us, isn’t it?’ they told me.”

Instead of stuff, Widener’s Dutch neighbors spent their money on frequent trips, taking full advantage of the 30 or more vacation days that most receive from employers. “It became clear that my neighbors kept going on vacation,” she explains. “It seems like they went every month or two. It was so natural and normal to them. They went during all the school breaks, for up to two weeks at a time. They wouldn’t even think of only a week off as a vacation. They went car camping in France, Switzerland and Italy. They didn’t fly. They all had these little pop-up trailers they call caravans.”

This may help explain why polls find the Dutch to be the fourth-happiest people in the world

(Americans rank 17th), with Dutch women and children coming in at no. 1. Happiness research shows that experiences, including travel, result in more long-term satisfaction than do material goods. Research also confirms that vacations improve health, reduce depression and strengthen family bonds. In addition to their own required paid sick leave, leave to care for sick children and vacation time, Dutch parents also receive three “emergency” paid days off each year to attend to important family functions.

Encouraging part-time work

One important thing to understand about the Netherlands is that although the Dutch are very productive economically and work hard at their jobs, they put in the fewest working hours annually of any country on earth, about 400 less than the average American worker. “It’s the largest part-time culture on earth,” Widener says. Three-quarters of female workers and nearly a quarter of men work less than full-time.

They are encouraged to do so through the Working Hours Adjustment Act, passed in 2000, a law that allows Dutch workers to reduce (or increase, though few choose that option) their working hours while retaining their jobs, hourly salary rate, promotions, universal health care benefits and prorated benefits, such as pensions and vacation time. Employers cannot refuse such requests unless they can demonstrate undue financial hardship for their firms, so the vast majority of such requests are accepted. Moreover,

European law requires that part-time workers be paid the same as full-time employees for comparable work.

For families with children, a common Dutch pattern is for fathers to work four days a week, and mothers, three, reducing the amount of time children spend in day care. It was actually proposed by the conservative Christian Democratic Party as part of a “family values” campaign, but won broad support in Holland’s multiparty parliament. While it results in less overall household salary, it usually also means that families end up in a lower tax bracket, reducing that negative economic impact on families.

And besides, Widener points out, “One income is enough to cover families in the Netherlands. You see very little real poverty of the kind you see here.” Single mothers work 16 hours a week and receive housing subsidies and other supports, including paid vacation time. “I only go on two vacations a year,” one of them told Widener, explaining that she was a low-income single mother.

For her dissertation, Widener surveyed 100 American and 100 Dutch parents regarding life satisfaction, conducting in-depth interviews. Not surprisingly, in five of the six categories she measured, the Dutch parents fared better. The exception was “self-esteem.” Widener now lives in McLean, Virginia, and teaches gender studies part-time at Georgetown University. Like Seattle mother Melissa Pailthorp, Widener sees a downside to the Dutch system, while acknowledging that it is still extremely popular with women. “Working women like it for the balance — they like [the] caring,” she says. “But it’s very hard for women to advance to managerial positions there. The Netherlands, like America, needs to find a way to achieve greater balance so women have more opportunities to advance at work and men partake more in caregiving and housework.”

American parents speak

Mothers in the U.S. are well aware of the problem of the “motherhood penalty”: New data from Michelle Budig, a sociology professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who has studied the parenthood pay gap for 15 years, finds that on average, men’s earnings increased more than 6 percent when they had children (if they lived with their kids), while women’s pay decreased 4 percent for each child they had. Low-wage-earning women with children younger than 6 suffered a wage penalty five times as great as that of higher-paid women with young children, according to a report on Budig’s findings in *The New York Times*.

Women of all ages, just like men, want a secure job they enjoy, but they are less likely than men to ask for raises or aspire to top management jobs, according to 2013 research from Pew. Among U.S. millennials (workers ages 18–32), 61 percent of women reported that they would like to be a boss or top manager someday, compared to 70 percent of men. Among Gen Xers (ages 33–48), 41 percent of women reported wanting to be a boss or top manager versus 58 percent of men.

And 51 percent of working mothers report that being a working parent has made it more difficult to advance in their career, compared to 16 percent of working fathers.

According to you, the readers of ParentMap, we’ve got a ways to go. While many parents feel supported in their work, and many mothers can opt out of the workforce, others in a recent survey of more than 3,000 readers expressed anguish about their situations. “There is no flexibility for parents,” writes one. “I just resigned from a terrible company,” reports another. “There was no paid sick time, and I had to file an HR complaint to get weekends off.” Another complained about constantly changing shift times.

Among other survey comments:

“My husband’s job is hourly, so he gets no paid time off.”

‘It’s hard to keep a full-time job in the corporate world, because there isn’t any flexibility.’

“I wish employers were more open to part-time work schedules. Part-time implies less than second class.”

“Every sick hour I accrue goes to taking care of sick children.”

“My employer made it very difficult for me to tend to my daughter.”

“So many of us are contractors or part-time employees and have almost no sick time, vacation time, holiday time or maternity leave.”

“I have a 30-hour-a-week job. Still, we struggle when one of the kids gets sick.”

“It’s hard to keep a full-time job in the corporate world, because there isn’t any flexibility.”

There are, however, some promising signs, both in Washington state and nationally.

Google cofounder Larry Page has been promoting a 32-hour workweek. Paid sick days are now required in several American cities, including Seattle, and in the state of Connecticut. California and New Jersey require paid family leave. The City of Berkeley just passed an initiative (with 81 percent of the vote) giving employees the right to request shorter or more flexible work hours without employer retribution, a law similar to one in the United Kingdom that has seen four-fifths of such requests accepted by employers. It’s not as strong as the Dutch Working Hours Adjustment Act, but it’s a start.

Here at home, the road ahead

In 2015, the Washington State Legislature will be considering three important bills that could make a difference for families, in addition to a proposed increase in the minimum wage. A family-work coalition organized by the Economic Opportunity Institute in Seattle is pressing for two of these: a mandatory paid sick days and safe leave provision, which includes time off to deal with the consequences of domestic violence, and a family and medical leave insurance act, which would provide payment during extended leaves for childbirth, adoption, serious health conditions or care for sick family members. On the national front, The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, introduced last year in Congress, proposes an insurance plan to provide paid family

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continued from page 21

and sick leave to every employee. It would come through coverage similar to Social Security and would be administered through the Social Security Administration.

In recent weeks, President Obama has been vocal about more support for parents. In January, he announced that federal employees would receive paid parental leave, and during his State of the Union speech Jan. 20 he drove the point home, saying, "Today, we're the only advanced country on Earth that doesn't guarantee paid sick leave or paid maternity leave to our workers. And that forces too many parents to make the gut-wrenching choice between a paycheck and a sick kid at home. So I'll be taking new action to help states adopt paid leave laws of their own." The president also raised the gender pay gap and the need for Congress to increase the minimum wage.

Then there's vacation. Currently, the U.S. is one of only a handful of nations that do not require paid vacation time. The others — Burma, Nepal, Suriname and Guyana — are all small and poor. In Washington state, state Rep. Gael Tarleton, a Democrat, is introducing legislation that would make Washington the first state in the nation to guarantee paid vacations for workers. (Puerto Rico already requires three weeks.) The bill would provide 12 days for full-timers, prorated for part-timers, and apply to businesses with 10 employees or more. A cost-benefit analysis of Tarleton's bill by graduate students at the University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs found it would bring a sizable net economic benefit to the state. It could be a model for other states.

In the current political climate, these bills may have a hard time. One argument against generous family leave policies like those in Europe is that Europe is struggling economically. But interestingly, the countries with the best policies and the shortest working hours — the Netherlands, Germany, Nordic countries — actually have the strongest economies and are doing very well. In California, a 2011 report revealed that six years after the introduction of a statewide paid family leave program, both workers and businesses report positive effects.

There is no evidence that family-friendly policies are harmful to national economies; indeed, such policies lead to greater hourly productivity, better health and more life satisfaction — all things that juggling parents, trying to make complex modern lives work, would relish.

We've got a lot to learn. ■

*John de Graaf is a documentary filmmaker, co-author of the books *Affluenza* and *What's the Economy For, Anyway?* and executive director of *Take Back Your Time*.*

Resources

Other family-friendly laws taking effect

nationalpartnership.org/news-room/press-releases/family-friendly-workplace-laws-taking-effect-in-early-2015.html

Tell Congress it's time for the FAMILY Act

action.momsrising.org/sign/the_family_act

Get involved with our Making It Work series

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Choosing a preschool



Use these tips, based on research around what children most need at this developmental stage, to assess whether a preschool program might be the right fit. (More at parentmap.com/education.)



RELATIONSHIPS (social-emotional growth) *What to look for:*

- Teachers with long tenures
- Children have ample opportunities to collaborate and work with each other
- Daily community rituals like circle time, sing-a-long and periodic community events that include parents
- Parents welcome in the classroom

PLAY *What to look for:*

- Time for long duration child-initiated play
- Open-ended materials like blocks, fabric, art supplies that change based on children's growth
- Teachers observe and respond to play with questions and offerings
- Outdoor play on multiple playscapes including structures and wooded areas

— Anoo Padte, of the Art of Education (artofeducation.net)

- Big body indoor play that invites coordination and balance through physical art forms like dance, gymnastics, yoga

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

What to look for:

- Singing, poetry, storytelling, jokes
- Opportunities for drawing, sketching and writing
- Exposure to multiple languages
- Access and exposure to print in real-life situations and through books

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

What to look for:

- Child-friendly with furniture at the height of the child and open spaces that allow for exploration and creation
- Carefully planned space that fosters independent self-care
- Children can easily access materials for play



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FEB 25, 9-10:30am
APR 22, 9-10:30am

GRADES 7-12
Contact Admissions

February PICKS



POMPEII: The Exhibition

Pacific Science Center's **fascinating exhibit takes visitors to Pompeii in the year 79**, when Mount Vesuvius's epic eruption killed the city's people and preserved its objects. Includes artifacts and an immersive CGI experience. **Feb. 7-May 25**. Timed-entry tickets (\$17-\$32) include admission to regular exhibits. Note: Some sensitive content. pacificsciencecenter.org



Kidstock! Free Arts Fest

This **FREE annual multi-act arts showcase** features Recess Monkey, The Not-Its!, zany prop-comic Alex Zerbe and Mexican dance troupe Bailadores de Bronce. **Saturday, Feb. 7, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.** **FREE**; preregister online for family pass. Edmonds Center for the Arts. edmondscenterforthearts.org



Risks and Realities: Guiding Your Adolescent in the Digital Age
Acclaimed sex educator/therapist Jo Langford M.A., author of the upcoming book *Spare Me 'The Talk': A Guy's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Growing Up*, guides parents on how to steer kids away from digital-age risks. **Wednesday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m.** \$25. Kirkland Performance Center. parentmap.com/lectures

SUNDAY

1

Cinderella. The beloved fairy tale, told in StoryBook Theater's distinct style (original, comic, 45-minute musical). At Kirkland Performance Center Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 1-8; additional venues through March 14. \$11. Ages 3 and up. storybooktheater.org
Films4families Frozen Sing along. Sing along with the Seattle Women's Chorus to the beloved Academy-Award winning musical. Saturday-Sunday, Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 12:30 p.m. \$11-\$12. SIFF Cinema Uptown, Seattle. siff.net/cinema/frozen-sing-along

8

The Dinosaur Show. Little dino superfans (and others) will delight in this funny and informative romp where the dinos are brought back from extinction. Saturday-Sunday, Jan. 31-Feb. 15. \$9-\$11. All ages. Northwest Puppet Center, Seattle. nwppuppet.org
Wild Adventure Hike. Explore winter around Rattlesnake and Christmas Lakes on a 2-mile hike. Feb. 7, 8 and 22, 1:30 p.m. **FREE**; preregistration recommended. All ages. Cedar River Watershed Education Center, North Bend. seattle.gov/util/crwec

15

Harlem Globetrotters. Premier comic family sports entertainment with eye-popping basketball skills and tricks makes three stops in our region. Saturday, Feb. 14 at ShoWare Center, Sunday, Feb. 15 at Seattle Center, and Monday, Feb. 16 at Xfinity Arena in Everett. harlemglobetrotters.com
The Monster Under the Bed. The comic story of a boy who matches his grumpy mom, faraway dad and monster problem with his out-size imagination. Feb. 6-22. \$13-\$19. Ages 6 and up. Olympia Family Theater. olyft.org

22

Tết Festival. Celebrate Vietnamese Lunar New Year, and see and taste rich cultural traditions of the local Vietnamese community, including dances, story time, food demos and more. Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 21-22, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Seattle Center. tetinseattle.org
Evan's Family Variety Show. Evan gathers great performers who feature magic, acrobatics, juggling or something new each time. 3 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. All ages. Phinney Neighborhood Center, Seattle. evan.org



St. Thomas School CampFair, Feb. 7, parentmap.com/campfair

MONDAY

2

Ground Hog Day. Kids engage in activities around shadows, weather and Punxsutawney Phil, the groundhog with a very important job. 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Included with admission. Ages 1-10 with caregiver. The Children's Museum, Seattle. thechildrensmuseum.org
Star Wars and the Power of Costume. Explore how clothing helped define your favorite characters from six *Star Wars* movies. Daily through Oct. 4. Included with admission. EMP Museum, Seattle. empmuseum.org

9

Lil' Diggers Playtime. Behold the giant, indoor sandbox of kids' dreams, with wi-fi for grown-ups. 9:30-11 a.m. or 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, Thursday. \$7. Ages 5 and under. Sandbox Sports, Seattle. sandboxsports.net **ONGOING EVENT**
Japanese Story Time. *Konnichiwa.* Visit the library for books and songs in Japanese, for families who speak the language and anyone interested in hearing it. 11 a.m. Mondays. King County Library System, Lake Hills Branch. kcls.org

16

FREE Entrance to National Parks. Visit one of Washington's three spectacular National Parks: Mount Rainier, North Cascades or Olympic National Park, **FREE** for Presidents Day Weekend, Saturday-Monday, Feb. 14-16. nps.org
Kids 'n' Critters. Bring your crew to visit Northwest Trek's fascinating animals and partake in special activities; up to four children (ages 12 and under) admitted free per paying adult. Saturday-Monday, Feb. 14-16. Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Eatonville. nwtrek.org

23

Toddler Time. Open-early play gym lets the little ones burn off energy with bikes, slides and toys. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-noon. \$2. Ages 3 and under with caregiver. Issaquah Community Center. ci.issaquah.wa.us
OmTots Play Gym. Preschoolers bounce around, swing from the ceiling and generally act like monkeys. Monday-Friday, 9:30-noon. \$8 (discounts available). Ages 1-4 with caregiver. OmCulture, Seattle. omculture.com **ONGOING EVENT**



Harlem Globetrotters in Kent, Seattle and Everett, Feb. 14-16

TUESDAY

3

Pre-K Open Jump. Little ones burn up major energy jumping and playing among the inflatables. 9:30 a.m.-noon, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays. \$5-\$7. Ages 5 and under. Pump It Up, Kirkland. pumpitupparty.com/kirkland-wa **ONGOING EVENT**

10

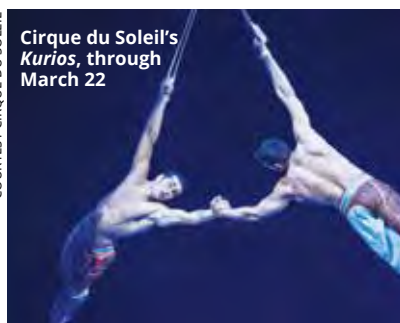
Toddler Time at the Aquarium. Last few sessions of the season to engage in marine-themed activities for little ones. 9:30 a.m.-noon, Feb. 9, 10, 23 and 24. Included with admission. Ages 0-5 with caregiver. Seattle Aquarium, Seattle. seattleaquarium.org
Classical Tuesdays in Old Town. Women's a capella group Dunava and Dave & the Dalmatians play Balkan music. 7 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Slavonian Hall, Tacoma. classicaltuesdays.blogspot.com

17

Story Time at Mockingbird Books. Stop by this almost-everyday story session to hear old favorites and new picks. Monday-Saturday, 11-11:30 a.m. **FREE**. Ages 6 and under. Mockingbird Books, Seattle. mockingbirdbooks.org **ONGOING EVENT**
Here & Now: Native Arts Inspired. Witness the direct link between contemporary and past Native artists, plus see the Seahawks mask. Daily through July 27. Included with admission. All ages. Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, Seattle. burkemuseum.org

24

Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella. This lush Broadway musical promises all the beloved scenes from the classic tale, plus new surprises. Tuesday-Sunday, Feb. 24-March 1. \$25-\$100. Ages 4 and up. The Paramount Theatre, Seattle. stgpresents.org
Play to Learn. Kids and caregivers gather for play, songs and circle time. 10-11:30 a.m. select Tuesdays. **FREE**. Ages 6 and under with caregiver. Charles Wright Academy, Tacoma, and Puyallup Public Library, Puyallup. playtacoma.org



Cirque du Soleil's Kurios, through March 22

WEDNESDAY

4

Toddler Breakdancing and Movement

Class. Get the kids started learning cool moves and having a blast with Uncle Boy Breakhouse. 10-10:45 a.m. Wednesdays through March 4. \$15 drop-in. Ages 1-5. Cornerstone Café, Seattle. focseattle.com
Kurios - Cabinet of Curiosities. An inventor stars in Cirque du Soleil's latest show, aiming to turn perception on its head amid Cirque's amazing acrobatic talent. Through March 22. \$25-\$131. Marymoor Park, Redmond. cirquedusoleil.com

11

Northwest Flower and Garden Show. The region's premier garden show brings spring early with lots of kid-friendly fun. Various prices and packages; kids 12 and under free. Wednesday-Sunday, Feb. 11-15. Washington State Convention Center, Seattle. gardenshow.com
Story Hour at the Conservatory. Study animal tracks and create a collage after reading *Someone Walks* by Carlson Voiles. 11 a.m. \$3; ages 11 and under free. Ages 3-8. W.W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory, Tacoma. seymourconservatory.org

18

Lunar New Year Celebration. Welcome the Year of the Sheep with fun crafts and special celebratory treats (while supplies last). 3:30-5 p.m. **FREE.** Ages 7 and under with families. Pierce County Library, University Place Branch. piercescountylibrary.org
Baby Jam. A multi-lingual, drop-in musical exploration for babies to preschoolers. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 11:15-11:45 a.m. \$10-\$12. Ages 0-5 with caregiver. Balance Studio, Seattle. babyjam.org
ONGOING EVENT

25

Risks and Realities: Guiding Your Adolescent in the Digital Age. Sex educator/therapist Jo Langford, M.A., provides tools on steering kids away from sexting, porn and cyber-bullying. 7 p.m. \$25. Adults. Kirkland Performance Center. parentmap.com/lectures
Wild Wednesday. The last Wednesday of the month enjoy free admission to this fun indoor play space with a food bank donation. 9 a.m.-8 p.m. **FREE** with two items. Ages 1-14. PlayDate SEA, Seattle. playdatesea.com

THURSDAY

5

Circus Oz: But Wait . . . There's More.

One of Australia's most popular exports, this troupe combines crazy acrobatics, cutting-edge juggling and inspired impersonations with messages about information excess and materialism. Thursday-Sunday, Feb. 5-8. \$35-\$55. The Moore Theatre, Seattle. stgpresents.org
Late Play Date. Fun crafts and activities with friends and family. 6-8 p.m. **FREE.** Ages 3-12 with families. White River Valley Museum, Auburn. wrvmuseum.org

12

Images of China Puppet Show. Chinese rod puppets act out folk tales and stories of China. 11 a.m. **FREE.** Ages 3 and up. South-center Mall Play Space, Tukwila. kcls.org
Discover Art - Jacob Lawrence. Study the art of a famous artist, then work on your own masterpiece. (Check library website for additional Discover Art workshops.) 4 p.m. **FREE;** preregister. Ages 6-10. Pierce County Library System, Gig Harbor Branch. piercescountylibrary.org

19

The Tasty Tale of Brave Sir Bump. Zambini Brothers Puppet Company presents the silly story of an unlikely hero who must save his kingdom from ruin. 1:30 p.m. **FREE.** Ages 3-9 with families. King County Library System, Shoreline Branch. kcls.org
Hands-On History: The Log Cabin Experience. Kids help build a model cabin of little logs and other activities with Eastside Heritage Center during \$1 Third Thursday Night. 5-8 p.m. \$1. Ages 1-10. KidsQuest Children's Museum, Bellevue. kidsquest.org

26

A Musical Journey Around the World. Travel with your tots (painless!) around the globe through songs in Russian, German, Hebrew and more. 10:30 a.m. **FREE.** Ages 3 and up. King County Library System, Enumclaw Branch. kcls.org
CulturalFest Expo. University of Washington students from around the world showcase the music, dance, food and culture of more than 35 different spots on our planet. 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. **FREE.** All ages. HUB Ballroom at UW, Seattle. fuuts.org

FRIDAY

6

Reel Women. Seattle Women's chorus performs an all-star musical tribute to some of the silver screen's most famous women, from "Hooray for Hollywood" to "Let it Go." Feb. 5-8. \$25-\$60. Various venues. seattlewomenschorus.org
FREE First Friday Night at Hands On Children's Museum. Brush those pearly whites, it's Dental Health month at the museum with free play. 5-9 p.m. **FREE.** Ages 0-10 with families. Hands On Children's Museum, Olympia. hocm.org

13

Grandparent Tot Shabbat. Kids, bring granny and gramps to celebrate with songs, snacks and Shabbat blessings. 9:45 a.m. **FREE.** Ages 0-5 with caregiver. Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island. sjcc.org
Disney's Aladdin Jr. The young actors of Ludus Youth Theatre Group present this adaptation of the movie musical. Friday-Saturday, Jan. 30-Feb. 14. \$10. Ages 5 and up. Everett PUD Auditorium, Everett. ludusyouththeatre.org

20

Bats of Bellevue. What benefits do our furry, flying friends bring to our region's ecosystem? Come and find out. 10 a.m. **FREE;** preregister. All ages. Lake Hills Greenbelt Ranger Station, Bellevue. bellevuewa.gov
Family Movie Night: Maleficent. Plop down to see those crazy horns on the big screen, plus enjoy pre-show LEGO activities. 5:30-9 p.m. \$4; preregister. Film rated PG. Chambers Creek Regional Park, University Place. piercescountywa.org

27

Preschool Pets. Kids meet a loveable shelter pet, plus take part in animal-themed crafts, games and songs. 10-11 a.m. \$10; preregister. Ages 4-5 with caregiver. Crossroads Bellevue Community Room. seattlehumane.org
Family Movie Night - Tot and Teen Edition. It's a double feature tonight starting with *Land Before Time* (G) followed by *The Amazing Spiderman 2* (PG-13); bring your indoor picnic or buy snacks (including grown-up drinks). 5:30-10:30 p.m. \$5/family. Mount Baker Community Club, Seattle. mountbaker.org

SATURDAY

7

St. Thomas School CampFair. Get a jump start on summer camps planning by meeting a wide array of camp providers, from soccer to equestrian to overnight adventure and more. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. **FREE.** All ages. St. Thomas School, Medina. parentmap.com/campfair
Lunar New Year. Celebrate the Year of the Sheep outside the Wing Luke Museum (lion dance, speakers and firecrackers) and inside (arts activities, games and story time). 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Outside activities free; admission fee for inside. Seattle. wingluke.org

14

Asia Pacific New Year Celebration. Cultural performances, martial arts, food and craft booths and more, with host nation Pakistan. 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m. **FREE.** All ages. Tacoma Dome Exhibition Hall. asiapacificculturalcenter.org
The I Hate Children Children's Show. This interactive magic and comedy show promises to leave adults and children happy and entertained. Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 7-Feb. 22. \$18-\$25. Ages 8 and up. Hale's Palladium, Seattle. ihatechildren.com

21

The Pop Ups. This duo from Brooklyn aims to put a fresh spin on kids' music, with electric beats and creative dance moves. 11 a.m. Ages 12 and under free; adults \$5. All ages. Town Hall, Seattle. townhallseattle.org
Seussical the Musical. It's a wild, goofy mash-up of all the best of Dr. Seuss starring Horton the Elephant in a challenging yet triumphant turn. Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 21-March 1. \$12-\$15. Ages 4 and up. Tacoma Musical Playhouse. tmp.org

28

Lake Hills Greenbelt Bird Walk. Get started birding right in town with avid birder Hugh Jennings; bring binoculars if you have them. 8:30 a.m. **FREE;** preregister. Ages 9 and up. Lake Hills Greenbelt Demonstration Garden, Bellevue. bellevuewa.org
STAT: Standing Tall and Talented: Home Court. NBA player Amar'e Stoudemire's story of friendship, courage and teamwork on the court, a Book-It Family Fun Day presentation. 10:30 a.m. \$10-\$12. Grades K-8 with families. The Center Theatre, Seattle. book-it.org

Kids 'n' Critters at Northwest Trek, Feb. 14-16


Seattle Children's
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www.seattlechildrens.org

5K St. Patrick's Day Dash
Sunday, March 15, 8 a.m.
 Run starts at Seattle Center, 3rd & Mercer
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Bring the whole family, leprechauns included, to this 3.1 mile run around Seattle Center, presented by the Detlef Schrempf Foundation and supported by the Tailgaters Anonymous for Children's Guild. A portion of the proceeds benefit Seattle Children's Autism Center. www.stpatsdash.com

Bike Helmet Giveaway & Fitting
Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
 Renton Community Center
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FREE bike helmet fitting and giveaway. Bring your kids ages 1 to 18 to get a free bike helmet, learn about proper fit, and enjoy giveaways and activities for the whole family!

www.makesurethehelmetfits.org

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March 28 & 29
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Evergreen City Ballet Tickets: evergreencityballet.org



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FEBRUARY 21 • 11AM-4PM
IN MACY'S COURT & BY THE PLAYSACE

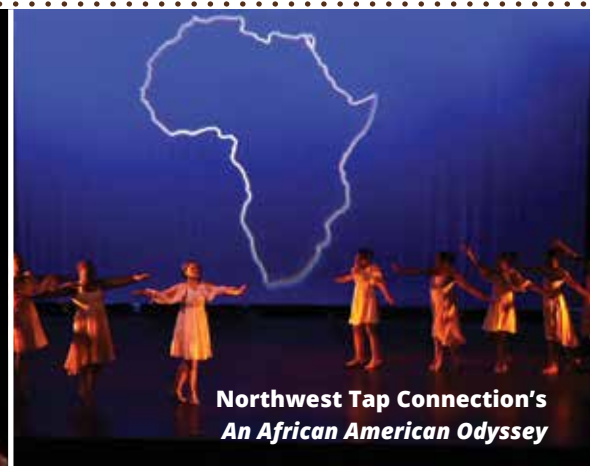
- Lion Dance Parade
- Cultural Performances
- Chinese Calligraphy & Crafts

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Shoe la la: Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* at The Paramount



Northwest Tap Connection's *An African American Odyssey*



Saigon's Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theatre

super spring ARTS PICKS

By Nancy Chaney and Elisa Murray

Remember those New Year's resolutions? Exercise more, stress less, expose your kids to more plays and concerts and culture? We can't help you (much) with the first two, but the last is a cinch, given the greater Seattle area's incredibly varied roster of family-friendly music venues, theaters, film festivals and other performing arts organizations. To inspire you, here are 20-plus picks for spring arts; find a comprehensive list at parentmap.com/springarts (or picks for any weekend at parentmap.com/weekender). >>



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Featuring the String Family!

1:30 pm - Instrument Petting Zoo
2:30 pm - Concert
Sunday, February 15
Schneebeck Hall
University of Puget Sound



Join the TSO String Quintet for a fantasy-filled introduction to the string family. Listeners will be taken to a land far, far away to explore the contrasts of high/low, slow/fast, and loud/soft while learning all of the ins and outs of what makes the string family truly unique. The music featured in this concert will be a balance between popular classical pieces, music from the movies, and tunes that the whole family will enjoy...and everyone lives happily ever after!

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out + about

super spring ARTS

continued from page 27

FEBRUARY

Chop Shop Contemporary Dance Festival

The Theatre at Meydenbauer Center,
Bellevue

Feb. 14–15

Explore an exciting range of contemporary dance at this acclaimed festival, featuring national and international award-winning dance companies and performing artists.

Tickets: \$23–\$28

Ages: 8 and older

chopshopdance.org

Treasure Island

SecondStory Repertory, Redmond

Feb. 14–March 8

Seafaring adventure awaits in this production. Ahoy, young Jim Hawkins finds plenty of action when he inherits a map leading to hidden treasure. How will he deal with Long John Silver and the other rogues?

Tickets: \$10; \$5 for ages 1–3 for all-ages shows on Sundays

Ages: 5 and older; Sunday shows are for all ages

secondstoryrep.org

The Miracle Worker

Lakewood Playhouse

Feb. 19–March 15

Inspire school-age kids with the story of Helen Keller and her teacher, Anne Sullivan. Blind, deaf and mute as a result of illness as a baby, Helen was thought to be unteachable, until her parents hired Sullivan to tutor the young girl. The teacher's dedication taught Helen to communicate and ultimately thrive in a world previously closed off to her.

Tickets: \$19–\$25

Ages: 10 and older

lakewoodplayhouse.org



**The Miracle
Worker in Tacoma**

Northwest Tap Connection's An African American Odyssey

Shorewood Performing Arts Center,
Shoreline

Saturday, Feb. 21, 11 a.m.

The all-ages dance company traces the African American experience from slave ships to the civil rights movement to current black artists — using movement, song and spoken word.

Tickets: \$8

Ages: All

shorelinearts.net

Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella

Paramount Theatre, Seattle

Feb. 24–March 1

The lush and charming Rodgers and Hammerstein production of the fairy tale is complete with pumpkin, glass slipper and masked ball.

Tickets: \$25 and up

Ages: 4 and older

sigpresents.org

MARCH

Celebrate Asia!

Benaroya Hall, Seattle

Sunday, March 1, 4 p.m.

Conducted by Carolyn Kuan, this annual Seattle Symphony concert celebrates our region's rich Asian-American cultural heritage with a program that includes music from *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Don't miss the preconcert festivities; many families dress up in traditional attire.

Tickets: \$12–\$70

Ages: All

seattlesymphony.org

Twisted Flicks:

The Fantastic Four

Kirkland Performance Center

Friday, March 6, 8 p.m.

The latest in Jet City Improv's Twisted Flicks series redubs *The Fantastic Four*, a never-released low-budget 1994 superhero flick, in a live improv show.

Tickets: \$15

Ages: 10 and older

kpcenter.org

The Rising Star Project: Carousel

The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle

March 13–14

Just after the professional production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *Carousel* closes at The 5th Avenue Theatre, a group of students ages 14–19 will mount their own production, using the same staging, props, set and costumes.

Tickets: \$15–\$25

Ages: Rated PG-13; see online parental guidelines

5thavenue.org/show/the-rising-star-project1



Celebrate Asia!
at Benaroya Hall

BEN VAN HOUTEN

Snow White

Pacific Northwest Ballet, McCaw

Hall, Seattle

March 15–21

PNB reprises its narrated one-hour ballet designed in length and format especially for younger audiences and danced entirely by students.

Choreographed by Bruce Wells, the

production boasts fairy-tale sets, magical dancing and a satisfyingly evil queen.

Tickets: \$25–\$60

Ages: All

pnb.org

Oblio and the Pointless Forest

Bellevue Youth Theatre–Crossroads

March 20–29

Check out Bellevue Youth Theatre's eco-cool new theater — a Gold LEED-certified building with a grass roof — and see a retelling of the musical fable by Harry Nilsson, a story of a round-headed boy in a land of many points, featuring classic songs such as "Me and My Arrow."

Tickets: \$10–\$12

Ages: All

bellevuewa.gov/BYT.htm

Our Only May Amelia

Olympia Family Theater

March 20–April 5

Northwest pioneer history, adventure and a girl's coming of



To a different drum:
Recycled Percussion in Olympia

RECYCLED PERCUSSION

age all get their turn in this play adapted from the Newbery-Award winning novel by Jennifer L. Holm about a 13-year-old growing up on an isolated farm in Southwest Washington. OFT presents this show and the rest of its ninth season in a new space, its own theater in downtown Olympia.

Tickets: \$13–\$19

Ages: 8 and older

olyft.org

Recycled Percussion

Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia

Sunday, March 22, 5 p.m.

A wild, rhythmic ride: Playing music on trash cans, ladders and tools, in addition to regular instruments, Recycled Percussion keeps toes tapping and attention rapt, as displayed in its run to the finals of *America's Got Talent*, in 2009. Note for parents of kids with sensitive ears: This show is quite loud.

Tickets: \$12.50–\$35

Ages: All

washingtoncenter.org

Fancy Nancy and the Mermaid Ballet

The Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue

March 28–29

When Nancy does not land the lead role in the ballet performance, how will she deal with the disappointment? Evergreen City Ballet presents another *Fancy Nancy* tale as a one-hour story ballet with costumes and sets that Nancy fans will love.

Tickets: \$14–\$25

Ages: All

evergreencityballet.org >>

super spring ARTS

continued from page 29

APRIL

Robin Hood

Seattle Children's Theatre

April 16–May 17

Seattle Children's Theatre revives one of its most popular shows ever with this high-energy version of the classic tale about Robin Hood and his Merry Men. The show promises lots of old-fashioned swashbuckling action, adventure, wit and romance.

Tickets: \$20–\$36

Ages: 8 and older

sct.org

As You Like It

Studio East, Kirkland

April 17–19

"All the world's a stage" . . . "Too much of a good thing" . . . *As You Like It* is an introduction to some of Shakespeare's most famous phrases, and a great story: A heroine, Rosalind, flees persecution to the Forest of Arden, where she seeks safety and love. Simon Pringle directs.

Tickets: \$13–\$15

Ages: 11 and older

studio-east.org

Saturday Morning Cartoons

The Pocket Theater, Seattle

April 18 and 25, May 2 and 9,
10:30 a.m.

Get tickets early for this follow-up to last fall's hit production by B-Sides & Rarities: cartoon-inspired short plays penned by Seattle playwrights and their kids, and produced at Greenwood's 50-seat Pocket Theater. Expect super-smart jokes that work for parents and kids and no teachable moments in sight.

Tickets: \$5–\$14

Ages: All

the1448projects.org

The Ugly Duckling

StoryBook Theater

April 18–May 16

You can now see StoryBook's highly original and entertaining 45-minute musical versions of fairy tales — a perfect early theater experience — in five venues around Seattle. *The Ugly Duckling* tackles bullying, friendship and pluck.

Tickets: \$11

Ages: 3 and older

storybooktheater.org

Mini Maestros: Percussion on Parade

Schneebeck Hall at the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma

Sunday, April 19, 2:30 p.m.

Under the leadership of Tacoma Symphony Orchestra's new music director, Sarah Ioannides, the symphony's percussion quartet marches out all its instruments to play for curious kids and their families in a 45-minute, interactive performance. Show up early for the instrument petting zoo.

Tickets: \$7–\$10

Ages: 2–8 with families

tacomasympphony.org



**Phantom haunts
the Paramount**

MATTHEW MURPHY

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

YTN Black Box at Emmanuel

Episcopal Church, Mercer Island

April 24–May 10

Narnia fans alert! Youth Theatre Northwest's talented actors from grades 4 to 12 present C.S. Lewis' magical tale of four siblings who discover a wintry fantasy world via the back of their closet, and — eventually — get involved in an epic battle between good and evil.

Tickets: \$13–\$17

Ages: 8 and older

youththeatre.org

The Phantom of the Opera

Paramount Theatre, Seattle

April 30–May 10

Angst, mystery, secrets, romance, high drama: If these themes sound up your tween or teen's alley, book it to Cameron Mackintosh's new touring production of the phenomenally successful Broadway show. Featuring new scene design, costume design and choreography, and a cast and orchestra of 52, this *Phantom* is one of the largest productions now on tour.

Tickets: \$30 and up

Ages: 8 and older

stgprepresents.org

MAY

Ariadne auf Naxos

Seattle Opera, McCaw Hall

May 2–16; Family Day, May 3, 2 p.m.

Introduce your family to opera through the spectacular costumes and soaring score of this Richard Strauss opera.

The story within a story — about a wealthy patron who commissions two very different pieces of entertainment — mixes lowbrow



**Ariadne auf Naxos
at Seattle Opera**

ROZARIL LYNCH

comedy, high art and surprises. Family Day performance includes activities and a great price for kids (\$15).

Tickets: \$25 and up; \$15 for kids accompanying an adult on Family Day

Ages: 8 and older

seattleopera.org

Carnegie Hall's The Orchestra Rocks

Benaroya Hall, Seattle

Saturday, May 9, 11 a.m.

One of the many standouts in the Seattle Symphony's Family Music series, this concert, conducted by Stilian Kirov, explores rhythm, pulse and groove, drawing on selected pieces that include Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Families are invited to participate from their seats.

Tickets: \$15–\$20

Ages: 6–11

seattlesymphony.org

Saigon's Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theatre

Town Hall, Seattle

Friday, May 15, 8 p.m.

This 1,000-year-old form of Vietnamese puppetry features colorful characters playing out stories in a shallow pool of water, accompanied by orchestra Rup Tung Cack's musical

arrangements. The fantastic puppets, along with gong, flutes, kettle drums and zithers, bring Vietnamese folk traditions magically to life.

Tickets: \$10–\$25

Ages: All

townhallseattle.org

Click, Clack, Moo

Everett Civic Auditorium

Sunday, May 17, 2 and 4 p.m.

Village Theatre's Pied Piper series presents this comical story of clever farm animals who get ahold of a computer and use it to their advantage. Note: The 4 p.m. show is a designated sensory-friendly performance (call box office at 425-257-8600 to reserve tickets).

Tickets: \$15

Ages: Grades K–4

villagepiedpiper.org

JUNE

The Illusionists:

Witness the Impossible

The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle

June 16–21

"Jaw-dropping." "Mind-blowing."

"Outrageous and astonishing." The world's best-selling magic show

generates superlatives like rabbits out of hats, which hint at its Las Vegas vibe (spectacular, but not for everyone). Parents of sensitive children, take note: The feats include sawing people in half.

Tickets: \$24–\$104

Ages: 4 and older; but note content advisories online

5thavenue.org

ONGOING

Split Second Improv: Sweet Saturdays at Seven show

SecondStory Hideaway, Redmond Town Center

Saturdays, 7 p.m.

"If we suck, it's your fault!" As the motto for Split Second Improv's family show indicates, kids are as responsible for shaping the scenes as other audience members, which means they are especially delighted to see their suggestions performed. The content is scrupulously clean — and yes, PG improv is funny.

Tickets: \$20

Ages: All

secondstoryrep.org/improv ■

inspire teen artists: 4 picks

SOUND OFF! Every year, EMP Museum hosts the region's premier battle of the bands for ages 21 and under. Performances are affordable (\$8–\$12) and exciting. Feb. 13–March 7. empmuseum.org

FRIDAYS AT THE 5TH. Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre hosts musical theater workshops for high-school students that also include, for \$25, a show and pizza dinner. 5thavenue.org

NATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR TALENTED YOUTH (NFFTY). Started by graduates of Ballard High School's film program in 2007, NFFTY is now the largest film fest for emerging directors in the world. April 23–26. nffty.org

TEEN TIX. This award-winning Seattle Center program allows teens to get \$5 tickets at more than 40 Seattle-area arts venues. teentix.com

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ParentMap

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See pg 47



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Parent-kid dates

Eight ways to rock family time

BY ELISA MURRAY

Modern parents are rarely accused of spending too little time with their kids. According to Pew Research Center, today's dads and moms log more hours with their children than they did in the 1960s (yes, even working moms, despite all that guilt). But after we're done with the homework nagging, chore wrangling and activity ferrying, how many minutes are left for plain old family fun — pinball, pingpong, pizza and the like?

So let's do it. In honor of the month of love, I am challenging you (and me, ahem) to drop the nag list and plan some pure fun time with your kids. Here are eight old- and new-school ideas to try around the Sound, which work as well for one-on-one time as family dates. Find more at parentmap.com/kiddates. Blast off!



TACOMA NATURE CENTER

1

GO ON A TREASURE HUNT

You want to hike, or at least walk outside. Your kid likes technology and treasure. The **win-win-win activity is geocaching**, a GPS-driven hunt that you can do anywhere in the world, starting with (literally) your backyard. A new article on ParentMap.com outlines basic caching etiquette and local starting points to get your family into the game, from a **hike in old-growth forest on Whidbey Island** to a **history-driven cache hunt in Port Townsend**. Find out more at geocaching.com and parentmap.com/geocache. Want a lower-tech hunt? **Try letterboxing**, whereby you follow clues to a cached journal, in which you can leave your signature stamp (parentmap.com/letterboxing).



2

HIT AN ARCADE A surefire way of engaging the most jaded tween or teen, arcades offer a chance for kids and parents to show and share favorite games. Head to one of **Full Tilt's** four locations for pinball games, Pac-Man and some of the best ice cream in town; the **Seattle Pinball Museum** in the Chinatown-International District (ID) for a trip down pinball history lane (and more than 50 games); or **Dorky's Arcade** in Tacoma for retro pinball and video games, plus classic eats (and the best name ever!).



3

WALK IN THE SNOW TOGETHER

It's said that shoulder-to-shoulder conversations are the best way to talk to your kids, especially as they get older — and what's better than a shoulder-to-shoulder tromp through the snow? Snowshoeing is cheap, easy to learn (can you walk?) and as unplugged as family time gets. Start by snowshoeing at the Nordic areas of local ski areas. Or sign up for a ranger-led **"Kids in the Snow" snowshoe walk** on Saturdays at Snoqualmie Pass; or a 1.5-mile ranger walk at the **Jackson Visitor Center at Mt. Rainier** (for kids ages 8 and up). More tips at parentmap.com/snowshoe.



4

TRY A NEW FILM SPOT Families with older kids should check out the **Cinerama**, the famous Paul Allen-owned theater in Belltown that just underwent another renovation and boasts rotating lobby exhibits (Star Wars costumes!), reserved seating and cool concessions. More fun flick picks include **Pacific Science Center IMAX** shows; Seattle International Film Festival's **Films4Families** screenings; Seattle's **Central Cinema** (try Cartoon Happy Hour on Thursdays); Mommy & Me screenings on Thursday mornings at luxe **Lincoln Square Cinemas**; or the charming **Tacoma Grand Cinema**, which offers a classic movie series on Tuesday nights and a free Click Family Flick on the third Saturday of each month (next up, *Ghostbusters*).

more dates >>

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Parent-kid dates

continued from page 33



LONESTAR

5

TAKE A BREAK (DANCE) If you've got kids ages 2-6 who love to spin and hop on the kitchen floor, this one's a no-brainer. Take your budding b-boy or girl to the exuberant **Mini Breaks dance class**. Organized by "Anna Banana Freeze," a member of Seattle's award-winning breakdancing crew Massive Monkees, **Mini Breaks** takes place Saturday mornings in the International District. Parent participation encouraged. Tip: Head to Uwajimaya afterwards for Ellenos yogurt and cool Asian doodads and eats.

6

CONSIDER THE COSMOS Don't wait for summer to ponder questions of space, time and whether asteroids are soon to demolish the earth (my son's recent question). The latest addition to our local galaxy of planetariums is the **Science Dome**, a digital planetarium at Lakewood's Pierce College, which offers three shows every Saturday in its 58-seat auditorium. You can also visit the **Jacobsen Observatory** on the University of Washington campus (star viewing on first and third Wednesdays, April through October); Pacific Science Center's **Willard Smith Planetarium** for multiple shows a day (they fill up quickly); or attend an **outdoor monthly star party** at Seattle's Green Lake or Shoreline's Paramount Park, hosted by the **Seattle Astronomical Society**. Find more ideas at parentmap.com/cosmos.



7

WHEEL-WORLD FUN Recipe for a fab family night: Lace up a pair of four-wheeled skates (aka quads), wobble on to the vintage floor of a roller rink and hang on to each other. If you're just beginning, try the affordable Friday family skate night at the **Bitter Lake Community Center Annex** in North Seattle. Other hot spots include smaller rinks such as Everett's **Skate Deck** and **Southgate Roller Rink** (original home to the Rat City Rollergirls); and larger rinks that offer speedier surfaces, such as Bellevue's **Skate King** and **Pattison's West**. South Sounders can take advantage of the online Kids Skate Free deal (kidsskatefree.com) at **Skate Tiffany's** in Puyallup. Find more tips and skate spots at parentmap.com/roller.

8

GET YOUR BOARD GAME ON In case you haven't noticed, the Seattle area is enjoying a boom in game stores and cafes — making it easy to while away an afternoon looking for your family's new favorite way of connecting (and competing). Try **Blue Highway Games** in Seattle's Queen Anne neighborhood, **Meeples Games**, a gaming cafe in West Seattle; or **Card Kingdom/Café Mox** in Ballard or its new, spacious Bellevue cousin **Mox Boarding House**, where you can try games in real time before you buy while enjoying nibbles and drinks. ■



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See pg 47 for more!

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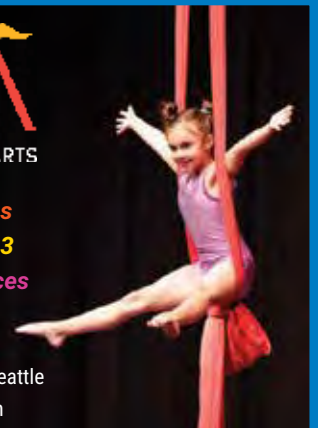
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0-2

Home alone

Four ways to beat new-parent social isolation

By Malia Jacobson

More ga,
less goo:
[parentmap.com](http://parentmap.com/baby)
/baby

Being a new parent has its perks, among them chubby fingers to kiss and that powdery new-baby smell. But despite the new small person in your company, early parenthood can be a lonely gig. A U.K. study found that 55 percent of new moms mourned the loss of their pre-baby social life; per *The Journal of Perinatal Education*, social isolation is a major hurdle that new moms (and their caretakers) need to address.

Loneliness feels lousy, but it can also seriously derail your health: Studies link loneliness to poor sleep quality, decreased immune function and higher levels of inflammation, which contribute to arthritis, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. In older adults, loneliness almost doubles the risk of premature death.

Fortunately, it's possible to stave off new-parent social isolation, but doing so takes effort, advance planning and some thinking that's outside the box, says Christa Melnyk Hines, author of *Confidently Connected: A Mom's Guide to a Satisfying Social Life*. "We're social beings, but we live in a culture that prizes independence. The inability to ask for help or not knowing whom to ask can make a new mom feel very lonely."

Practice acceptance

After her daughter was born in early 2010, Shannon Walker's regular sources of social interaction — after-work classes at a local gym and evening get-togethers with fitness-minded pals — didn't jibe with her new stay-at-home-mom schedule or the demands of parenting a newborn.

"I remember thinking, 'When I have a kid, I hope I don't become one of those people who fall off the face of the earth socially,'" recalls the Tacoma mom. "And then I did. I felt like I lost part of that person."

A few months in, she realized that old social habits weren't going to fit into her new life as a mom, at least not right away. In the second half of her baby's first year, she discovered Meetup (meetup.com) and the parenting group that she now leads. Accepting her new "mom status" was



a breakthrough moment that helped her find new community, she says. "I'm still friends with my gym buddies, but I'm part of a new world, too."

Social savvy: Accept that relationships and schedules change. Try to maintain old friendships, but explore new horizons, too.

Be less kid-centric

It's a common scenario: Pals become pregnant at the same time and look forward to sharing playdates and swapping in-the-trenches tales over double lattes at baby gym class. All too often, though, it doesn't pan out. Walker and a close girlfriend became pregnant around the same time, but eventually they parted ways when their children and parenting styles turned out to be polar opposites.

Andrea Cantu, a Burien mom to 4-year-old twin boys, has a similar story. Her best pal had a daughter shortly after Cantu had her sons, but now, the moms rarely get together. "Everyone gets busy, and it's just too hard to make the schedules match up," Cantu says.

When a formerly strong friendship falters in early parenthood, it may be time to rethink

expectations for the relationship; this person may not be a playdate go-to, but she could still remain a good friend.

Maintaining some friendships that don't center around your offspring is a healthy way to retain part of your pre-kid identity, says John Sommers-Flanagan, Ph.D., associate professor at the University of Montana and a member of the American Counseling Association.

"We put this silly pressure on moms that their new lives, including their social interactions, should be about their child 24/7. Kids need moms who take care of themselves, and that includes having relationships outside the child," Sommers-Flanagan says.

Social savvy: Not every relationship or social date should be about the kid(s): Friends who are parents but have different parenting styles or kids who clash may be better off meeting for drinks or a Spinning class after the kids are in bed. And socializing with non-parents via a local running club or book discussion group could be a refreshing blast of real-world perspective after a long day filling sippy cups and wiping noses. >>

0–2 Home alone

continued from page 37

Bolster your network in advance

New-parent loneliness can strike anyone, but certain parents may be more at risk, including those with a child who has special needs, those whose friends don't have children yet or those with a history of depression, Melnyk Hines says.

In those cases, it's smart to plan ahead. "Some moms join moms' groups while they're still pregnant, anticipating that they are going to need a network of support after the baby arrives," she says. (And most moms' groups welcome participation from expectant parents.)

"This is a great way to help buffer yourself from isolation if you don't already have a strong support network in place," Melnyk Hines notes. "Once the baby arrives, you may feel too exhausted to make the extra effort to find a moms' group right away."

Social savvy: If you have some time before Junior arrives, use it to scope out or join new-parent groups. Many health care providers and hospitals, including Swedish Medical Center, Northwest Hospital & Medical Center and Overlake Medical Center, offer support groups and classes for moms with children born around the same time. Search meetup.com, peps.org and Facebook for parenting groups in your area. (See our resource list for more leads.)

Use social media as a springboard

Go ahead and join that Facebook parenting group, but don't restrict yourself to screen-based social interactions. Despite news feeds packed with smiling faces, social media won't cure social isolation. In fact, studies show that Facebook users are generally lonelier, and a study from the University of Michigan found that Facebook use undermines happiness and well-being.

One possible reason: Facebook and Twitter provide photographic proof that everyone else is having more fun than you, without you. Social networks can be a double-edged sword for new parents, helping them connect to one another while simultaneously making them feel left out, Cantu says. "My mom said, 'Twenty or 30 years ago, you just thought everyone else was busy, but you didn't have this visual confirmation that you were missing out. Now, you have it thrown in your face.'"

Online interactions can be a great way to test out a new social group; because loneliness increases feelings of vulnerability, it's helpful to feel like you're accepted before meeting in person.

But once parents find communities online, the next step is to go out and meet these people face-to-face, says Sommers-Flanagan. "It can be nerve-racking to meet new people for the first time, of course. But the best cure for anxiety is exposure. The more you do it, the easier it gets."

"To really grow and deepen a friendship, nothing can completely trump face-to-face interaction," Melnyk Hines says. "It gives us feedback and immediate responses like nonverbal gestures and facial expressions, which builds trust."

Social savvy: Seek out social connection online, but ditch the screens for regular face-to-face socializing, too. And make a standing date to meet a friend for drinks or coffee in person — with or without baby. ■

Malia Jacobson is an award-winning health and parenting journalist and mom of three. Her latest book is Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades.

seattle-area resources

Ballard Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) Group ballardmops.com

Eastside Attachment Parenting meetup.com/eastsideap

Eastside Mothers of Multiples emoms.org

Families of Color Seattle (FOCS) focseattle.com

Green Lake Moms greenlakemom.com/green-lake-moms

Kirkland Moms Network facebook.com/groups/288544047831262

Listening Mothers communityofmindfulparenting.com

Mount Baker Parents <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MountBakerParents/info>

PEPS (Program for Early Parent Support) peps.org

Seattle Attachment Parenting (API) apiseattle.org

Seattle PFLAG (Parents, Family & Friends of Gays and Lesbians) seattle-pflag.org

Seattle Single Parents Meetup Group meetup.com/The-Seattle-Single-Parents-Meetup-Group

Seattle Stay At Home Dads meetup.com/Seattle-Stay-at-Home-Dads-Group

Tacoma Area Attachment Parents meetup.com/tac-aap

national resources

Adoptive Families Circle Support Groups adoptivefamiliescircle.com/support-groups

International MOMS (Mothers Offering Mothers Support) **Club** momsclub.org

Holistic Moms Network holisticmoms.org

La Leche League (support for breastfeeding mothers) laleche.org

Meetup meetup.com

Mocha Moms mochamoms.org

Moms in Motion momsinmotion.digifit.com/mim

Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) mops.org

MomMeetMom.com mommeetmom.com

Mothers & More mothersandmore.org

National Association of Mothers' Centers mom-mentum.org

National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs nomotc.org

Source: Christa Melnyk Hines, author of *Confidently Connected: A Mom's Guide to a Satisfying Social Life*.

Books for Black History Month and Chinese New Year

Had enough of Valentine's Day already? Why not explore other, richer topics with your kids this February, such as black history or Chinese New Year, which begins this year on February 19 (Year of the Sheep). Here are three book picks to get you started.



Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad, By Ellen Levine. The true and amazing story of Henry Brown, a slave in pre-Civil War America who mailed himself to freedom after his family was sold away from him in a slave market. Kadir Nelson's illustrations bring this heroic story to life. *For ages 7-9.*



The Watsons Go to Birmingham, by Christopher Paul Curtis. This book examines the segregated South and the growing Civil Rights movement through the story of 9-year-old Kenny, a son in a middle-class black family who happened to be in Birmingham at the time of the 1963 church bombing. This book has it all, from family humor to sibling rivalry to engaging history. *For ages 8-10.*



Bringing in the New Year, by Grace Lin. A beautifully illustrated book that takes readers through a Chinese-American family's preparation for the Lunar New Year, from sweeping out dust to making dumplings. The New Year celebrations area also covered in lovely detail, including elaborate fireworks, lion dancers, lanterns and dragon parade. *Ages 3-6*



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2-4

Play or learn for preschoolers?

It's not a choice, it's a balancing act

By Anoo Padte

Play or early learning toward academic growth: Which one is more important in preschool? As the parent of a 7-year-old and now a 1-year-old, I have tossed and turned between these two seeming extremes of what a child most needs in the early years. While my educator brain hears and knows that play is a child's work, my mommy brain cannot shut out the fact that many well-meaning parents just like me worry about how to lay a strong academic foundation that will grow capable, motivated learners.

After much reading, research, and working with families, preschools and children, I have come to this conclusion: Children need opportunities for balanced growth. Balanced growth comes from a combination of child-initiated play and adult-designed activities. Play is a child's most serious work, and it is through play and exploration that children experience balanced growth.

It is easy to imagine children running around and laughing, but is that what leads to essential early growth? Yes and no. Rich, complex play is not often found during the casual playground playdate or in most homes. Similarly, it is easy to imagine worksheets, alphabet charts and counting activities as the basis for teacher-led activities — but these are not the experiences that lead to strong intellectual growth. My mental tossing and turning has led me to identify the following experiences and activities that can lead to true, balanced growth.

We are nature

Nature is not a place to visit; it is a part of us, and to interact with it is a natural human need. No one knows that better than a young child. Young children come wired with instincts, curiosity and wonder that draw them to trees, pebbles, sand, water and, of course, puddles! Research



continues to show that children who spend time outdoors exploring, playing, creating and imagining are quieter, focused, healthier and able to learn academic material voraciously. Whether at preschool or home, look for opportunities that invite your child to come into intimate contact with natural elements. A nurturing and educational preschool program will emphasize digging, collecting, touching, feeling, expressing and building. Preschool should provide ample time for outdoor exploration, and not all of that time should be completely structured.

Babblers, talkers, writers and readers

The ability to read seems to crown the many complex language milestones that a child achieves. Yet reading is just one facet of being a strong communicator and language learner. Facilitating

all-around linguistic growth for your child includes: talking to your baby constantly; using sign language; speaking mother-ese (the undulating, baby-oriented tone most adults naturally take on while speaking to an infant or toddler); exposing your child to multiple languages; reading to your child for the sheer joy of storytelling and reading; giving access to child-friendly reading materials; providing writing instruments at an early age; encouraging your child to draw, scribble, scratch and pretend to write; having your child dictate a story to adults; and, eventually, offering activities that help your child explore how a word is made up of sounds and how sounds blend together to make words.

Strong preschool-age linguistic growth involves carefully attending to every stage of linguistic growth and, within each stage, exposing children to the many ways in which language is used, understood and enjoyed. When searching for a preschool curriculum, look for a combination

of real-life, social and independent work, plus guided language exposure.

Get messy!

Art does not only mean crayons, markers, pencils and paint. Art also means clay, mud, found objects, recyclables, tape, pinecones, ink, drills, wood and electrical circuits. Art is distinct from craft, which relies on a specific medium and technique to create a product that often is given or presented to someone else. Look for ways in which mixed media and unconventional objects can be provided to inspire children to express themselves and create. A rich art experience allows sensorial explorations and open-ended opportunities for creating. An artistic foundation is made complete with exposure to music and dance, including listening, singing, following beats on an instrument, moving to the music and learning cultural dances.

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Scientists at heart

Have you played “I am your picker-upper”? Yes, you have. Your toddler throws something from her high chair, and you pick it up. She does it again, and you pick the object up again. The game goes on until you finally wake up to her experiment. Toddlers and preschoolers are wired to figure out how the world works through experimentation. A lively preschool environment offers a variety of materials and teacher-designed activities that invite children to explore and learn about objects and phenomena (think of a simple experiment about which objects sink versus those that float). The next time you find your preschooler jamming a square peg into a round hole, don’t stop her. Instead, kneel beside her and offer her some more holes to jam the peg into. A good teacher will do the same.

Pattern makers

The human brain sorts, categorizes and identifies patterns. Puzzles, sorters, scales, measuring tools, counters and pattern makers support the natural need for the brain to see and create pattern. Patterning is the basis of mathematical thinking. The best patterning experiences are balanced. They invite children

to systematically work through activities that require sorting and identifying a pattern, just as a puzzle or counter does. They also invite creativity by allowing children to make their own patterns. It is easy to find preschool classrooms filled with single-outcome puzzles and sorters, but look for those materials that invite pattern creation and even experimentation that deviates from the pattern.

Drama kings and queens

Children love stories. They love to hear them and, as their language skills grow, they like to create them, tell them and act them out. Dramatic play is a significant avenue for children to wrestle with social issues, to know right from wrong and to learn how to “get along with others.” A strong preschool has a dramatic-play area with open-ended materials, such as fabric and blocks, and features open-ended time for children to imagine stories and act them out.

Let the imagination run wild

Play can be social, and it can also be solitary. Solo play, with imaginary playmates, dolls, little characters, pets and play animals, is essential. Children flirt with wild imaginations, create fantasylands, act out emotional

dilemmas and investigate societal roles by taking on personas through solitary imaginary play. This play is an expression of a child’s internal life. Look for opportunities, both at preschool and home, to give your child space and time to be by themselves — time when nothing is planned, when they are not being asked to do anything and when they can get into small, safe, cozy but stimulating spaces to create their own worlds.

Use these pointers both to decide how you will engage your little one at home and also as markers of what to look for in a preschool setting. A magical balance of experiences between home and preschool, between what the child initiates and what the adults around her respond with, leads to that much sought-after balanced growth. ■

Anoo Padte is a teacher, education consultant and mother. At Art of Education (www.artofeducation.net), she coaches parents on choosing the right school and develops personalized education plans that empower parents to identify schools, enrich their child’s experience and be involved in that child’s education. She teaches math and science, and often can be found tinkering, creating art and cooking with her two sons.

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4–8

Same-page parenting

What to do when you and your partner disagree on discipline and child rearing

By Melissa Benaroya, LICSW



Parenting young children is hard. It is even harder if you and your partner are not aligned in your child-rearing strategies. A strategy called same-page parenting can remove the obstacles that create stress, conflict and anxiety.

Significant differences in parenting create inconsistencies that send mixed signals to kids when they misbehave. Many couples come to me seeking ways to be more coordinated in their parenting. Inadvertently, one parent will try to counter the style of the other, and this inconsistency creates stress for everyone. For example, one parent's style might be kind, loving and lenient, while the other parent is strict, firm and takes a "tough love" approach. Other times, both parents may vacillate between both styles, which typically results in parents feeling guilty, ineffective and helpless. My role as a coach is to help parents step out of these patterns to find the right blend that sets respectful boundaries for the parent-child relationship.

There are three critical steps to becoming a same-page parenting team: 1. Define your

long-term goals for your child and family; 2. Prioritize near-term areas of improvement; 3. Take action. Spell out your parenting philosophy, as well as the tools and responses you need to work with your child(ren).

1. Define your long-term goals

The best place to start is to chart a vision of what it is that you are trying to achieve as a parent and what you wish for your child or children. The process is surprisingly easy, and it can take as little as 5–10 minutes to answer some thought-provoking questions and then share them with your partner. What you will likely find is that your values and goals are quite well aligned. This exercise alone will serve as an anchor that you can return to often to reaffirm that you are the exact same page and that it is where you want to be.

Try answering these questions to help you define your values and long-term parenting goals. Write out your thoughts, share them and discuss which of those values and goals feel most important to both of you.

- What are the qualities, characteristics or life skills that you hope to instill or influence in your children? Or: What kind of human being do you want to nurture?
- What are the qualities, characteristics or life skills that you want to bring to your parenting? Or: How do you want to show up for your child?
- What do you want your family to feel or be like? Or: How do you hope your child will reflect on what it was like growing up in your home or as a part of your family?

2. Prioritize near-term areas of improvement

With family values and long-term goals now in place, it's time to focus on the specific high-stress situations and behaviors that are creating the most friction in the home. Yes, this might be a long list, but get it out there. Include everything from bedtime struggles to not listening, setting limits on technology, getting out the door or even whining. Agree with your partner on what are the most urgent items to address and pick a few. Focus on really making an impact on a few issues, rather than trying to boil the ocean.

3. Take action

Once you are clear on the near-term areas of improvement, then it's time to take action. Just knowing your shared values and areas of focus is a huge weight off the minds of most parents. But then, where to begin? This is where things get tricky, because there is no one-size-fits-all, same-page parenting manual. We are inundated with parenting advice all the time, but here are three areas really worth exploring:

- **Consult with a professional** (pediatrician, family coach or behavioral specialist).
- **Access community resources.** Take a parenting class or workshop together. Most communities have frequent events, and these provide a great way to promote discussion among partners.

- **Read a parenting book (together).** There are some amazing resources out there from authors such as Alfie Kohn (*Unconditional Parenting*), Jane Nelsen (*Positive Discipline*) and John Gottman (*Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*).

No matter what tools or strategies you choose, finding that blend of kindness and firmness will be paramount to any successful same-page strategy.

Taking the time to have same-page parenting conversations early in your parenting process will be an invaluable investment in your family. Clearly define your long-term goals as parents in order to set the stage for your near-term planning. Tackle two or three issues at a time so you don't become overwhelmed and can measure

progress. Take action by becoming informed about resources available to equip you with the skills you will need to be successful. Same-page parenting is the journey. Knowing where you want to get to and why make up the necessary roadmap. Isn't it time you and your partner sat down to get on the same page? ■

Melissa Benaroya, LICSW, is a parenting expert and coach in the Seattle area. She cofounded Grow parenting (growparenting.com), which offers parent coaching and classes, as well as frequent speaking engagements at area schools and businesses.

best practices for same-page parenting conversations

- **Acknowledge** your partner's perspective when discussing goals and ideas.
- **Be respectful and specific** when offering suggestions or ideas.
- **Be mindful of the language** you are using to promote a team effort and that you are not coming from a "me versus you" mind-set.

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The good fight

Fighting happens; are you teaching your kids how to do it right?

By Deanna Duff

Turn on the television to nearly any channel to witness reality stars flipping tables, and pundits cursing and yelling. In families, fights happen — between siblings, partners, and parents and kids. Terrible TV is a good reminder of why it's important to teach children how to fight fairly in a healthy and productive manner.

And parents should begin by looking in the mirror, experts say.

"Parents and adults have to take ownership," says Laura Doerflinger Schneider, a Kirkland-based family counselor. "The way parents problem-solve, negotiate and argue will be the same way their kids fight. Kids behave, react and respond based on what they've learned."

Problem-solving skills can improve everything from sibling and peer relationships to school performance. Down the road, it potentially translates into healthier marriages and careers.

Step in or stay on the sidelines?

For Cindy Bovey's 10-year-old son, Aiden, the soccer field became the breeding ground for disagreements. At home, typical sibling arguments about toys erupted with Grace, his 7-year-old sister.

Two years ago, Aiden enrolled in weekly classes through Casey's Clubhouse (*caseys-clubhouse.com*). Founded by Doerflinger Schneider



and Leslie Fields, both licensed mental health counselors (LMHC), the independent, Kirkland-based program teaches problem-solving and social skills to first- through eighth-graders.

"I used to step in so quickly because I didn't want to see the kids fighting," Bovey, a Newcastle resident, explains. "I've learned through Casey's Clubhouse that it's OK to step back and wait. Let the kids try to handle it themselves until they ask for help or it's clearly needed."

According to Liliana Lengua, Ph.D., a child psychologist and professor of psychology at the

University of Washington, adults tend to respond in one of three ways when addressing children's conflicts: They immediately end the argument; they jump in and solve it; or they ignore the situation altogether. Instead, the ideal approach is to equip children with the needed skills to effectively handle it themselves.

"The adult's role is more like a coach on the sidelines. Offer advice, perspective and help them see the steps they could be taking," Lengua says. "If it's a low-level conflict, let them navigate the situation without too much intervention."

Bovey now identifies potentially problematic situations in advance. She and Aiden discuss expectations and prepare ahead of time for playdates and soccer games.

"It's so awesome. It's really helped him, and I've particularly noticed in the past year how much better he is at de-escalating situations with his sister. He's learned skills so he can handle it better on his own," Bovey says.

Take a breath

It's a sibling tradition to argue over personal possessions. In the Lubkowski household, books are prized possessions that sometimes spark disagreements.

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“They have to keep it fair, no name-calling or physical disagreements. Those are basic rules,” says Ballard resident Kelly Lubkowski, mom to a 13-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter. “We usually wait until everyone cools off — leave the room if necessary — to talk it through.”

Experts agree. When tempers flare, the fight-or-flight instinct kicks in, and it’s challenging to respond rationally. Take a breath. A minor incident may only require counting to 10, whereas an escalating incident might mean physically removing oneself.

“Instead of designating a ‘time-out’ so it feels like a punishment, have a calm corner that’s recognized as a settled space,” Doerflinger Schneider advises. During a parent-child conflict, “If the child has to go to their room to calm down, then the adult should go to their room, too.”

Authority figures and children inhabit different roles and are not necessarily equals. However, don’t dismiss a child’s concerns or feelings because they seem trivial from an adult perspective.

“They deserve respect,” Doerflinger Schneider says. “They should have the right to express their emotions, thoughts and even to disagree.”

Express yourself

There is an intuitive element to some social skills, but many are actually learned. All of them can be developed and honed.

“Not everyone is wired to be naturally

empathetic, but it’s something you can actually teach the brain,” says Susan Tomlinson Gorman, founder and director of New Discovery School (NDS), a Seattle-based preschool celebrating its 30th year.

The school uses the Second Step program, which focuses on conflict management. Children are taught to identify emotions in themselves and others, which fosters a sense of empathy.

“Empathy is the next step in arguing effectively,” Lengua says. “In addition to teaching kids ‘I’ statements [stating one’s feelings rather than making accusations], encourage children to also make empathetic statements, such as, ‘You might be feeling frustrated, too.’ Keeping that in mind, then work to find a compromise.”

According to Lengua, children as young as 2 have the developmental capacity to begin learning such skills. Begin by teaching vocabulary to articulate and communicate emotions. Role-playing is particularly effective.

Starting young can help students begin school on a positive note. Better conflict-resolution skills help children focus on academics. Gorman hears from teachers and parents that NDS youngsters entering kindergarten are more confident, less distracted and better able to cope with new situations.

“As teens, they deal with more complex situations. If they already know basics, it’s easier to develop more nuanced skills,” Lengua says.

Family dynamics

Fighting fairly should be the same whether dealing with siblings or peers. Children tend to take the gloves off more often in family situations.

Some amount of sibling discord is to be expected, but it still should be addressed and taken seriously. Lengua and Doerflinger Schneider advise framing the conversation by asking a child whether they would behave the same way with a peer. If not, why?

“Sibling conflict can really escalate and turn aggressive to the point of bullying. In my opinion, there are definitely consequences in the long run if it’s not addressed. Catch it when it’s at a low level,” Lengua advises.

The time will come when even adults lose their cool and mishandle an argument. Seize the opportunity to teach the final step in fighting fairly — reparations.

“Model the ability to apologize. Acknowledge that you didn’t handle the situation well and said something hurtful rather than helpful. Talk about better approaches,” Lengua recommends. “Actually, if parents always do things perfectly, kids don’t master skills as well. Show them how to cope with less-than-optimal responses.” ■

Deanna Duff is a Seattle-based freelance writer who contributes to a diversity of regional and national publications. She is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists and the Washington Press Association, which has awarded her writing.

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Someone you should know

By Shin Yu Pai • Photograph by Will Austin

AMY HYUNAH PAK is the founder and executive director of Families of Color Seattle (FOCS), a nonprofit focused on building community by supporting families of color through parenting programs, sharing resources, and fostering meaningful connections. An immigrant transracial adoptee, Pak is a community educator and social change worker committed to building a community of powerful, conscious, and creative families of color in Seattle. She is the mother of two young sons..

How did Families of Color Seattle (FOCS) get started?

The history of the collective goes back to 2010. I experienced a dramatic shift when I went from serving the South Seattle Asian Pacific Islander and youth community as a social worker and a student adviser at UW to being laid off and becoming a stay-at-home parent with my first son. Our extended families live in Hawaii and Minnesota. Raising a child without many resources, I felt we needed to find our network of progressive parents of color to share this experience. FOCS (focseattle.com) started informally with monthly potluck playdates that brought together 10 families from South Seattle.

I started connecting with other “advanced maternal age” new moms of color, like Stephanie Jones Peguero, who is Korean and black, and was concerned for her mixed-race daughter. She wanted to make sure Soleil would have a community of other brown babies like herself and wanted something beyond what mainstream mommy groups offered.

My father-in-law, radical writer Gary Pak, suggested I find work where I could bring my youngest son. Gary reminded me of the passion I have for community organizing. Many other new parents feel that dramatic shift of changing their identity, social circle and daily routine — experiences inherent to beginning a family and caring for a newborn. I jumped at the idea of making new mommy friends and coordinating playdates.

Who do you serve?

Little did I know, there was a growing community of families of color, including many new transplants to Seattle, a talented community of many highly educated, multicultural and multiracial older parents. We now have the whole range of local younger new parents with twins, transracial families through adoption, international families, and multiethnic and multiracial families from numerous locales, countries, languages, neighborhoods and professions. Facilitated gatherings provide a space for the group to discuss culture, bilingual homes, traditions and food, antibias schools, mixed-race experience and race consciousness.

When parents in the FOCS community ask, “How did you start FOCS?” I reference the spirit of *ubuntu* and say, “FOCS is because you are.” Paulo Coelho, author of *The Alchemist*, writes, “Intuition is really a sudden immersion of the soul into the universal current of life.” FOCS came at the right time for the climate of Seattle’s changing face of families with young children. Our collective has grown to 200 families in 1.5 years.



How did your partnership with the Collaboratory in Hillman City develop?

We heard about the progressive community space of Hillman City’s Collaboratory, a historic building at Rainier and Orcas. Cofounders John Helmiere and Ben Hunter welcomed FOCS and worked with us to accommodate our vision. Cornerstone Café launched on Oct. 20, 2014 with programs that include Brazilian capoeira, and Portuguese and Hawaiian ukulele and “talk story.” The mission of the café is intended to address the lack of entrepreneurial avenues for parents and women of color. We work hard to be a cultural cornerstone to address the economic threat to erase the character and cultural resonance of the South End. We stand to be part of the movement to de-gentrify our community.

What is your vision and plan for Cornerstone Café?

Cornerstone Café integrates conscious parenting and perpetuates a global culture of inclusivity, community building and play-centered learning. FOCS Cornerstone Café provides a creative blend of family programming with arts and culture, as well as multilingual classes for children and parents. There will be a community café, drop-in child care, evening forums, FOCS parent-child groups, workshops, experiential learning and outdoor play in the 4,000-square-foot community garden. New cultural arts programming for children of all ages is also offered every two months.

We challenge systems to provide avenues for entrepreneurial women of color, immigrants and new fathers. We teach children cultural resonance in a loving, inclusive community of families of color and integrate the local neighborhood of South Seattle’s rich and diverse cultural base, the 98118. ■

Shin Yu Pai is a poet and freelance writer for International Examiner, Northwest Asian Weekly and Ballard News-Tribune. For more information, visit shinyupai.com.

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