

# ParentMap

'cause parenting is a trip!

our  
**TECH**  
issue

## Apps of kindness

*Can your kids download their way to a better character?*

*plus:*

- Cell phone dos and don'ts
- Oh snap! What's that new app?
- Is your kid addicted to screens? Are you?



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# Apps of kindness

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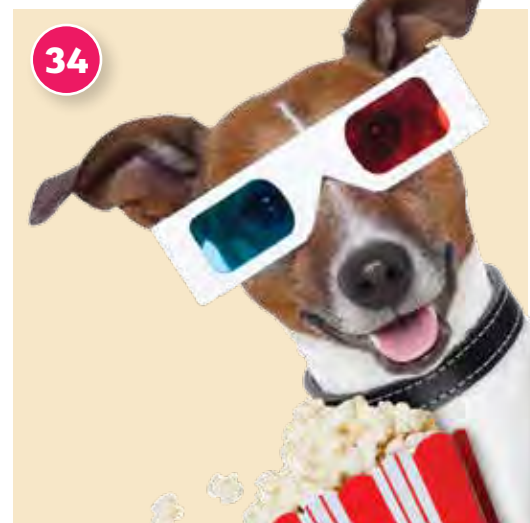
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## All the gobble, none of the trouble!

Who says you have to spend the days leading up to Thanksgiving hunched over a hot stove or scrubbing dirty pans? Check our roundup of **family-friendly places to eat out** on Turkey Day, from fancy buffets to multi-course feasts. And if you want to host the feast at home but don't have time for all that prep, we've also included local restaurants, grocery stores and foodie hot spots where you can get **all of the fixings, pre-made**, for a delicious and easy meal. [parentmap.com/easythanksgiving](http://parentmap.com/easythanksgiving)



## Be a card shark!

Sending out your season's greetings? We are going to help you get an early start this year! From family photos to creative crafts, we've got fresher-than-snow ideas for your holiday cards, including adorable versions kids can make themselves.

[parentmap.com/seasonsgreetings](http://parentmap.com/seasonsgreetings)



## 12th kids

Looking for a family-friendly sports bar or play space where you can cheer (loudly) for the Hawks while your kids play away? We've uncovered the best spots around the Sound to be a 12th family, as well as cool **Seahawks outings** to do on non-game days, from field tours to exhibits that let you relive the Super Bowl win. [parentmap.com/hawkwatch](http://parentmap.com/hawkwatch)

## Screen-time salve

We hear a lot of worrying about screen time out there in the parenting jungle. But technology is helping kids develop and families connect in amazing ways. At our **kids and media page**, we review educational apps, talk with experts about how to build a family cell-phone contract, and explore game-changing developments like Vroom, an app that helps parents put brain science into action with their kids. [parentmap.com/kidsandmedia](http://parentmap.com/kidsandmedia)



## Lights fantastic

Just as our region heads into the darkest time of the year, brilliant holiday light displays are there to save us. Find out the scoop on fun, free neighborhood displays; learn which zoo displays are a must-see; and discover where to catch a garden display of 500,000 lights, complete with a smoking dragon, that's almost free. [parentmap.com/holidaylights](http://parentmap.com/holidaylights)

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# QUESADILLA WITH APPLE SLAW

Quesadillas are popular with kids, and it's really easy to add extra helpings of fruit and vegetables to this cheesy classic. PCC Chef Jackie Freeman whips up this crunchy, melty dinner in no time with her guests, 7-year-old Oxani and his mom, Leika, from Seattle Tilth.

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dear reader

## Practicing what we preach

I'm often described as a doer as opposed to a thinker, and I'm not always proud of this fact. Recently, I received a few unforeseen gifts while sitting on a plane heading off to a family wedding. My 14-year-old, 5-foot-10-inch "baby" girl fell into a deep sleep on top of me (gift no. 1) before the wheels folded up after takeoff. Drooling on my jeans, she clearly needed this siesta. I squirmed around, trying to reach my laptop and phone as I assessed the interminable work I had hoped to tackle during the flight. I did not consider just unwinding for three hours.

Nevertheless, I did not have the heart to wake this deep sleeper, and because of that I had the most unusual experience. I was forced to sit motionless (gift no. 2). There was no device within reach. I gazed out the window struck by gift no. 1 asleep on me. My unexpected gift no. 2, being static, caused me to contemplate the breathtaking beauty of Seattle, with glittering water juxtaposed against our growing city, lush green landscapes that quickly gave way to white-capped mountains, then blended into the dusty brown spread of eastern Washington. What struck me as I took in this splendor was the rarity of the moment and how completely addicted I am to devices. Bill Maher's recent rant came to mind. He brilliantly elevated our cell-phone obsession, raging about the millions taking selfies when they actually had "maybe 10 seconds to actually see and be present with their hero, the Pope."

Our tech issue will likely challenge you as a parent, as it did me. I am good role model on many fronts, but not this one. Guilty of "phubbing\*," we're entering the season of Thanksgiving and can positively influence one another. This is pro-social behavior time, where we can recommit to a focus on family, giving to others and our blessed traditions.

Savor the studies and house rules suggested throughout this issue that tell us what we know yet want to ignore: "Too much time on a device can cause a range of long-term issues, including attention problems, subpar academic performance, poor interpersonal skills and sleep disturbances ("This is your brain on screens," p. 11).

Undoubtedly our lives have changed for the better, too, with technology: today's easy airline check-in with the Alaska Airlines app; routinely skyping my NYC big kids; or my daily dose of traffic course-plotting. Surely, too, there are new technologies that might boost our kids' character and skills: empathy, tolerance, courage and responsibility.

But we're all overdoing it. Nothing can replace face time!

*\*Phubbing: a term to describe the habit of snubbing someone in favor of a mobile phone.*







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## BRAIN FUEL

parent news, snack-sized

### Ether madness

A chemical used as a fire retardant in consumer goods has been phased out — but possibly not before causing harmful effects in some children. Researchers at Columbia University have just linked prenatal exposure to polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) with attention problems in 3- to 7-year olds. In the study of 210 kids, those with the highest exposure to certain PBDEs had approximately twice the number of attention problems of other kids. Phased out since 2004, PBDEs are still among us in textiles, plastics, upholstery and electronic devices that were made before that time. To minimize your family's exposure, replace any furniture with visible or broken-down foam. Use a wet mop and vacuum fitted with a HEPA filter, and wash hands often with soap and water. Find much more at the Washington Toxics Coalition website ([watoxics.org](http://watoxics.org)).

### Reality bites

New proof that love is blind: In a big new study, only one out of six mothers of overweight or obese kids recognized their child as overweight or obese. Researchers at the University of Limerick, Ireland, studied 7,655 mothers and their 9-year-old kids. While denial was rampant when it came to their kids, the moms were better when it came to themselves: 75 percent of overweight mothers and 60 percent of obese mothers were able to recognize themselves as overweight or obese. In our country, about 17 percent of children and 35 percent of adults are obese, and those numbers appear to be rising.



### Big-scream TV

This just in: TV is becoming more harmful to kids — but maybe not for the reasons you think. A new report published in the *Journal of Neurosurgery: Pediatrics* finds that more and more, TVs are toppling onto tots, causing an increasing number of severe head and neck injuries. The reason for the rise?

Television sets are getting bigger and more affordable, so they're in virtually every home. But many aren't fixed to walls or to stable bases, and little kids who climb onto or bump into them can knock them over or pull them down. Crash test your sets now!



### No phubbing!

I've long thought that smart-phones are killing off romance, and now there's proof: New research from Baylor University finds that mobile phone use (or misuse) leads to relationship problems. The research focused on "phubbing," or "partner phone snubbing," the term the researchers coined for that special feeling you get when your partner is distracted by his or her smartphone, glancing at it while you're talking, perhaps, or checking it during a lull in conversation. They found that 46 percent of people in the study have been phubbed by their partner;

nearly 23 percent said phubbing has caused conflict in their relationship. Researchers say it's easy to think these behaviors are insignificant, but they add up to real damage: The more often a couple's time together is spent with one of them attending to the phone, the less satisfied the other partner will be in the relationship.

### Stellar schools

We're celebrating some incredible accomplishments by local schools this month. Tacoma Public Schools (TPS) is a finalist for the 2015 Data Flashlight Awards for its use of data to create a dramatic turnaround in graduation rates. Just five years ago, TPS had a graduation rate of only

55 percent. In a few short years, a program including innovative use of data has increased graduation rates by 23 percent! That's a lot of young lives forever changed.

Three other schools are being honored for helping low-income kids and students of color close the achievement gap. Public television station KCTS's 2015 Pathways to Excellence Awards go to Chinook Elementary School in the Auburn School District, and Denny International Middle School and Chief Sealth International High School, both in West Seattle. Read more at [KCTS9.org](http://KCTS9.org). ■

— Kristen Russell



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# This is your brain on screens

*Is your child addicted to screen time? Are you?*

By Caitlin Flynn

**I**t's become the norm for both adults and children to spend hours in front of a screen every single day. There are plenty of benefits to being plugged in: countless academic and professional resources at our fingertips, better ways to keep in touch with long-distance relatives, and the availability of apps that are both fun and educational. But the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly eight hours a day exposed to media (with five hours of direct media use), and older kids and teenagers spend about 11 hours a day exposed to media, according to a 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation study. Recent research is now showing that too much time on a device can cause a range of long-term issues, including attention problems, subpar academic performances, poor interpersonal skills and sleep disturbances.

Balance is obviously key to a healthy approach to screens. But teaching balance to children requires that parents lead by example, modeling healthy screen usage. That is a challenge for many adults, because we are also guilty of overusing our devices — and our own addiction is only getting worse. According to a recent eMarketer study, adults currently spend almost three hours each day on a mobile device engaging in recreational activities such as social media and perusing the Web. By 2016, experts project that our screen usage will increase by 14 minutes per day. And these numbers don't even count time spent talking on the phone (if you actually do that anymore).

So, how do we model good screen behavior for our kids when work emails are pinging in at all hours of the day, Instagram is beckoning, and you just need to get that one important text out?

## Setting limits

To combat unhealthy media usage and potential screen addiction, parents must set some ground rules, enforce them and then practice what they preach, experts say. Although screen addiction is not currently a clinical diagnosis, experts advise that parents seek professional help for their children if they observe that screen time is seriously interfering with schoolwork, sleep habits and in-person socialization.



*The average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly eight hours a day exposed to media.*

Caroline Knorr, parenting editor at Common Sense Media ([commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)), emphasizes that it's important to set appropriate screen-time limits that work for your family — and then adhere to them. For example, don't just leave the TV on in the background after your favorite show is over. It's unnecessary to have a screen on when it's not being used, and background TV has a negative correlation with language acquisition.

Regulating usage is critical, so it's important that parents be clear with their children about how much screen time is acceptable.

"Kids generally have difficulty learning self-control, and this is the case with screens, too. So, I would really encourage families to have a weekly screen-time plan in place as you go into the week. Help your kid keep to the limits," Knorr says.

Explain to your kids that technology and media should not be used during family time because it detracts from the experience of truly spending quality time together. Just like everything else that parents teach their kids, it's crucial to hold yourself to the same standards. If children aren't allowed to have devices at the dinner table, then parents'

phones should be put away as well. When your child talks to you, put down your device and give them your complete attention — because that's certainly what you'd expect from them.

"Most importantly, use your technology as tools, not treats," Knorr says. "Show kids how the mapping program works and helps you find your way. Skype with Grandma as a way of helping kids bond with far-flung relatives. Activities that are utilitarian versus pure entertainment help show the value of devices as tools that enable our lives."

## Modeling good behavior

Experts say it's critical that parents model healthy media consumption the same way they lead by example when it comes to healthy eating and safe driving.

One of the biggest concerns about excessive screen use is that it detracts from fully engaging in real-life experiences. For example, we sometimes get so caught up in capturing that flawless photo of our social outing that we end up ignoring friends and family members as we search for the perfect Instagram filter. >>

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[sunnyworldschool.com](http://sunnyworldschool.com)**This is your brain on screens***continued from page 11*

Dimitri Christakis, M.D., director of the Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development at Seattle Children's Hospital, has tracked the consequences of too much screen time and says it's crucial that parents model the behavior of being fully present during a family activity.

"When you see parents at the park with their young children, they're often on their phones as they push the swing with one hand. It's great that they show up to their kids' sports games, but they're staring at their device rather than watching the game," he says.

And kids notice.

"A lot of studies are coming out now about kids saying that their parents spend too much time on their phones,"

Knorr says. In fact, in a recent study, one-third of children in the Netherlands said their parents spend more time on their devices than they do actually interacting with them. More than half of the children in the study reported that their parents check their devices too often and, as a result, the children said they often feel ignored or unimportant. In Brazil, a whopping 87 percent of children said their parents spend too much time on their devices, and 56 percent of the children surveyed wished they could take away their parents' devices altogether.

If kids consistently see that their parents are only partially present, it's completely understandable

that they'll mimic those behaviors. But when parents make a point of showing their children the importance of being authentically present, kids will be more likely to follow their example. When they're out with their own friends, they'll recognize that it's disrespectful to scroll through their phones rather than fully engaging and enjoying time together.

Knorr also says parents should not hand over their phone or iPad when a child is bored or fussy. Although it may be easier in the moment, she says, this practice prevents children from learning how to self-soothe and figure out creative ways to keep themselves busy.

For long car trips, bring books or activities that will keep your kids entertained and remind them that plenty of enjoyable, interesting activities exist outside their devices and apps.

Still, media is undeniably a part of all our lives. Parents can model positive behaviors by planning some family activities that incorporate healthy media usage.

"Set aside time for a media night for family — a movie night, a game night, an app duel. These are fun ways to enjoy media, and your kids will respect your rules more if you are engaged in media, too," Knorr suggests.

Even when children are too young to have their own social media accounts, it's not too early to instill key values. For example, it's a good idea for a parent to ask their child's permission before posting his or her pictures to Facebook, many experts

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agree. When they have their own page in a few years, they'll know from example that it's a healthy and respectful practice.

### How much screen time is appropriate?

"Not all screen time is equal," Knorr says. "There are plenty of games that actually have educational value for kids of all ages, from learning numbers and letters for little kids to coding for the older ones. Studies are emerging that show that interactive digital media has learning potential — especially when an engaged parent, teacher or caregiver is actively supporting the learning."

She encourages parents to extend media into hands-on learning experiences. "Use it as a launch pad for discovery and exploration via museum trips, crafts, books and other activities."

Even so, keep limits in mind. Christakis recommends that children of all ages spend no more than one hour per day on their devices.

### The negative effects of too much

According to Knorr, screen addiction is an appropriate term when a child has reached a point where screen time seriously interferes with normal, healthy activities, such as homework, sleep and human interaction. If a child exhibits these signs of addiction, there are plenty of treatment options, and it's time to get a doctor involved.

And while many behaviors don't reach the level of full-blown addiction, they are still liable to negatively impact a child's development and family life in the home.

Research performed by Christakis

and his team at Seattle Children's has shown that too much screen time at an early age is linked to attention problems later in life. Kids who excessively use social media and video games are more likely to develop weight problems and engage in dangerous behaviors, such as alcohol use.

Knorr points to studies that have shown some teens report depression related to social media. Additionally, dangerous behaviors like cyberbullying are typically the result of excessive screen exposure.

If a child doesn't learn healthy screen habits at home, they are likely to continue misusing their devices for years to come — and that's exactly why parental modeling is so important.

"We've found that about 10 percent of college-age kids have problematic or compulsive Internet usage," Christakis says. "That makes it more common than any other chronic childhood illness, such as asthma and ADHD. It's an emerging epidemic that parents should be aware of. It starts early, and the habits carry into adult life."

Awareness is power, and it means parents can take steps to enforce reasonable rules and, more importantly, show their kids what healthy screen usage looks like. While unhealthy screen time is certainly a very real problem, parental modeling is the best way to ensure that children will use their devices in a healthy, respectful manner. ■

*Caitlin Flynn is a lifestyle and entertainment writer at Bustle (bustle.com). Before moving to Seattle, she worked in children's book publishing in New York City.*



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# Apps of kindness

Can your kids download their way to a better character?

BY KRISTEN RUSSELL

"When you feel so mad that you want to roar, take a deep breath and count to four."

"When you feel sad, it can help to know that little by little, you'll feel better."

"When something seems bad, turn it around and find something good."





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I'm being schooled by a zoo animal — Daniel Tiger, to be exact, the adorable hoody-wearing star of PBS Kids' animated TV show *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*. Now fully housebroken, this kitty is going mobile, making the rounds on handheld screens via a family of downloadable applications for preschoolers. Daniel's stated goal? To boost children's social-emotional development, one feeling at a time.

Increasingly, lessons that used to be taught at story time with late-blooming lions and curious monkeys are being given via animated, portable and extraordinarily engaging games. A blossoming industry of kids' apps that purport to boost character and skills such as empathy, tolerance, courage and responsibility is virtually bursting the app-store seams. The selection is vast and fascinating, with choices for kids of all ages (and even self-aware adults who want to live their best lives; we're on it, Oprah). Just pay a few bucks, hit "download," and in minutes, your child can be tapping and swiping his way to greater social-emotional competency. Parental participation is optional.

In a way, this is nothing new. Parents have always sought a little back-getting on the character-training front, from the "village" of tattling neighbors of yore to the

1960s and the deeply lovely *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, to the 1970s, when we were *Free to Be You and Me*, to the new and readily available apps — many from well-respected entities such as PBS, Sesame Street Workshop and The Fred Rogers Center — that target what is widely perceived as an increasingly urgent societal need. Now we can automate character training, weaving it into our kids' worlds so seamlessly that they don't even know it's there, like so much puréed cauliflower lurking in the mac and cheese.

It's the kinder, gentler side of the always-on-devices lifestyle, brought to you by the letter A and some of the most revered powerhouses of child development, grounded in research and in bulletproof social-emotional curricula. So why not? Kids are always on devices, anyway, we reason — that ship has long since sailed — so why not break up the Candy Crushing with a little pro-social training?

That may not be the right question to ask, a bit like asking whether your child's before-dinner PopTart should include real fruit flavoring. It's healthier, sure, but what the heck are we doing? How has the new normal brought us to empathy training via tablet? Increasingly, child advocates say, we need a record-scratch reset on the whole thing. >>

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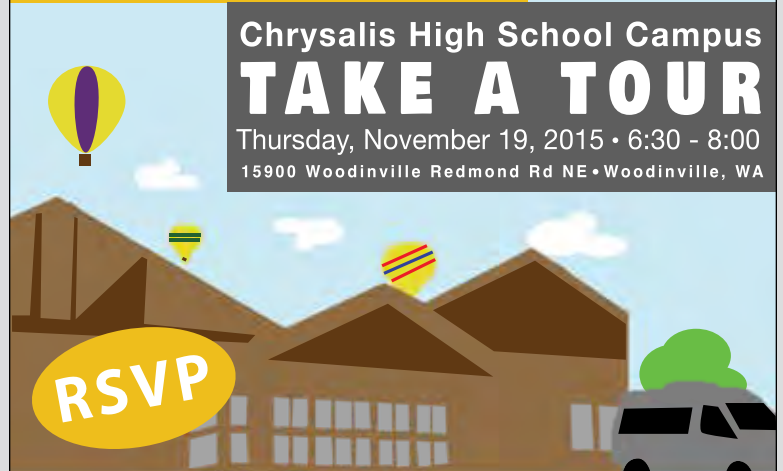


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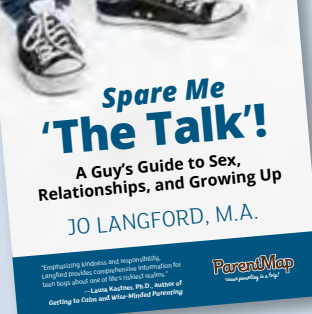
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**Apps of kindness***continued from page 15***Empathy entropy**

One could argue that it's easy to see how we got here, given the recent research. In the nine years since then Senator Barack Obama decried a national "empathy deficit," evidence has been piling up that kids are less compassionate and caring these days, and more obsessed with success and material gain. "We live in a culture that discourages empathy," Obama said in 2006, triggering an angst-charged wave that ripples to this day, "a culture that too often tells us our principal goal in life is to be rich, thin, young, famous, safe and entertained."

It's a painful irony of our culture that even as children are becoming more connected to others — constantly in touch with a widening circle of "friends" via social media — they seem to be caring less about others. A 2010 study by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research found that college students in 2010 were 40 percent less empathetic than their counterparts were in 1979. There's no hard data on why, but researchers have a hunch: exposure to media, especially violent media, which some believe numbs us to the pain of others. They also point to one of the more interesting paradoxes of social media: Constant and frequent exposure to "friends" online gives you the luxury of just tuning out when you don't feel like dealing with the messy feelings of others. There's no in-the-moment imperative, no real-life sad face to

stare into as you grope for words of apology, of consolation or encouragement. It's so much easier now: You can get to it later ... or maybe never. With fewer chances to practice empathy, there comes a sort of empathy entropy, or so many are starting to fear.

But just as we parents were smugly blaming media for our increasingly rotten kids, along comes a study that seems to lay the blame pretty squarely on us. Though many of us say we value empathy and compassion very highly, *we are apparently not saying it believably*, at least not to our kids.

Last year, Harvard University's Making Caring Common Project released the results of a study in which 10,000 middle school and high school students were asked to rank what was most important to them: achieving at a high level, happiness or caring for others. Almost 80 percent picked high achievement or happiness as their top choice. And 80 percent said that their parents are more concerned about achievement or happiness than caring for others. They were also three times more likely to agree than disagree with this statement: "My parents are prouder if I get good grades in my classes than if I'm a caring community member in class and school."

What's really behind the empathy deficit, then, may be more about parental disconnect than technology uber-connect. So says Mary Gordon, the founder of Roots of Empathy ([rootsofempathy.org](http://rootsofempathy.org)),

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your kid to be  
more kind, get  
them doing kind  
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a groundbreaking international empathy training program for kids. "I don't blame technology for the empathy deficit," Gordon says. "It's really about how the landscape of childhood has changed." Gordon, whose program is used in schools all over the world — including 67 schools in the greater Seattle area — has a front-row seat to modern childhood. She believes what's increasingly missing from these days is family hang time.

"I'm certainly not opposed to these apps," Gordon says, "but if we think we're doing our parental duty by getting our children apps to develop empathy, we'd better first look at how our little ones are spending their days." Life is so complex and stressful, she says, that our primary relationships are suffering. "Parents are the no. 1 teachers of empathy for children. It flowers or fades with parental attention and attunement," which leads to the ability of being emotionally attuned to others, laying the groundwork for empathy.

"If you're thinking about downloading an empathy app for your child," Gordon says, "go download a basketball, or a trip to the park. Children learn most by being with their parents. And they learn best not when we're teaching, but when we're being."

## No sub for IRL

"When you read about what children need for their brain development, to handle stress and for social emotional learning, it's play. Play is magic for children," says clinical psychologist Laura Kastner, Ph.D. Kastner, the author of the just-released *Getting to Calm: The Early*

*Years* (which was edited by this writer and published by ParentMap), doesn't object to empathy apps per se — especially ones that validate emotions, particularly negative ones — but says that playtime and real social interaction are vastly more effective in developing character in kids. And by this, she means play in real life, not virtual play. Also needed: bringing the newspaper to an elderly neighbor, writing thank-you notes, and a host of other character-enhancing activities Kastner outlines in her book.

"I think compassion and empathy fall by the wayside because our focus is on achievement and getting ahead," says Kastner. "But the busier you are — wound up with stress and worry — the less likely you are to do something as boring as play with your child, or sit quietly with people and really read their faces, which are the real ways we develop empathy."

It's just this stress and worry that leads parents to seek backup — purchasing gummy vites to supplement nutrition, say, or buying apps to cover the character bases. "There's no easier place to extract a dollar than from a worried parent," says Lenore Skenazy, a popular speaker, blogger (*freerangekids.com*) and the author of *Free-Range Kids: How to Raise Safe, Self-Reliant Children (Without Going Nuts with Worry)*. "So companies create the belief that good character won't happen naturally, and that you need their product."

"But to say that you must didactically teach empathy is an insult to the human race," Skenazy says. "The idea that suddenly we need to literally teach character

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## Apps of kindness

continued from page 17

to kids — as if they wouldn't develop it naturally — is evidence of a profound loss of belief in our children, in nature and in ourselves."

"You want an empathy app?" Skenazy asks. "It's called the sandbox. It's called playtime. When kids have to decide whether to throw the ball easier to the little kids, how to make the team — all of that is learning empathy."

### Bridging the gap

Rather than teaching empathy per se, researcher Anna Ly has developed a new app that aims to create calm and mindfulness — so kids are more receptive to learning empathy. Working with The Fred Rogers Center, Ly has created Whooshh, an app that incorporates breath into storytelling, encouraging kids as young as 3 to advance the story by breathing or humming into their tablet's microphone. In one scene, children use calm breathing to coax an ox out of hiding; heavy breathing or loud noises will scare the ox away.

"The children are just completely quiet when they're playing with this app," Ly says. "It's just astonishing." One reason for the app's success might be its novelty; when Mimi Phan's three kids — Peter, 4, Sarah, 7, and Andrew, 9 — tested Whooshh, they were surprisingly engaged. "The app is novel," says the Metuchen, New Jersey, mom. "The fact that it is different requires the children to reframe how they would interact with the app, asking for help or

problem solving in ways that are creative and nontraditional."

Ly, who is the senior manager of business and creative ventures for the Sesame Workshop and an Early Career Fellow with The Fred Rogers Center, says choosing the app platform — rather than a workbook, say, or flash cards — was a no-brainer for her, given the increasing trend towards device-connected kids. "This is where kids are today: on their devices. We need to find ways to utilize the time kids spend on devices to learn something that will benefit them, and even the world."

"I think empathy is the thing that is going to save the world," Ly says. "When people feel what other people feel, a lot of the problems in today's world could be solved."

The app, which is free, was released last month; whether or not it can be mapped directly back to a successful outcome — short of world salvation, at least kinder, gentler kids — remains to be seen. But it does seem to be part of a technology trend toward bridging the gap between virtual and real-world empathy.

"The best way for kids to learn is by doing," says Gregg Murset, CEO of Leap Spring and creator of the newly-released app Zingity. "If you want your kid to be more kind, get them doing kind things. If you want your kid to learn sportsmanship, put them in sports."

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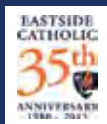
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## Apps of kindness

*continued from page 19*

character traits. It's a bit like earning a Brownie badge. The activities are designed to be parent-supervised, bite size and fun, so kids build character without even realizing it, working toward a reward of some kind, such as going out for ice cream or getting a new teddy bear.

A child working on the cooking pack, for instance, might bake cookies for a neighbor, learning baking skills, and also compassion and kindness in the process, according to Murset. A sports-themed pack might require a child to organize a pickup basketball game, getting off the couch while learning organizational and leadership skills. The idea is to provide a framework to prompt real-world action.

"I think it motivates kids to do things that they may never have thought to do," says Jennifer Morse, whose two daughters, Kayla, 10, and Sara, 12, tested Zingity. Morse and her husband are junior high coaches at their Surprise, Arizona, church, and see a lot of room for improvement in the character skills of kids at those ages. "There are so many kids nowadays that feel like they are owed something," she says. "Their parents just drop them off and pay money for them to do stuff, but don't actually teach them what it means to be a good person. Sometimes kids just don't know what to do. This at least pushes them to do things."

"It's not about watching two animated penguins learn to walk

in each other's flippers," Murset says. "It's about learning things like patience and respect by actually *doing* things. Go take flowers to your friend who got bullied at recess today. Go visit someone who has a health challenge.

"Next time you go to the store, stand there and hold the door open for somebody. When was the last time you saw a kid do that?"

On these ultimate lessons, it seems, everyone can agree "Parents are so conscientious about teaching everything these days — nutrition, responsibility to the environment, composting, now even empathy — that they really don't have enough relaxed jammy time, enough time just doing things together," Gordon says.

"I don't think parents appreciate how powerful the easy moments are." ■

*Kristen Russell is the co-author, with Laura Kastner, of Wise-Minded Parenting: Seven Essentials for Raising Successful Tweens + Teens.*

## Apps aimed at building character

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SAT., NOV. 14 & SAT., JAN. 9 • 1-3 PM

### How to have a great parent- teacher conference



#### BEFORE

- Find details about what your child will be learning at specific grade levels, and the standardized tests she will take, at Your Child's Progress ([k12.wa.us/resources/yourchildsprogress.aspx](http://k12.wa.us/resources/yourchildsprogress.aspx)).
- Attend curriculum night at your school and listen to your child's teacher explain what will be taught.
- Stay engaged with your child and ask him what he did in school that day. Check in on homework. Which assignments did your child find enjoyable? Which were challenging?
- Make a list of specific questions to ask your teacher during the conference.

#### DURING THE CONFERENCE

- Before you say anything, listen to what the teacher has to say about your child regarding social, emotional and academic development.
- If the teacher's description of your child does not ring true, or if you think there's crucial missing information, speak up.
- Ask about grading, report-card formats, daily schedule and the teacher's policies.

#### LEAVE WITH AN ACTION PLAN

- Ask the teacher how you can support her learning goals for your child. This could mean encouraging your child to tackle tougher math problems, having her read every day or monitoring homework.



### KINDERGARTEN-5TH

5601 University Way NE  
206.524.0653  
[ucoopschool.org](http://ucoopschool.org)





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December 4-20th


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December 12 - 13  
December 19 - 20


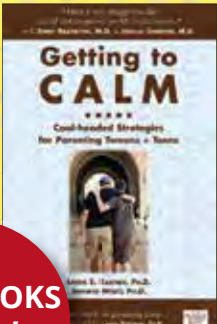
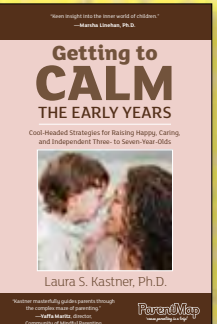
Kids 5 & under are FREE

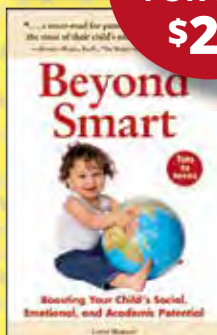
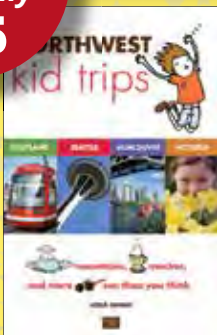
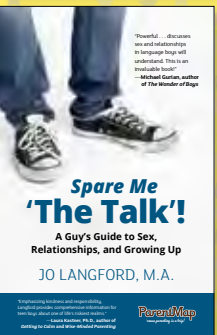


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# SEASON'S READINGS

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# santa photos

November 14 - December 24

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PHOTO COURTESY OF SEATTLE TILTH

Gardening around: Kids will dig helping with Seattle Tilth at Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands

# A year of giving and receiving

By Tiffany Doerr Guerzon

A few years ago, my husband and I surprised our kids with a trip to Disneyland, on Christmas Day. Because the trip was expensive, we cut back on buying presents and — throughout the holiday season — concentrated on giving back instead. We prepared sandwiches for Heroes for the Homeless, made cards for soldiers and collected food to stock our town's food bank. It opened our eyes to the need in our own community and made us resolve to develop a family practice of giving long past the holiday season.

If you have a similar goal of developing a volunteering tradition for your family but aren't

sure how to begin, we've rounded up 10 great giving activities for families or groups, to suit a wide range of ages and interests. Consider making a monthly commitment to the cause that speaks most to your clan.

Receiving all year long is fun, too, so also check out the sidebar for ideas on one of the year's hottest gift trends: monthly subscription boxes of toys, games and craft kits. Put these two together and your kids will experience the joy of giving — and receiving — all year long.

*continued on page 28 >>*





## PICKS



**Día de los Muertos at Tacoma Art Museum, Nov. 1**



**Pipers Creek Salmon Celebration, Nov. 27**



**Santa Train, Nov. 28-Dec. 19**



**Meet the Mammals at the Burke Museum, Nov. 14**



**Big Top Rock: Lighter Than Air, through Dec. 27**

### SUNDAY

1

#### **Día de los Muertos Community Festival.**

Make a sugar skull, create a chalk memorial, experience music, community altars and a *tapete* sand painting by Rene Julio. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Tacoma Art Museum. [tacomaartmuseum.org](http://tacomaartmuseum.org)

**Seattle Family Dance.** Grab a partner, little or big, and learn fun line and square dances with live music. 3-5 p.m. \$7/person or \$20/family. Ages 10 and under with families. Phinney Neighborhood Center, Seattle. [seattledance.org](http://seattledance.org)

8

**Snow White and Rose Red.** Snow White, her adventurous sister and their new pal battle an evil dwarf. Friday-Sunday, Nov. 6-15. \$5-\$12. All ages. Bellevue Youth Theatre-Crossroads. [bellevuewa.gov](http://bellevuewa.gov)

**Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra.** Dedicated young musicians, ages 6-19, perform in ensembles and orchestra groups. Sunday-Monday, Nov. 8-9. \$12-\$15. All ages. Meydenbauer Center Theatre, Bellevue. [byso.org](http://byso.org)

15

**Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.** Join two kids and their dad for this magical, musical adventure in a "fantasmagorical" car called Chitty. Nov. 7-Dec. 27. \$25 and up. Ages 6 and up. Seattle Children's Theatre. [sct.org](http://sct.org)

**Great Train Expo.** Bring your choo-choo fans to this model-train show with layouts, vendors, hands-on activities, kids' area and more. Nov. 14-15, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. \$8, free ages 11 and younger. Washington State Fairgrounds, Puyallup. [trainshow.com/puyallup](http://trainshow.com/puyallup)

22

**Fantasy Lights Walk.** Put on your walking shoes and take in the amazing light displays by foot, the only chance to walk, not drive, through the park. \$3-\$4/person or \$9-\$12/family. Spanaway Park. [co.pierce.wa.us](http://co.pierce.wa.us)

**Yulefest.** Partake in Scandinavian Christmas traditions with music, tasty treats, craft marketplace and more. \$5; ages 12 and under free. Saturday-Sunday, Nov. 21-22. Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle. [nordicmuseum.org](http://nordicmuseum.org)

29

**Handel's Messiah.** Experience Messiah in a new way as City Opera Ballet stages its ballet oratorio of the famous work. Saturday-Sunday, Nov. 28-29. Check website for prices. The Theater at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue. [cityoperaballet.org](http://cityoperaballet.org)

**Santa Train.** Ride a real train to visit Santa and have a treat. Saturday-Sunday, Nov. 28-Dec. 19, plus Friday, Dec. 18. \$22; under age 2 free. Northwest Railway Museum North Bend Depot, North Bend. [trainmuseum.org](http://trainmuseum.org)

### MONDAY

2

**Let's Play: Princess and the Pea.** Olympia Family Theater invites little ones to enjoy an excitement-filled, 30-minute show, the perfect length for young attention spans. Nov. 2, 6 and 7; 10:30 a.m. \$5. Ages 0-5 with caregiver. Olympia Family Theater. [olyft.org](http://olyft.org)

**Top Ten Toys Story Time.** As if you need another reason to visit this creative-toy heaven, bring the tots for weekly story time. Mondays, 11 a.m. **FREE**. Top Ten Toys, Seattle. [toptentoy.com](http://toptentoy.com) **ONGOING EVENT**

9

**Toddler Time at the Aquarium.** Make a fish-print painting and engage in other marine-themed activities. Nov. 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10; 9:30 a.m.-noon. Included with admission. Ages 0-5 with caregiver. Seattle Aquarium, Seattle. [seattleaquarium.org](http://seattleaquarium.org)

**Maker Mondays.** Visit the Maker Space to experiment with 3D modeling and try out the 3D printer. Mondays, 3-8 p.m. \$5; pre-register. Ages 11-18, under 15 with adult. Future of Flight Aviation Center, Mukilteo. [futureofflight.org](http://futureofflight.org) **ONGOING EVENT**

16

**Play to Learn.** Kids and caregivers gather for community play and circle time around a weekly theme. Mondays, 10-11:30 a.m.; additional weekly times/locations. **FREE**. Ages 6 and under with caregiver. Madison Complex, Tacoma. [playtacoma.org](http://playtacoma.org) **ONGOING EVENT**

**Lil' Diggers Playtime.** Behold the giant, indoor sandbox of kids' dreams, with toys and Wi-fi for grown-ups. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 9:30-11 a.m. or 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. \$7. Ages 5 and under. Sandbox Sports, Seattle. [sandboxsports.net](http://sandboxsports.net) **ONGOING EVENT**

23

**Swansons Reindeer Festival.** Meet real-live reindeer, little Dasher and Blitzen, and their camel buddy named Curley. Daily, Nov. 14-Dec. 24. **FREE**. Swansons Nursery, Seattle. [swansonsnursery.com](http://swansonsnursery.com)

**The Legacy of Seattle Hip-Hop.** Interactive exhibit on local hip-hop culture and its connection to the global hip-hop movement. Daily through May 1, 2016. Included with admission. Museum of History & Industry. [mohai.org](http://mohai.org)

30

**Happy Hour.** Bounce time for energetic kids to get the rainy day (or any day) wiggles out. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. \$5-\$8. Ages 1-8. Elevated Sportz Trampoline Park, Bothell. [elevatedsportz.com](http://elevatedsportz.com) **ONGOING EVENT**

**WildLights.** Experience the zoo after dark, illuminated in holiday sparkle. Daily, Nov. 27-Jan. 3, 5:30-8:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 24-25). \$6.50-\$9.75; ages 2 and under free. Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle. [zoo.org](http://zoo.org)

### TUESDAY

3

**Toddler Art Drop-in.** Dress for mess and dig into art exploration with paints, crafts, gluing, construction, sculpting and more. Tuesdays through Nov. 17, 10 a.m. \$10. Ages 2-4 with caregiver. Kirkland Arts Center. [kirklandartscenter.org](http://kirklandartscenter.org) **ONGOING EVENT**

**Drop-in Chess.** Youth join in casual games of chess to learn and practice their skills. Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m. **FREE**. Ages 6-18. Seattle Public Library, High Point Branch. [spl.org](http://spl.org) **ONGOING EVENT**

10

**The Art of Saving a Life.** Last week to view more than 30 artists' representations of the role of immunization in global health. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through Nov. 14. **FREE**. All ages. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Visitor Center, Seattle. [gatesfoundation.org/visitor-center](http://gatesfoundation.org/visitor-center)

**Family Game Night.** All kinds of board games are the battleground as you go head to head with family and friends. 4-5:30 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Pierce County Library, DuPont Branch. [piercecountylibrary.org](http://piercecountylibrary.org)

17

**Preschool Playtime.** Drop-off play for little tots and some "me-time" for caregivers. Tuesday, Thursday, 9-11 a.m. or noon-2 p.m. \$10; call to reserve spot. Ages 3-6. Lynnwood Recreation Center. [ci.lynnwood.wa.us](http://ci.lynnwood.wa.us)

**Preparing for 'The Big One' Workshop.** Learn what to do to prepare your family for an emergency then get the kids to help make your plan. 5:30-6:35 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Adults. Seattle Public Library, Green Lake Branch. [spl.org](http://spl.org)

24

**OmTots Play Gym.** Preschoolers bounce around, swing from the ceiling and generally act like monkeys. Monday-Friday, 9:30-noon. \$10; discounts available. Ages 1-5 with caregiver. OmCulture, Seattle. [omculture.com](http://omculture.com) **ONGOING EVENT**

**The Sound of Music.** Rodgers and Hammerstein's beloved musical of stage and screen makes a memorable holiday family outing. Nov. 24-Jan. 3. \$29 and up. Ages 5 and up. The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle. [5thavenue.org](http://5thavenue.org)



**Swansons Reindeer Festival, Nov. 14-Dec. 24**



## WEDNESDAY

4

**Toddler Tales & Trails.** Kids and caregivers enjoy story time and a short nature hike. 10–11 a.m. \$2. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Seward Park Audubon Center, Seattle. [sewardpark.audubon.org](http://sewardpark.audubon.org)

**Low Sensory Evening.** KidsQuest invites kids to play with a little less noise and light, and fewer other guests. 5:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 1–10 with families. KidsQuest Children's Museum, Bellevue. [kidsquestmuseum.org](http://kidsquestmuseum.org)

11

### FREE Entrance to National Parks.

Venture out to one of Washington's three spectacular National Parks: Mount Rainier, North Cascades or Olympic National Park, free today in honor of Veterans' Day. [nps.org](http://nps.org)

**Veterans' Appreciation Days.** Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Northwest Trek offer free admission to active-duty military and veterans, and half-price for their immediate families. Wednesday–Thursday, Nov. 11–12. Tacoma, Eatonville. [pdza.org](http://pdza.org), [nwtrek.org](http://nwtrek.org)

18

**Kidz Bounce Drop-In Time.** Grown-ups get a breather while the little ones get their workout at this inflatable gym. Tuesday–Thursday, 9:30–11 a.m. or 12:30–2 p.m., plus Thursday 5–6:30 p.m. \$7. Ages 2–10. Kidz Bounce, Preston. [kidzbounce.com](http://kidzbounce.com)

### ONGOING EVENT

**Pokemon League.** New and experienced players gather for play, crafts, refreshments and more. 4:30–7 p.m. **FREE**. All ages. Tacoma Main Library. [tacomalibrary.org](http://tacomalibrary.org)

25

**Healing in Flames.** Explore the connection between art and healing by viewing the works of U.S. soldiers interpreting their experiences through glass. Wednesday–Sunday through March 2016. Included with admission. Museum of Glass, Tacoma. [museumofglass.org](http://museumofglass.org)

**Tide Pools by Flashlight.** Bundle up and bring your light for this exciting, nighttime beach adventure. 8:30–10:30 p.m. \$5; preregister. Ages 6 and up. Discovery Park, Seattle. [seattle.gov/parks](http://seattle.gov/parks)

## THURSDAY

5

**Seattle MathFest.** Celebrate math and its awesomeness with carnival-like games and prizes for kids and their families. 5–8 p.m. **FREE**; preregistration recommended. All ages. Rainier Community Center, Seattle. [zenomath.org](http://zenomath.org)

**SpaceFest: Oh the Humanity!** Explore how humans might live together...somewhere besides Earth. Thursday–Saturday, Nov. 5–7. Included with admission (free Thursday). All ages. Museum of Flight, Seattle. [museumofflight.org](http://museumofflight.org)

12

**Origami Afternoon: Yoda, Chewie and More!** Create super-cool *Star Wars* characters from origami paper. 4:15 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 9–12. King County Library, Covington Branch. [kcls.org](http://kcls.org)

**PEPS Lecture: Six Steps to Create Your Will.** Attorney Megan Gebhardt shares step-by-step tips for parents to put their estates and wishes in order. 7 p.m. \$15 per couple or pay-what-you-can. Adults. Verity Credit Union, Seattle. [peps.org](http://peps.org)

19

**Intimate Impressionism.** Treasures of French impressionism visit SAM from the National Gallery of Art. Wednesday–Sunday through Jan. 10, 2016. \$15–\$25; ages 12 and under free. Seattle Art Museum. [seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

**\$1 Third Thursday and Hands-on History.** Kids practice skills from an earlier era: Beating rugs, rolling dough, scrubbing clothes and more. 5–8 p.m. Ages 1–10. \$1. KidsQuest Children's Museum, Bellevue. [kidsquestmuseum.org](http://kidsquestmuseum.org)

26

**Norpoint Turkey Trot.** Move your body before stuffing your belly; try the 5K run, 2-mile run/walk or kids' dash. 9 a.m. \$10–\$30. Center at Norpoint, Tacoma. [metroparkstacoma.org](http://metroparkstacoma.org)

**Seattle Turkey Trot.** Join your community for a scenic 5K jaunt that finishes at Golden Gardens and benefits the Ballard Food Bank. 9 a.m. \$15–\$35. Golden Gardens, Seattle. [seattleturkeytrot.org](http://seattleturkeytrot.org)

## FRIDAY

6

**Family Bingo Night.** Bring your family and your own marker or dauber and get in on some bingo fun with great prizes. 6:30–9 p.m. \$5 includes 6 bingo sheets; preregister. All ages. Meridian Habitat Park, Puyallup. [piercecounitywa.org](http://piercecounitywa.org)

**My Fair Lady.** A professor tries to teach a Cockney flower seller to speak properly in this beloved Broadway musical. Nov. 5–Jan. 3 (Jan. 8–21 in Everett). \$38–\$70. Ages 7 and up. Village Theatre, Issaquah. [villagetheatre.org](http://villagetheatre.org)

13

**Multiracial Families: Community Dialogue.** Join Families of Color Seattle for open discussion and potluck plus keynote speaker. 5–8 p.m. **FREE**; RSVP required; bring a dish to share. All ages; free child care provided. The Bush School, Seattle. [focseattle.com](http://focseattle.com)

**Disney on Ice: Frozen.** The perfect tale to be told on ice; your favorite characters skate and sing. Nov. 11–16; also Nov. 18–22 at Xfinity Arena, Everett. \$30 and up; ages 1 and under free. ShoWare Center, Kent. [showarecenter.com](http://showarecenter.com)

20

**Preschool Pets.** Kids meet a loveable companion pet and learn about caring for our animal friends. Nov. 13 and 20; 10–11 a.m. \$10; preregister. Ages 4–5 with caregiver. Seattle Humane Society, Bellevue. [seattlehumane.org](http://seattlehumane.org)

**Family Movie Night – Sing Along Edition.** Adult beverages on offer for grown-ups will help *Frozen* go down easy; bring your indoor picnic or buy snacks and drinks. 6:30–9:30 p.m. \$3/person. Mount Baker Community Club, Seattle. [mountbaker.org](http://mountbaker.org)

27

### Pipers Creek Salmon Celebration.

Welcome chum and coho salmon back to the creek and mark the occasion with kids' activities, music and hot drinks. 11 a.m.–1 p.m. **FREE**. Carkeek Park, Seattle. [kingcounty.gov/salmon](http://kingcounty.gov/salmon)

**Zoolights.** Revel in the dazzling light creations — a bear family, a giant Pacific octopus and more. Daily, Nov. 27–Jan. 3, 5–9 p.m. (closed Dec. 24). \$8.50–10; ages 2 and under free. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. [pdza.org/zoolights](http://pdza.org/zoolights)

## SATURDAY

7

**Big Top Rock: Lighter Than Air.** Local indie band Recess Monkey and Teatro ZinZanni's amazing entertainers go on a Bollywood adventure. Select weekend dates through Dec. 27. \$20–\$25. All ages. Teatro ZinZanni, Seattle. [zinzanni.com](http://zinzanni.com)

**Arts of the Fur Trade.** Re-enactors give hands-on demonstrations of 19th century crafts. 11 a.m.–4 p.m. \$5–\$8; ages 4 and under free. All ages. Fort Nisqually Living History Museum, Tacoma. [fortnisqually.org](http://fortnisqually.org)

14

**Meet the Mammals.** Touch a bat or a fox, meet a live llama, build a whale skeleton and more. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Included with admission. All ages. Burke Museum of Natural History, Seattle. [burkemuseum.org](http://burkemuseum.org)

**Ghosts of the Great Hall.** Actors portray Captain Cook and others in their race to chart the Northwest Passage in this "Arctic Ambitions" presentation. Noon–2 p.m. Included with admission. Ages 6 and up. Washington State History Museum, Tacoma. [washingtonhistory.org](http://washingtonhistory.org)

21

**Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty.** This exhibit about the Japanese superstar showcases rare and unique Hello Kitty pieces alongside mixed-media works inspired by the global icon. Daily from Nov. 14. \$16–\$22, kids 4 and younger free. EMP Museum, Seattle. [empmuseum.org](http://empmuseum.org)

**The Mitten.** Beloved Ukrainian folk tale, made famous by Jan Brett, magically comes to life on stage. Friday–Sunday, Nov. 20–29. \$5–\$12. All ages. Bellevue Youth Theatre–Crossroads. [bellevuewa.gov](http://bellevuewa.gov)

28

**Afternoon on the Trails.** Sign up early for this post-Turkey Day edition of exploring IslandWood's fantastic features and trails. Noon–4 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. All ages. IslandWood, Bainbridge Island. [islandwood.org](http://islandwood.org)

**70th Annual Holiday Tree Lighting.** Gather with the South Sound community for this traditional welcome of the holiday season; buy tickets for 'Chris Perond's Stunt Dog Experience' before or after the ceremony. 5 p.m. Pantages Theater, Tacoma. [broadwaycenter.org](http://broadwaycenter.org)

Fantasy Lights Walk, Nov. 22

FANTASY LIGHTS



[www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Preventing Teen Drug Use Wednesday, Nov. 18, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Wright Auditorium at Seattle Children's Hospital  
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle

Dr. Leslie Walker, Chief of Adolescent Medicine at Seattle Children's, will discuss teen health, the impact of drug use, and what parents can do to prevent their teen from using drugs. Her talk will be followed by a panel discussion with other experts. Call 206-987-4954 to learn more or RSVP.

### 38th Annual Festival of Trees Sunday, Nov. 22, 1 to 4 p.m.

Fairmont Olympic Hotel  
411 University Street, Seattle

The Festival of Trees is a wonderful chance for families to kick-off the holiday season. Come see the collection of designer decorated trees, visit the Teddy Bear Suite and enjoy free entertainment and refreshments. Presented by the Dr. Forrest L. Flashman Guild and the Autism Center Guild. For more information and to view and bid on the trees, please visit [www.seattlefestivaloftrees.com](http://www.seattlefestivaloftrees.com).

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## Giving and receiving

continued from page 25

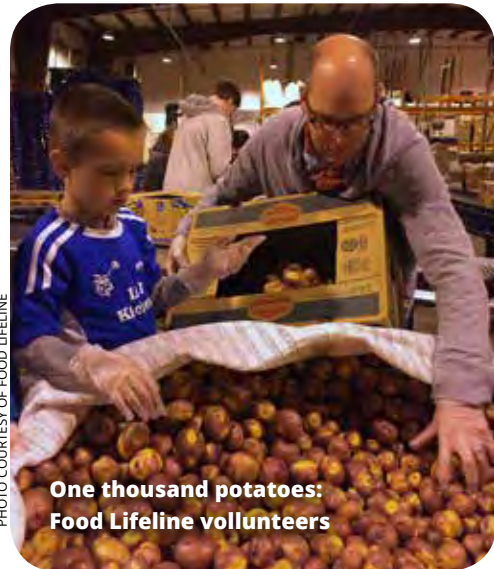


PHOTO COURTESY OF FOOD LIFELINE

**One thousand potatoes:  
Food Lifeline volunteers**

### Rescue food

#### FOOD LIFELINE

Did you know that 40 percent of food in America goes into landfills? Shoreline-based Food Lifeline creatively redirects food that might otherwise go to waste, providing 88,000 meals a day to food banks, food pantries, after-school programs, shelters and hot-meal programs. Kids as young as 6 can help sort and pack food for families, and kids ages 16 and older can help inspect and sort rescued food from restaurants and grocery stores.

**Good to know:** Volunteers must be at least 6 years old, and youth younger than age 18 must have a signed parental consent form. You can also gather a group and sign up for a weekly or monthly commitment. [foodlifeline.org/how-to-help](http://foodlifeline.org/how-to-help)

### Feed the hungry

#### NORTHWEST HARVEST

Kid volunteers work alongside adults to sort and package food, make sandwiches and distribute food at either Seattle's Cherry Street Food Bank or the Kent warehouse for Northwest Harvest. Young volunteers will love using a conveyor belt to move food, and will appreciate knowing they're part of an operation that provides more than 2 million meals per month to food banks, meal programs and schools in high need.

**Good to know:** Kids in third grade and older can volunteer; if they're 15 or younger, they must be accompanied by an adult. All volunteers must apply and schedule a shift. [northwestharvest.org/volunteer](http://northwestharvest.org/volunteer)

### Dig in SEATTLE TILTH

Kids who love digging and planting will enjoy Seattle Tilth's drop-in volunteer work parties, held every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands in southeast Seattle. The 7-acre farm produces thousands of pounds of fresh produce each year, which is passed on to the local community.

**Good to know:** Volunteers must be at least middle school age. Dress for the weather and bring a lunch, snacks and water bottle. [seattletilth.org/get-involved/work-parties](http://seattletilth.org/get-involved/work-parties)

### Plant a better future EARTHCORPS

Seattle-based nonprofit EarthCorps trains young adults from around the world in environmental leadership and restoration. These leaders in training, in turn, lead year-round work parties to maintain green spaces around the Seattle area — a great opportunity to contribute to the parks that sustain families all year long. Kids will love learning about local flora and fauna, and how to use tools.

**Good to know:** Kids ages 12 and younger must be accompanied by an adult to volunteer; unaccompanied teens ages 13–18 must have a signed youth waiver. [earthcorps/volunteer.php](http://earthcorps/volunteer.php)



PHOTO COURTESY OF HEROES FOR THE HOMELESS

**Lunch lady:  
Heroes for  
the Homeless**

### Be a sandwich superhero

#### HEROES FOR THE HOMELESS

Can peanut butter and jelly make a difference? Yes! Heroes for the Homeless delivers emergency services, such as food and hygiene items, to the most vulnerable of the homeless, those living without any kind of shelter. Families or groups with kids of any age can sign up to make sandwiches at home; each month, up to 500 sandwiches need to be prepared the night before an outreach and dropped off in the morning at the organization's Queen Anne location.

**Good to know:** Kids of all ages can help with parental supervision; this is a fantastic opportunity to gather a neighborhood, church or sports group and hold a sandwich-making party. [>>](http://heroesforthehomeless.org/join/sponsor-an-outreach)



PHOTO COURTESY OF EARTHCORPS

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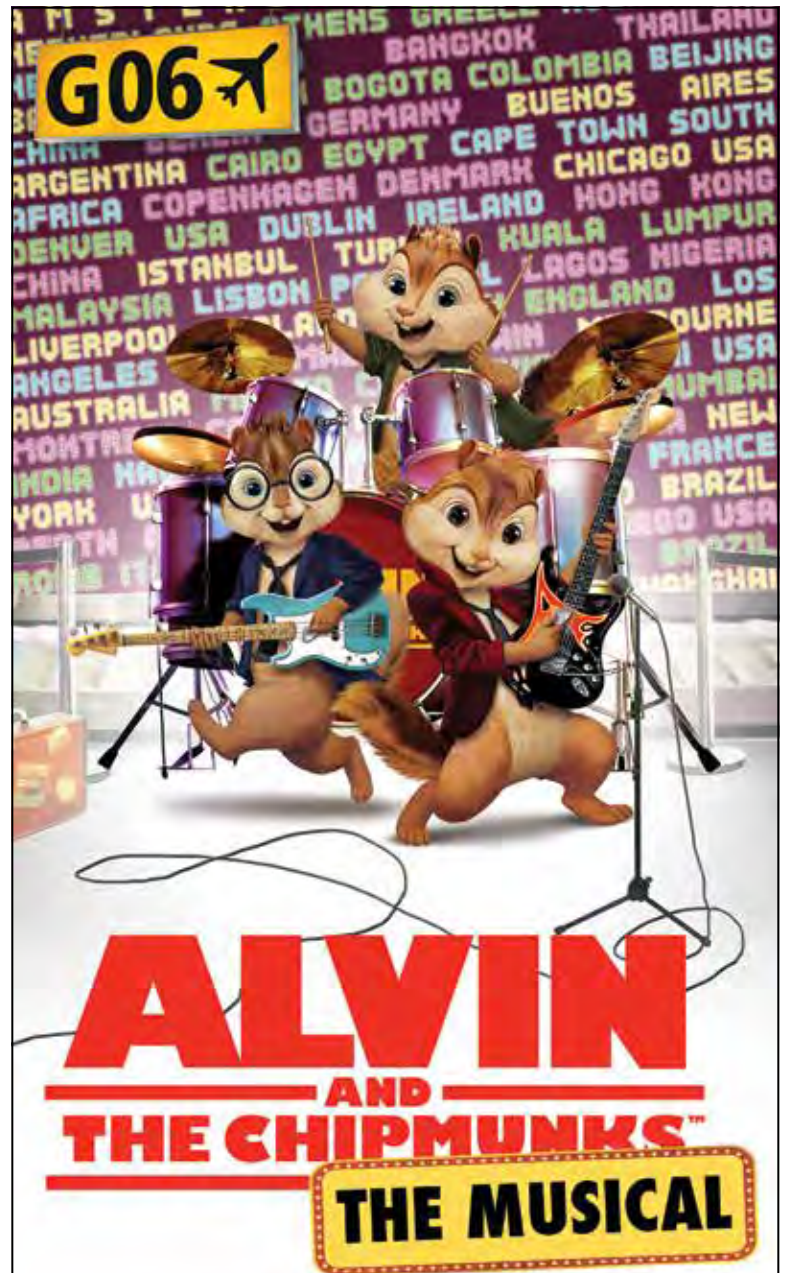
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## Giving and receiving

continued from page 29

### Set up shop

#### TREEHOUSE

Do your kids like to play store? Sign up to volunteer together at Treehouse's "Wearhouse" in South Seattle, a place where foster kids and caregivers can shop for clothing, school supplies and gifts free of charge. Volunteers at the Wearhouse sort through books and tag clothing, a bit like working in a true retail location. Treehouse connects foster kids with basic necessities, extracurricular activities and educational resources.

**Good to know:** Volunteers must be at least 6 years old. One adult must accompany every three elementary-age kids, and every five middle schoolers. Youths ages 15 and older may volunteer independently. Volunteers are asked to commit to a certain number of hours per month. [treehouseforkids.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://treehouseforkids.org/get-involved/volunteer)



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HUMANE SOCIETY

Fuzzy fostering at the Humane Society

### Cuddle a cat or dog

#### HUMANE SOCIETY

Families with critter-crazy kids should look into volunteering with a local chapter of the Humane Society. At the Tacoma/Pierce County Humane Society shelter, kids must be 16 or older to work at the shelter, but families can foster animals at home. At the Seattle Humane Society in Bellevue, beyond fostering animals, families can make pet blankets or catnip toys, or host a pet food or coin drive.

**Good to know:** Volunteers must be at least 16 to work at the shelter in Pierce County and 18 at the Seattle shelter. At-home projects are available for all ages through the Seattle Humane Society, and kids of all ages can help parents care for foster animals at home. [seattlehumane.org/volunteer/opportunities](http://seattlehumane.org/volunteer/opportunities); [thehumanesociety.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://thehumanesociety.org/get-involved/volunteer). >>

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out + about

## Giving and receiving

continued from page 31



Doing good at Eastside Baby Corner

PHOTO COURTESY OF EASTSIDE BABY CORNER / WESTSIDE BABY

Rainier Beach and Auburn. Kids ages 10 and older can help prepare and serve meals, and kids in middle school and high school (18 and younger) can be "Allies," who do chores such as help with registration, or simply spend time hanging out with the "guests" (homeless teens). Allies serve in pairs, alone or with an older "Advocate" (older than 18). Many Allies enjoy this position so much that they go on to be Advocates.

**Good to know:** Volunteers must be at least 10 years old and attend an orientation. To be an Ally, you must commit to two hours weekly for at least six months. [teenfeed.org](http://teenfeed.org) /volunteer

## Shop for families in need

### WESTSIDE BABY AND EASTSIDE BABY CORNER

Eastside Baby Corner and WestSide Baby are nonprofits that provide basic necessities for vulnerable kids from birth through age 12. Kids can volunteer alongside their parents to fill "Big Bundle" clothing bags, basically "shopping" for a family in need. Teens can help out at community events, running games and activities, or at annual events.

**Good to know:** At Eastside Baby Corner, volunteers ages 7 and older can sort donations and fill clothing orders; at WestSide Baby, volunteers can also do take-home projects, such as doing laundry, creating toy grab bags and sewing. [babycorner.org](http://babycorner.org); [westsidebaby.org](http://westsidebaby.org)

## Hang with teens

### TEEN FEED

Ways to make a difference abound at Teen Feed, an inspiring organization that feeds homeless teens at locations in Seattle's University District,

## Pal around

### FRIEND TO FRIEND AMERICA

By pairing volunteers with senior citizens in need of social connection, Friend to Friend America solves one of the most poignant problems in society today: isolation. Six out of 10 seniors living in group homes or assisted living facilities don't receive visitors. To sign up, fill out an online volunteer form, noting that you'd like to visit with your children, and Friend to Friend will "match" you with a senior in your community who would like to see kids.

**Good to know:** Families with kids of all ages can participate, but it's asked that you visit weekly or biweekly. The Senior to Senior program matches high school seniors with seniors; these kids can visit independently. [friendtofriendamerica.org](http://friendtofriendamerica.org) ■

*Tiffany Doerr Guerzon is a freelance writer and the mother of three children, including a teen.*



## The gifts that keep on giving

Kids of all ages agree: Receiving all year long is also pretty satisfying, especially when you're getting a monthly box of toys, games and kits tailored to your age and interest. (Find more toy-subscription ideas at [parentmap.com/toyboxes](http://parentmap.com/toyboxes).)



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**ARTSNACKS** Ideal for artsy teens or tweens, each ArtSnacks box contains four or five professional-grade art supplies — many of which haven't hit the stores yet — and a "menu card" describing the tools and how to use them (\$20/month, [artsnacks.com](http://artsnacks.com)).

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**CITRUS LANE** The perfect subscription for kids newborn to age 5, each box includes four or five toys, books, puzzles, food products and even clothes — all from well-known companies

such as Skip Hop, Melissa & Doug and Plan Toys (\$29.95/month, [citruslane.com/shop/#!/Gift-Boxes/sb](http://citruslane.com/shop/#!/Gift-Boxes/sb)).

### SPANGLER SCIENCE CLUB

The brainchild of Steve Spangler, the creator of the Mentos/Diet Coke geyser experiment, this subscription science box, aimed at kids in grades K-6, contains enough materials to complete more than a dozen science projects. Bonus: Kid-friendly instructions are liberally laced with Spangler's trademark humor (\$29.99/month, [stevespanglerscience.com/club](http://stevespanglerscience.com/club)).

**KIWI CRATE** This monthly dose of creativity can be tailored to kids ages 3-16, and includes two or three hands-on projects in arts, crafts, science or engineering (\$19.99/month, [kiwicrate.com](http://kiwicrate.com)).

**COMIC BENTO** How would your comic-loving teen or tween like a monthly package of graphic novels — many brand-new — worth at least \$60? Each month has a theme, such as "Cloak and Dagger" or "Cinematic Adventures" (\$20/month, [comicbento.com/#plans](http://comicbento.com/#plans)).



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# How to do family movie night right

*Parental guidance for a ritual that can connect you all year*

By Gemma Alexander

*Do you feel lucky?*

## Picking the right movie

"If it's going to be a family movie night, we want a film that is going to engage all of us, the kids and the adults," says Stefanie Malone, documentary filmmaker and executive director of the National Film Festival for Talented Youth (NFFTY). It can be hard to find films that are not only appropriate for the youngest viewers but interesting for grown-ups, so many families wait to start doing movie night until kids reach school age. "I have to watch myself to avoid 'youngest child syndrome' — letting the youngest watch things the oldest never did at the same age," Malone says.

Reaching consensus on what to watch can be nearly impossible, so many families take turns. In my family, parents can veto choices based on age appropriateness, but no one is allowed to complain about another's choice. As a result, my kids have discovered they like black-and-white movies, and I have discovered Disney's *Pixie Hollow* series is good for more than selling dolls. In other families, parents pick the movies or establish ground rules, such as banning straight-to-video releases or requiring documentaries only.

"You don't have to let the studios' taste rule you. You can't trust that just because a film is marketed to kids it will be what your kids will like. My 10-year-old asks why kids' movies always have to have a big chase scene at the end. She really loves Fred Astaire movies. You have to be choosy," Scarecrow Video's Steiner says.

**TAKEAWAY:** Pixar is good, but experiment to find movies that engage and inspire your family.

*Danger, Will Robinson!*

## Picking the wrong movie

Ratings are not always consistent. Many current PG movies are scarier than PG-13 movies from the '80s. And ratings are not always based on the same things that parents care about. The website Common Sense Media ([commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)) provides parents with more than a recommended minimum age: Descriptions of the film's content include levels of language, violence, sexual content, drugs and alcohol, and consumerism as well as insight into any positive role models and messages in the film. The Internet Movie Database ([imdb.com](http://imdb.com)) has similar information in its Parent Guide (in the Quick Links box on the side of the movie page).

"You can never be sure," Steiner says. "One time we got burned by *Space Dogs*; it was just a horrible movie. Then there's the movie you think you can trust, like *James and the Giant Peach*, based on the book by Roald Dahl, who is my daughter's favorite author. The filmmakers indulged themselves and added a really creepy scene that wasn't in the book."

Although Malone relies on Common Sense Media to research unfamiliar movies, she tends to pick movies she remembers as favorites from her childhood. Shee does not hesitate to turn off a movie and watch something else when a choice proves unsuitable, and she keeps a "to watch" list of movies as alternatives in case a choice doesn't work out.

Both Malone and Steiner agree that when you're selecting movies, your children's temperaments are more important to consider than their numerical ages or movie ratings. Malone's 8-year-old son is more sensitive to scary scenes than his 10-year-old brother ever was; Steiner's 13-year-old daughter is disturbed by sustained tension and often opts out of movies her 10-year-old sister will enjoy.



### TAKEAWAYS:

- Research movies in advance.
- Don't be afraid to turn off a movie that isn't what you expected.
- Have a "safe" movie handy as a backup so that a bad movie doesn't ruin the evening.

**S**ince the invention of the VCR, family movie night has been an American tradition. Friday night is the apparent favorite, but sometimes the schedule shifts. Pizza in front of the TV may be the most popular dinner, but Chinese takeout has its supporters, and throw into the mix some gluten-free tacos, too. There are as many ways to do family movie night as there are families. We've talked to some movie-night pros to come up with rules (more like guidelines, really) for planning unique and successful Film Fridays, Cinema Saturdays or Screenplay Sundays (OK, we'll stop there).

Family movie night doesn't have to come with themed snacks or even be as formal as a weekly ritual. Mark Steiner, buyer at Scarecrow Video, the largest independent video store in the U.S., watches a lot of movies with his daughters, ages 13 and 10, but they don't have a regular movie night. Between extracurricular activities and baseball games on TV, family movie night happens whenever Steiner's busy family of four can fit in a movie together. "The communal experience is always different from viewing by yourself," he says.



**TAKEAWAY:** If your family is watching a movie together, it's family movie night!



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### As you wish

### Movies as education

If chosen judiciously, inappropriate movies have their place, too. "A lot of times we watch movies with questionable values, and we use [them] as a teaching tool. I point out sexism and lack of diversity. I try not to be overwhelming, but I do let them know my opinions. It's an opportunity to talk," Malone says. On a recent trip to Chicago, Malone showed both her boys *The Blues Brothers*, deciding that the Chicago setting and musical history embedded in the movie were more significant than the language that earned it an R rating.

"You can cultivate their tastes without imposing on them. Whether it's music, a play or a movie, you should talk about it afterwards," says Steiner, whose musical selections in the car often lead to movie choices at home. Through their stories, movies provide starting points for conversations that might otherwise

be awkward — or simply never come up in the course of daily life, like historical events. Malone watched the PG-13 movie *Selma* with her 10-year-old after the events in Ferguson, Missouri, and a documentary on the life of Walt Disney provided a history lesson on the Great Depression for Steiner's daughter.

But in an overly scheduled world where every activity and product touts its educational and developmental benefits, the greatest benefit of family movie night might be relaxing together. "I don't always need a reason to watch a movie," Steiner says.



**TAKEAWAY:** Sit back, relax and enjoy the show. ■

*Gemma Alexander is a Seattle-based freelance writer with two daughters. When she is not writing for ParentMap, she blogs about books and travel at [gemmaealexander.wordpress.com](http://gemmaealexander.wordpress.com) and spends too much time on Twitter @gemmaeetweet.*

### recommendations

Malone and Steiner are both clear that movie choices are very personal. What works for one family (or even one child in a family) might not be appropriate for another. That said, here are a few of their family favorites.

#### STEFANIE MALONE'S LIST

*Duck Soup*  
*E.T. the Extra-terrestrial*  
*Raiders of the Lost Ark*  
*Star Wars*  
*The Goonies* (despite the language)  
*The Princess Bride*  
*Up*

#### MARK STEINER'S LIST

*Abbott and Costello movies*  
*Looney Tunes* (shorts)  
*Singin' in the Rain*  
*The Incredibles*  
*The Man Who Planted Trees* (short)  
*Up* (and other Pixar movies)  
*Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*



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## Waiting for potty time

**Q:** My 2-and-a-half-year-old daughter is not potty trained yet. Nothing I do is working! I am getting so frustrated. What advice do you have for us both?

**A:** Don't panic — many children (especially firstborn boys) don't train until age 3. Studies suggest halfway between ages 2 and 3 years is the golden age to try potty training. There are those kids who fall into the age spectrum (2–3 and a half) and those who are outliers.

I've found that sometimes it takes a "trigger event" for some kids to be ready. My family's trigger event happened after months of working on potty training with my son. We went in for a regular doctor visit, and our pediatrician told him he was ready to go on the big-kid potty. So then he was ready. It was frustrating (for me) but great at the same time.

Think of yourself as your daughter's pit crew: supplying the tools and helping her to the potty when she requests it. When parents come to me in need of help, here's what I advise.

1. Never punish your child for wetting or having an accident.
2. I like using reward charts for potty training:
  - Basic is best. You don't need to buy a chart. Make the reward chart together, which provides the child with a sense of ownership.
  - Celebrate success on the chart. Ignore failures. Never take stickers down for mistakes.
  - Give stickers freely for any good deed you deem worthy of progress. Be clear with your child about progress: putting on underwear, peeing/pooping on the toilet, or even entering the bathroom to pee in a diaper, if your child is resistant.
  - Rewards should be nonfood items whenever possible. A \$1–\$5 toy may be best for the first row of stickers, for example. Save a big reward, like a trip to the toy store alone with Mom or Dad (for a \$2 toy) for a completed chart. Do provide structure to the child about how the reward system works. The first toy will be very educational.
  - Don't give up hope when you step backward on the potty training road. Return to reward charts again and again. Change incentives and rewards to inspire a sense of newness.
  - Talk to your pediatrician if you're worried.

If and when your frustration leaks into the potty-training routine, take a break. Never continue pushing while frustrated or you will get resistance. The task of the toddler is to grow his or her own sense of autonomy. The job of the pit crew is to remain as calm as possible while knowing that someday your child will ditch the diapers forever.



Wendy Sue Swanson, M.D., MBE, is a general pediatrician and executive director of Digital Health at Seattle Children's Hospital. She also writes the popular blog *Seattle Mama Doc*.

## I make my tween wince. Help!

**Q:** How do I properly respond or act when I know my tween is so embarrassed by me? Help!

**A:** The first thing to know — in caps, highlighted, bolded and underlined — it's not personal. It's important to understand the work your youngster is up to as he or she begins to separate from you. This rearranging is hard work: it's messy, confusing and very scary.

When your tween is embarrassed by you, try to adapt a compassionate, amused attitude without scolding and shaming. Much of the reactivity they have toward you is involuntary and irrational. Imaginary audience syndrome means kids — particularly in middle school — believe every move they make is being scrutinized. They don't understand other kids are suffering from the same syndrome, not evaluating their friends as much as worrying about being judged themselves.

Tweens have a desperate need to fit in, because it's one of the essential steps of breaking free from us. In the course of separating, they try to re-identify with a group of peers. This is risky business, because their peers are fickle and unreliable. Any perceived wrong move can cast them out, and belonging is a powerful need.

When you say good-bye to your tween with a hug or a kiss and they fear that someone might think of them as a mamma's boy, their peer-group belonging is at risk. Your presence is seen as disrupting the apple cart. You may jeopardize that cart by breathing the wrong way! It's a highly insecure time. Do your best to not take the embarrassment personally and not scold or punish them for this.

I remember driving somewhere with my son, who was then 12 or 13, and a great song came on the radio. I started softly bobbing my head. My son looked at me, mortified, and said, "Mom, please!"

Tweens lead double lives. They are one way with friends, but when they are alone with you, they can be young, cuddly and needy. Just go with it. Don't say, "You sure are being nice now, after being horrible earlier." You are on a ride that spins you around. The less you try to control how your child is, the better. They need your reassurance.

Visit tween planet and see how bobbing your head to music can be a death sentence for them. When you go to war with "Don't tell me I can't bob my head to the song!" tensions escalate. Remember: compassion and amusement. Look at them with a glint of love in your eye while you resist bobbing your head and singing along to the good song on the radio. It's not personal.



Marriage and family therapist Susan Stiffelman has worked with families to create greater harmony and connection between parents and children for more than 30 years. Her book *Parenting with Presence: Practices for Raising Conscious, Confident, Caring Kids* came out in April.

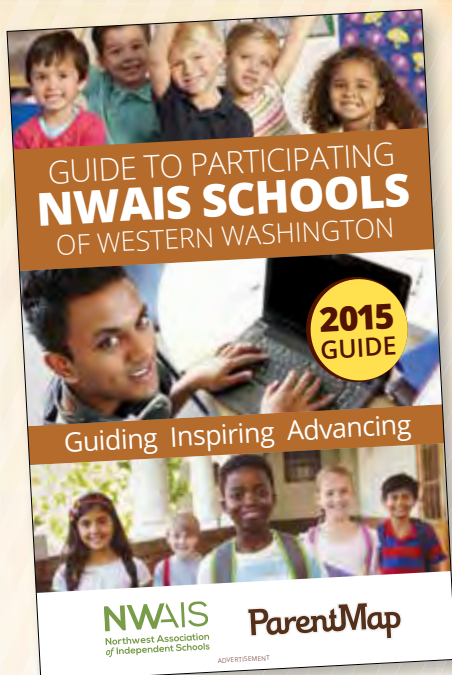
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# Doing the math on blended learning

*Opportunities broaden with online tools*

By Shawna De La Rosa

**W**hen Kirsten Langdon's children pointed out a shell's Fibonacci pattern while beachcombing, she was a bit surprised. The homeschooling mom planned to teach her children about the numerical patterns found in nature. However, as of that moment, she had yet to broach the topic.

As it turned out, her children had stumbled on that fascinating fact all on their own. Langdon credits their online learning tool: Khan Academy.

Rather than hovering over her children's shoulders as they do their online assignments, Langdon, who lives in Duvall, feels safe allowing her children to navigate through Khan's many educational topics.

"I like it because they are on the computer and they can talk and be kids, but it is [safe]," explains Langdon, whose children are 16, 13 and 12. "I don't have to be constantly watching them. I know they are safe on the Internet. They are not just floating free."

Langdon discovered Khan Academy three years ago while looking for a more efficient way to teach math to her kids.

"I can teach history as a group, but with math, they are all on a different level," she says. "It can be very time consuming."

While it was math that prompted her to seek out online learning tools in the first place, Langdon is pleased with the variety of topics her children can explore. Her 16-year-old daughter is learning computer coding through Khan, a topic to which she would not otherwise be exposed.

"I know nothing about computer coding," Langdon admits.

While online learning tools are an



obvious option for homeschooling families, there are plenty of parents and educators who are also supplementing traditional education with online learning services.

Sheryl Carlson, a Gig Harbor-based mom, used *HomeschoolMath.net* worksheets at home to supplement her children's elementary education.

"This has been especially helpful in keeping my kids' minds extra active with math over summer," she says. "They were able to jump back in to school without being rusty."

The term for this is "blended education," which means students are still taking part in traditional education, whether at school or home, but also using online learning tools.

## Learning as fun

Online learning options can be intuitive and can deliver a customized education experience.

DreamBox Learning, a Bellevue-based online learning service, collects 50,000 data points per student per hour. For example, the program monitors how long a student takes to do a lesson and how many times he or she needs to go through it. Once it's

*Online learning options can be intuitive and can deliver a customized education experience*

clear the lesson has been mastered, the program moves the student to the next lesson.

"Half the battle with math is getting [students] excited about doing it and achieving success," says Dawn Moye, blended learning manager at Federal Way Public Schools. "This is the first time we're seeing students gain self-esteem because of their math success. Kids think it's fun, and teachers are using the powerful data in DreamBox to modify what they're doing in the classroom."

DreamBox is used by students in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Canada. Locally, customers include Bellevue, Renton, Federal Way and Tahoma school districts. Seattle schoolteachers have used it as well. >>

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## Blended learning

continued from page 39

### Do the math

The number of students using online learning tools continues to grow.

IXL, a tool that serves both schools and families, reports it has grown to 5 million subscribers in 190 countries since starting seven years ago. The company says that one in 10 students in the United States uses IXL.

DreamBox has 1.5 million active users and expects to teach 1 million math lessons per day this year. Khan Academy has 15 million registered students, 12 million of whom use the site each month.

Isaac Durand, a communications associate at Khan Academy, points out that all of the lessons can be accessed without registration.

Khan Academy started in 2003 when founder Salman Khan began tutoring his cousin, Nadia, in math. Soon, other family members were looking for help. To accommodate the growing number of requests, Khan began posting his tutorials on YouTube. He soon realized that his relatives weren't the only people looking for assistance with learning.

Khan saw a strong demand for this type of tutoring from people all over the world. He didn't want to limit access for those who couldn't pay.

"Khan made the program free because it is exciting to him to be able to impact those people who are underserved," Durand says. "He doesn't want to deny students who are unable to pay."

While free, Khan Academy does accept donations. DreamBox does charge for its service, but costs are low enough that school districts and many parents can afford it. School districts pay \$7,000 a year. Smaller districts are charged \$25 per student. Parents can purchase a similar package starting at \$59.95 per six months per student.

"At this moment in history, we have a terrific opportunity to democratize learning opportunities by leveraging a new class of technologies that can impact learning dynamically and continuously," says Jessie Woolley-Wilson, CEO and president of DreamBox Learning. "Through the effective use of personalized learning technologies, we can unlock the learning potential of every child, regardless of what ZIP code they are from."

### Reshaping opportunity

As the popularity of blended learning and other tech-inclusive classroom environments grows, more online tools will be created, says Jennifer Gu, executive vice president of IXL.

"There are no boundaries online as with traditional textbooks and worksheets," Gu says. "At IXL, for example, we computer-generate our questions so that students rarely see the same question twice and can practice as long as they need to master a skill."

Single- and multi-district blended and online programs are the largest and fastest growing segment of online and blended learning, according to the International Association for K-12 Online Learning. Schools are making online learning opportunities available to their students as a way to offer courses not available in the schools, particularly in urban districts.

For Langdon, the value of online learning tools is the opportunity for her children to learn what they want, when they want.

"If they are ready for something, they will embrace it," Langdon says. "Even if they don't immediately understand, there is still a shadow of knowledge there and when it comes up again, they will better understand it." ■

*Shawna Dela Rosa is a local writer and mom.*



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## Librarian reboot

*Your personal (and free!) media mentor is just around the stacks*

By J. Elizabeth Mills and Cen Campbell

**"I don't have an iPad at home. Will my child be behind when it's time for school?"**

**"I'm not sure how much screen time is right for my child. I keep hearing conflicting information."**

**"Where do I find guidelines on how to manage my family's media use?"**

**"I don't want my child looking at a screen instead of playing outside."**

Do these questions and concerns sound familiar?

The percentage of children with access to a "smart" mobile device at home, such as a smartphone or tablet, jumped from 52 percent to 75 percent in just two years, according to a 2013 Common Sense Media report titled "Zero to Eight: Children's Media Use in America". As kids' access to screens increases, it can seem like there are few places for parents to turn to in their communities to discuss their concerns. How do you make informed decisions for your family when it comes to technology?

Actually, you need look no farther than your local library. Surprised?

The profession of children's librarianship has undergone a major shift in the past few years, precipitated by changes in the communities served by children's librarians. As children become more tech savvy and app hungry, children's librarians are stepping into the role of media mentor — someone in the community who supports families in making healthy and informed media decisions. At the University of Washington Information School, future children's librarians are learning how to evaluate apps and digital media in addition to traditional print media. And online privacy concerns from patrons are also a part of a new curriculum focused on 21st century skills. These students are perfectly equipped to step right into the role of media mentor. (To find out more about this shift, read the "Media Mentorship in Library Serving Youth" paper — [ala.org/alsc/mediamentorship](http://ala.org/alsc/mediamentorship) — adopted by the Association



for Library Services to Children, a division of the American Library Association.

Here are five ways to tap into the new skills and tech savvy of your local librarian and make that person your family's media partner:

### 1 Talk with the librarian about your family's media questions and goals.

Whether you have a tot interested in dinosaur books, a tween hoping to swipe her way through a school project or an indie-film-obsessed teen trying to learn how to make a movie of his own, librarians can point you to resources that provide ideas for family media plans and keep kids safe as they explore.

"We're hearing from our community that they want to know which apps to use," says Judy Nelson, customer experience manager for youth for the Pierce County Library System. Talk with your librarian about your family's habits around media and ask questions. You know your family best, and librarians want to support you in your decisions to include or not include media in your daily lives.

### 2 Ask your librarian to connect you with research from experts.

Children's librarians keep up on the latest research related to youth and media. For instance, did you know that the American Academy of Pediatrics has just revised its position on screen time? They are now recommending that screen time be interactive between parents/caregivers and children to help facilitate an environment of learning and engagement. Whether it's new information related to child development and the use of technology or recommendations from ongoing research about how early learning and apps fit together, librarians want to connect you with guidelines and best practices that will help you in your own decision making, such as **Children's Technology Review** ([childrenstech.com](http://childrenstech.com)).

### 3 Ask your librarian to recommend high-quality, age-appropriate media.

Librarians are famous for recommending good books; did you know that they also recommend other forms of media? **Pierce County Library System's** website features links to curated lists of apps and reviews for families. Visit their website at [piercescountylibrary.org/kids-teens/parents-caregivers/books-resources/digital-kids/Default.htm](http://piercescountylibrary.org/kids-teens/parents-caregivers/books-resources/digital-kids/Default.htm) and [piercescountylibrary.org/files/library/appshandout1114.pdf](http://piercescountylibrary.org/files/library/appshandout1114.pdf) for more information.

**Kitsap Regional Library** has a blog post in which they recommend literacy apps: [kitsapregionallibrary.wordpress.com/2014/08/25/literacy-apps-for-early-learners](http://kitsapregionallibrary.wordpress.com/2014/08/25/literacy-apps-for-early-learners). And librarians want to learn from you, too, so be sure to share your own app and game experiences with them.

### 4 Check out libraries' innovative programming for children on technology and suggest new ideas!

Libraries are providing programs that feature different forms of technology. Some programs coincide with bigger events, such as Hour of



Code (a global event to get kids interested in coding; [hourofcode.com/us](http://hourofcode.com/us)), to promote STEM learning and experimentation. These programs give kids the opportunity to collaborate and innovate in a shared space, and most are free or low-cost.

One **King County Library System** branch is taking an innovative approach to tech-themed programming for kids. The **Sammamish branch** will be offering a series of programs in December focusing on the book *Hello Ruby*, a children's book from Finland that celebrates the philosophy of creativity behind computing. The programs will encourage children to think about how technology works and their own use of technology, all by using paper, flannel and other objects. Visit the website ([kcls.org](http://kcls.org); click "Find a Library" at the top of the page) for more information.

Also, several Pierce County Library System branches incorporate tablets into their story-time programs, using apps during the program and using the tablets with projectors.

### 5 Learn about how to access media and opportunities for family engagement.

Librarians are ready and willing to help you and your family learn how to use technology as a joint learning experience. One of the many enduring benefits of public libraries is the open access to media that they afford — now digital access is available, too.

Several branches of **The Seattle Public Library** offer iPads for families to use. The tablets feature curated free and paid apps, selected based on

a set of criteria focused on informal learning for young children. Some King County Library System branches will also be carrying tablets through a small pilot project this fall. Check with your local library to see what devices it offers.

**Kitsap Regional Library** branches offer a program called Open Lab, in which children and families can come by the library to try out various games and activities, such as Makey Makey, Minecraft, Microsoft Kodu and Snap Circuits. Check your local branch's website for dates and times.

And don't worry — books are still a part of libraries! But libraries have so much more to offer, including databases for school reports, media to stream or borrow, and more. "Technology is just another tool of learning," says Erica Delavan, children's services librarian at the **Northeast Branch** of The Seattle Public Library. She says libraries "are a place where kids and families can come to do informal learning, where kids get to decide what they're learning."

Talk to your local librarian about how you can get involved in the programs being offered for kids around technology. Together, you can be media partners for your family. ■

*J. Elizabeth Mills is a doctoral student at the University of Washington Information School. She studies young children, technology and libraries. She lives in Seattle.*

*Cen Campbell is a children's librarian, author and founder of Little eLit ([littleeLit.com](http://littleeLit.com)). She supports children's librarians to serve as media mentors in their communities.*



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9-13

Answer right now! This is your mother!

**R**esearch tells us that, on average, parents feel comfortable giving smartphones to their kids when those kids are between the ages of 12 and 14.

But wait: A recent survey conducted by Sprint and Techlicious shows that some parents believe kids are ready at age 9, while other parents think 17 is the magic age for first-time smartphone users.

Also, parents don't always agree with one another: Dads are much more likely to bequeath a phone to an elementary-school-age child, while the moms are more apt to hold out until middle school.

Ah, behold the absolute truth: There's no one definitive rule book for parents who are navigating this new rite of passage. Luckily, there are people who have made it their business to help parents teach their kids to become responsible, kind and safe cell phone users.

We reached out (via e-mail, still one of our preferred tech mediums) to local and national experts in both the parenting and social media fields. Here are their top dos and don'ts for parents of first-time cell phone users. Read this before you start your holiday shopping and you'll be ahead of the game.

## Before they have the phone

**1 DUMB IT DOWN** "Do set an age when your child receives a dumb phone, and call it a talk-and-text phone. Obviously it's different for

## 10 dos and don'ts for parents of first-time cell phone users, from the experts

By Nancy Schatz Alton

each child, but I think no earlier than seventh or eighth grade.

Age 9 is too young!

After one to two years of use, switch to a smart computer phone with limited apps and data minutes. I suggest that kids contribute money or chore time to pay a third of the data charges per monthly bill," advises Cora Collette Breuner, M.D., who works in adolescent medicine at Seattle Children's Hospital.

### 2 COMMON SENSE

"Do read the Parental Concerns page at [commonsensedia.org](http://commonsensedia.org). You'll find tons of good information so you know what issues to cover with your child before you start cell phone use," writes Laura Kastner,

Ph.D., a clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Washington and coauthor of *Wise-Minded Parenting: 7 Essentials for Raising Successful Tweens + Teens*.

### 3 SWEEP THROUGH SETTINGS

"Before handing over the device for the first time, do set restrictions using the built-in parental controls on the smartphone. This empowers you and your child to learn how to navigate the digital world safely by encouraging a conversation about how they are intending to use the device," writes Adam Pletter, Psy.D., a psychologist in Bethesda, Maryland, who runs a workshop about parenting and technology called iParent 101.

## Make a contract and teach about the social contract

**4 HOUSE RULES** "Don't make up the phone rules on your own! Creating house rules means kids help craft the positive and negative consequences for following or breaking the rules. Cocreating a contract increases bonding and buy-in from your tween, giving them a voice in something that is going to affect them," writes Yvonne-Monique Aviva, parent educator and founder of Parent Tool School.

"Do make a drop-off point and time for turning in all family cell phones at night. Developing brains need downtime, and the draw of instant-gratification technology can make it hard for impulse-control-lacking tweens to put the phone down," advises Aviva.

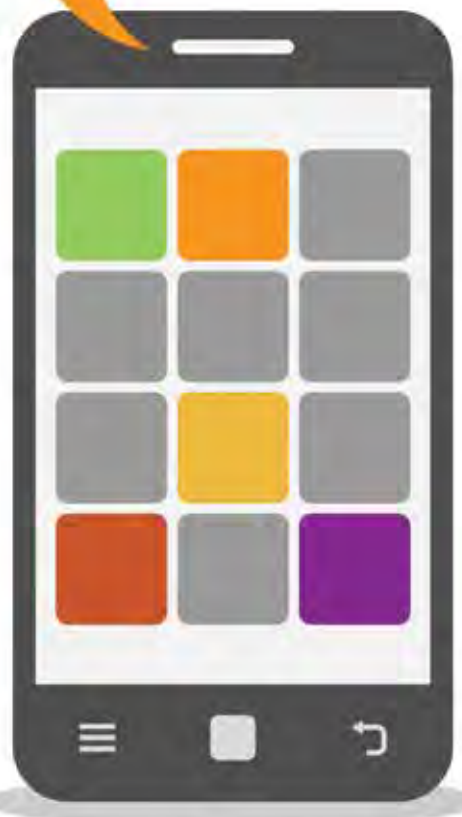
### 5 ANSWER ME, THIS IS YOUR MOTHER!

"Do teach cell phone etiquette to new users: when and where it's appropriate to use a phone; what to say (and not say) over texts; and appropriate time frames for responses," writes Michelle Icard, author of *Middle School Makeover: Improving the Way You and Your Child Experience the Middle School Years*.

"Do insist kids respond to parents' texts or calls right away. Otherwise, if the convenience of communication is gone for the parent, the phone may be gone for the child. Every kid should know that their phone is supplied by their parent as a convenience for both parties," Icard says.

### 6 HOLD UP, INSPECTOR GADGET

"Don't spy on your kid. Do let them know that you are monitoring their behavior. If you monitor your tween's cell phone usage without telling them, that's like sitting rows behind them in the movie theater without telling them. Don't sneak in and stalk them," writes Jo Langford, a Seattle-based therapist, sex educator and author of *Spare Me 'The Talk': A Guy's Guide to Sex, Relationships,*



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## ages + stages

### 9-13 First-time cell phone users

*continued from page 45*

and Growing Up. He recommends Uknowkids and Qustodio for parents who need monitoring software.

#### Become app savvy

##### 7 YOU CAN DO IT TOO

Do let your child be the expert around new apps and/or mobile phone use, and be willing to learn from them, but don't be afraid of introducing new digital media to your child, too," writes Katie Headrick Taylor, an assistant professor of learning sciences at University of Washington's College of Education.

##### 8 MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON...

"Don't set a precedent in which the kids can download/buy apps when/however they want. Do set an expectation of a pitch: [They] get two minutes to present their argument for the app, game, etc. Do your own research, compare notes and revisit the conversation," writes Langford.

#### Join the larger community conversation

##### 9 DON'T BE JUDGY

"Do talk to other parents about what is happening with kids and cell phones. Don't be judgmental when you hear about another child making a poor or unsafe decision with their phone. Your child may make a similar mistake down the road," writes Kim Estes, child safety and prevention educator, and founder of Savvy Parents, Safe Kids.

**10 GET META** "Don't let them operate in a vacuum. If they are old enough to have a smartphone, they are old enough to read articles and posts [via their phone!] about teen suicides related to cyberbullying, about problems with apps like Snapchat or the role technology played in the Steubenville rapes," writes Langford. ■

*Nancy Schatz Alton is a Seattle writer. Find her blog at [withinthewords.com](http://withinthewords.com).*

## science-driven advice

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) just released its key findings from the Growing Up Digital: Media Research Symposium. Here are a few points aimed at parents of tweens/teens:

**Role modeling is critical.** Limit your own media use, and model online etiquette.

**It's OK for your teen to be online.** Online relationships are integral to adolescent development. Social media can support identity formation. Teach your teen appropriate behaviors that apply in both the real and online worlds. Ask teens to demonstrate what they are doing online to help you understand both content and context.

#### Create tech-free zones.

**Kids will be kids.** Kids will make mistakes using media. These can be teachable moments if handled with empathy. Certain aberrations, however, such as sexting or posting images of self-harm, signal a need to assess youths for other risk-taking behaviors.

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With the holiday season around the corner, it's a good time to spark some gratitude and creativity in our offspring. If we can get solve some Thanksgiving decoration problems at the same time, all the better. Here are some fun crafts to have kids do before the big feed. Get full details at [parentmap.com/turkeyfun](http://parentmap.com/turkeyfun).



**Garland of gratitude:** This couldn't be simpler. Find colorful construction paper and cut it into traditional autumn or Thanksgiving shapes. Next, have your family write down (or color) some of the things that they are grateful for on the shapes and attach them to a pretty bow or plastic ribbon to hang from your mantle.

**Family thankful box:** Got an empty box and some markers and decorations? Then you've got the raw materials for creating a family thankful box, where everyone can write down their gratitude notes, and slip them inside for reading at Thanksgiving.



**Feed the birds:** Give back to our feathered neighbors with a fun pine cone bird feeder this holiday season. Not only will you be giving the birds a hand during a time of year when food is more scarce, but your little ones will love treating their neighborhood feathered friends to a Thanksgiving meal of their very own.

**Cereal boxes turned turkeys:** Instead of tossing your old cereal boxes in the recycling bin, transform them into turkeys instead! Get your circle cutter (or scissors), cut several different size circles and have kids glue them together into different turkey shapes. Add in some crayon action and a popsicle stick, and voilà! — Jen Betterley

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13–18

## Oh snap, what's that new app?

*A social media maven's guide to helping your kids*

By Caitlin Flynn

**S**o you've laid down the ground rules. You've talked to your kids about Internet safety. And now your teens are loose out there, roaming the cell phone Sahara for hours each day. How involved are you in their screen time? Do you know what apps they use? Which platforms are harmless, and which ones invite dangerous behaviors, such as cyberbullying and sexting?

What are they so busy doing with that device? What are the warning signs that indicate you need to have a serious talk with your child?

Katie Greer, the founder of KL Greer Consulting, travels all over the country to provide Internet safety training to children, parents, educators and law enforcement officials. She previously worked as an intelligence analyst for the Massachusetts State Police and as the director of Internet safety for the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, so she has the investigative mind and tracking skills of some of the world's sharpest parents.

I spoke with Greer about what parents of teens should really be watching for, right now.

**Q: What social media apps and platforms are currently trending among children and teens?**

**A: Snapchat** and all these disappearing apps are still huge. Snapchat has replaced sexting, and kids send images more freely because they believe they'll disappear. But these photos can be screenshot by the recipient. Even if they're not, the images do not simply go away. Last year, hackers gained access to thousands of pictures that had supposedly been deleted.

**Flinch** is a really popular app where kids are randomly connected to strangers via live video chat. It's really big right now, and it's really inappropriate. You can be connected to anyone of any age, anywhere in the world. People log on and are naked and say really

inappropriate things. One kid logged on and put a gun in his mouth. What's also dangerous about this app is that, if a child has their geolocation turned on, it allows strangers to track down where they live and gain other information about them.

**Q: When it comes to cyberbullying, which app is the most dangerous?**

**A:** Believe it or not, **Ask.fm** is still really big. If your kids are using it, it's an invitation for trouble. The app allows kids to anonymously ask questions and make comments to other users. It's notorious for cyberbullying, because the anonymity often leads to children saying terrible things to each other.



**Q: What's your advice to parents when it comes to monitoring their children's social media activity?**

**A:** The biggest rule for parents of children of any age is to **be involved reasonably**, just like they're reasonably involved in everything else in their [children's] lives. Unless your kids are getting into trouble, you don't need to check every text or every single post. It's the same as being reasonably involved when they're spending time with their friends. Kids are spending an average of 7.5 hours per day on some sort of screen — so if parents aren't involved in that, they're missing a massive a chunk of their [kids'] lives.

**Q: What is the most important thing parents should teach their children about healthy social media use?**

**A:** A general rule, although it sounds fluffy, is to **teach compassion**. Behaviors like cyberbullying and sexting all go back to not being taught kindness. Really, the root of this doesn't go back to the evil of technology. It's about teaching kids compassion. We need to talk to our kids about things like bullying and treating others with respect.

**Q: What are parents worrying about or focused on that they don't need to be?**

**A:** In general, it's important to remember that **social media is more good than bad**. You don't need to worry all the time; just be aware and be in communication. Technology and social media aren't inherently bad things. We need to educate our kids to not make poor choices like cyberbullying and sending nude photos.



But, parents should rest assured that there are many positives to social media, and most of what kids are using it for is good.

**Q: What are parents not concerned about that they should be paying attention to?**

**A: Strangers.** We talk to our young kids about not walking away with strangers, but after kindergarten, we don't have that conversation anymore. We don't have that conversation with our ninth-graders. The kids that friend me on Instagram have thousands of followers, and they can't possibly know all those people personally. This is cause for concern because many kids put geotags on their Instagram posts.

It's a really big issue that kids are connecting with people they don't know, and there are apps that encourage that. Kids converse on messaging apps like **Kik** with people they don't know. A young girl I spoke to in Washington had been talking to someone on Kik, and it turned out he was an older man across the country.

**Q: What is the biggest issue facing kids right now when it comes to social media?**

**A: Privacy.** It's been a concern for many adults, but it's not something that kids think about when they sign onto these social media sites. Many social media apps store our information, and it can be stolen or used in other ways. For example, loan companies and banks are going to start aggregating information from Facebook profiles to see who is living lavishly and then compare it to their income.

Facebook owns the photos you

post and a lot of websites and apps operate the same way. It's important to remind your kids that on platforms like **Facebook** and **Instagram**, their searches are not private, and the companies own their posts and photos.

**Q: What are signs of unhealthy social media use that parents should be looking for?**

**A: When kids are hiding things or ducking away, that's something I would pay attention to.** If they need 10 more minutes on their phone after you said to put it away, that's something parents should question their kids about. Ask why they needed more time and who they were communicating with. If your child consistently fails to follow your screen-time rules or can't sit through a family dinner without checking their phone, it's cause for concern, and it's time to have a serious talk and impose stricter limitations on their screen usage.

**Q: How can parents ensure that their kids are keeping their social media habits healthy?**

**A: You have to set limitations.** It's unhealthy to be engaging in any activity too much, even something healthy like riding a bike. When it comes to social media, it's really dangerous to give kids unlimited access to their screens whenever and wherever they want. That's when problems begin to arise. ■

*Caitlin Flynn is a lifestyle and entertainment writer online at Bustle. Before moving to Seattle, she worked in children's book publishing in New York City.*

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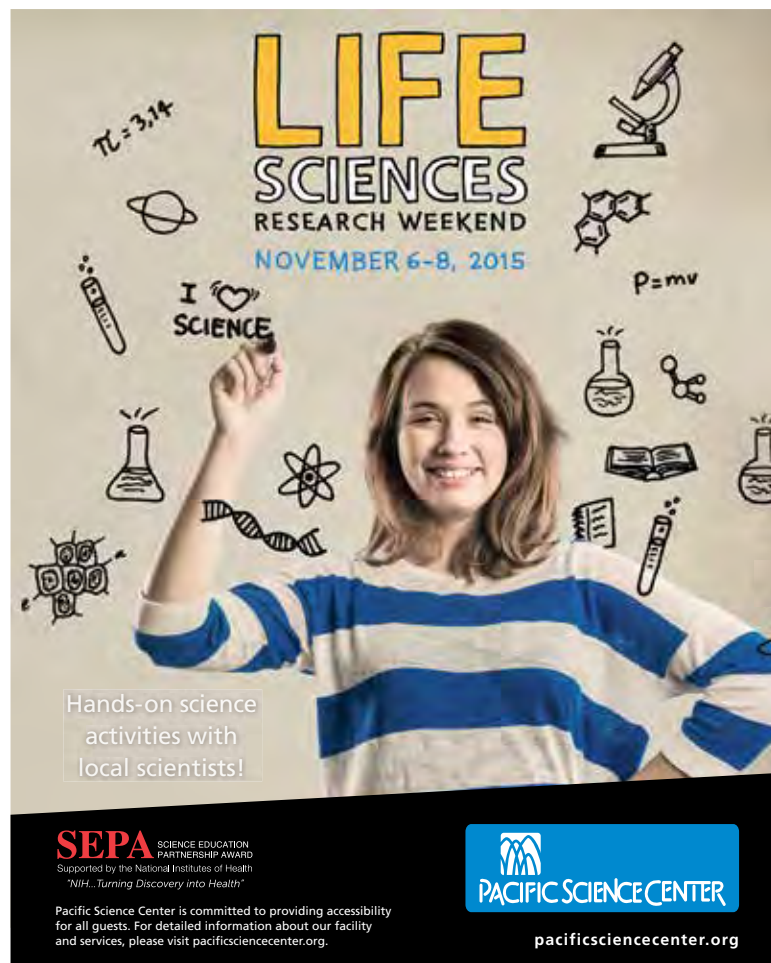


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## Katie Headrick Taylor

By Natalie Singer-Velush • Photograph by Will Austin

A professor at the University of Washington's College of Education, Katie Headrick Taylor studies children's digital literacy practices, spatial literacy as it pertains to youth mobility and mapping, new ways of teaching spatial literacies and how to leverage new technologies to engage young people in civic processes that drive community change. Taylor earned her bachelor's degree from New York University and her doctorate from Vanderbilt University. She came to the UW from Northwestern University, where she studied how children use visual media. She's originally from Tennessee ("*not* urban!" she says) and is a mom of two young kids.

### When did your interest in technology begin?

My dad was tech geek — he was one of the first people in my neighborhood to get Internet; we had AOL dial-up. I was always a tech nerd.

Later, I worked as an educator at a homeless shelter in Nashville. That work really made me think about how it is that we can get kids who are "nontraditional learners" to engage in learning in all kinds of settings; so, helping kids get out into the community and see that learning was all around them. That really ignited my interest in using technology to bridge learning spaces.

### What's the focus of your work?

I have two big projects.

First, I am pitching an idea to the National Science Foundation Cyberlearning [and Future Learning Technologies] directorate. They have a call to fund projects using technology in a state-of-the-art kind of way. At Vanderbilt, I did a project on getting kids to collect data on their own daily lives using wearable GPS. These were kids living in mobility deserts, places not conducive for getting around as a pedestrian or on a bicycle. I was hoping to share that data with community and urban planners. So these kids were involved in building bikes and then riding them around the neighborhood, but they quickly found that it wasn't safe to ride around the neighborhood. So I came into that existing project, helped them collect data and then built their own counter-maps. Then they shared the maps with urban planners and local stakeholders, and we actually saw some of their recommendations come to fruition.

So I'm trying to get more support to do that work in Seattle. Kids have a unique perspective to offer to these community development processes, conversations kids aren't usually involved in. And kids like technology a lot, and they want to and need to get around. It's a nice combination of interests. I'm hoping to partner with Cascade Bicycle Club in South Seattle. I'm pitching the proposal in December and already getting a team together.

The other project is to follow some teachers in Seattle public schools (to start, I am working with Highline School District), doing ethnographic, on-the-ground work to see what practices teachers are using to integrate technology. And then I want to follow kids into their homes to see if they are following the teacher's practices in their homes, and if not, ask how can we bridge that gap.



### What's the parents' role with regard to screen time? Or what should it be?

We've seen some really cool things parents do with technology with their kids. We've seen a mom introduce an iPhone app into her daughters' piano practice, to help the girls practice their rhythm. Parents are really good about finding videos on YouTube to help their kids cook, or to help find historical information. We saw a kid who played the cello, and he heard older kids playing [Led Zeppelin's] "Kashmir" in the orchestra, and he asked his mom what it was, and his mom took him on YouTube and they listened to old Zeppelin videos, and they had a rich convergence of interests, where mom listened to Zeppelin like she used to and the kid was engaged.

Kids often want you to sit down and play a game with them, or watch with them. We too often talk about "Is the device babysitting my kid?" But instead, it's that the device is giving us the opportunity to engage in our kids' interests *with* them.

### What's your favorite way of engaging with technology with your own kids?

I have a 3-and-a-half-year-old and a 9-month-old. The 9-month-old is doing other stuff. But my 3-and-a-half-year-old loves Toca Town and that whole line of games. He's also big into PBS Kids on the iPad. We do a lot of watching Netflix kids' channels. We limit iPad time to when you can't go outside.

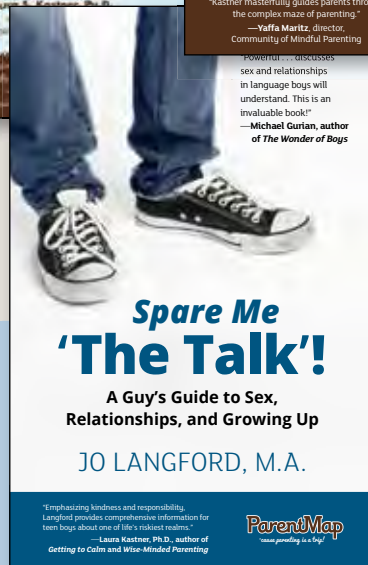
He's always trying to take selfies and pick videos off my phone. I have built-in research subjects with my kids, and it's crazy and fun. It's interesting to see how it is that they follow digital media. Their engagement with tech is always changing, not only because the tech is changing, but because they are developing into different people. It makes technology a very powerful thing.

I know I sound very hip hip hooray about technology, and I am, but we try to make it a balanced thing. We really value being outside. iPad things are for after dinner. ■



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