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NOVEMBER 2016

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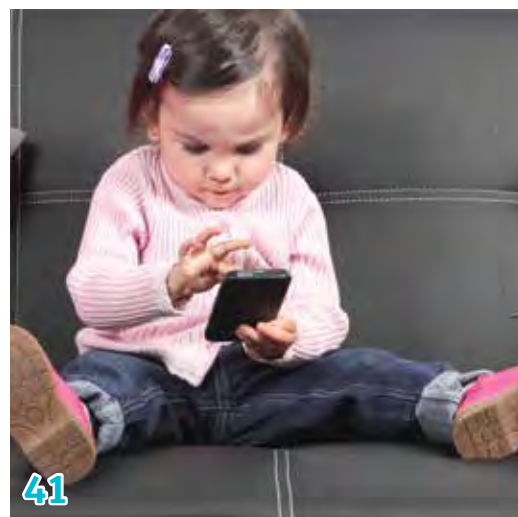
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Get your song on

If your life feels like a perpetual musical, consider channeling those skills into a choir, theater performance or at-home concert. We followed our ear to find a few sweet ways to sing out around Puget Sound. "It's a full body, mind and soul workout!" says one choir teacher. parentmap.com/singalong



How to get into college: Google?

We'd rather not think about it but chances are good college admissions officers are Googling your students during their decision-making process. What can you do about it? Turns out, a lot. parentmap.com/college-admissions

We vote for these

It's here: Election Day. Whatever the outcome, we can all campaign for more reading. Get your future voter curious about the democratic process with these conversation starters, perfect for a variety of ages.

parentmap.com/election-books



Traveling with kids

Fewer things can take the "happy" out of the holiday season than a mid-flight tantrum. Prepare with this advice from a mom who's been there, done that and didn't buy the T-shirt because, well, it was naptime. parentmap.com/travel-tips



Five miscarriages later

A doula shares the ups and downs of her fight to conceive and what she wishes someone would have told her about miscarriage, including the worst thing you can say to someone going through one. parentmap.com/miscarriage



November is a great month to...

1 EAT CHEAP

We've just updated our tasty list of "kids eat free" deals, from gourmet Italian on Monday to free barbecue on Sunday. parentmap.com/kidseatfree

2 TRY BMX

Put this on your winter bucket list: a road trip to the Kitsap Peninsula, where your kids can learn to BMX race on the only indoor track in the state. parentmap.com/bmx

3 PLAY IN A NEW PARK

The Eastside's newest playground, at Lake Sammamish State Park, is accessible and epic, with a zip line, challenge course, a quirky "mine" for kids to explore and more. parentmap.com/sammamishpark

4 STOCK UP ON INDOOR-PLAY IDEAS

Our giant rainy-day list can get help you get the wiggles out for weeks, with the latest news on indoor play, museums, bouncy houses and kid-friendly latte stops. parentmap.com/rain

5 JUMPSTART GRATITUDE

This month, start a family tradition of giving back that will carry on long after the holidays, with family-friendly volunteering ideas for a wide range of causes. parentmap.com/giveback



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dear reader

Eight years later

Ask yourself, 'Are you better off than you were four years ago?'

Ronald Reagan said that famous line in a presidential debate during the 1980 election; I find myself contemplating it — and in fact, further back, to the election eight years ago — as we approach Election Day 2016.

Eight years ago, life was slower. In a few short years, technology has moved us to a new 24/7 experience with our families “together” yet often, sadly, hunched over our respective screens, immersed in our own reality.

Eight years ago, I was winding down after months spent espousing my loud and proud passionate political convictions for the candidate of my choice, Barack Obama.

Eight years ago, *ParentMap* was receiving a record-breaking number of letters from busy readers reacting to our political coverage.

Fast-forward to tonight in October 2016: It's the last debate (thank God!) and I can't watch another circus-like sporting event when so much is at stake for our children, our environment, our great nation and the world. In fact, you are reading the only election-related words in this November issue and their message is this: Vote, please.

Perhaps fittingly considering what a role technology has played in this election — there were 100,000,000 Facebook users in 2008; today there are 1.71 billion (that's a 1,600% increase) — our November issue is all about the good, the bad and the ugly sides of screens, tech and more.

The good: Finding a family holiday gift that will engage your family in ways you've never dreamed of. (“3-D printers: A maker family essential?” p. 12).

The “bad”: our feature on porn (“One click away,” p. 14). “Porn kills the village ... by not talking about the reality of porn and the high likelihood our children will encounter it, we put our children at greater risk for having a negative impact on their healthy sexual development.”

And finally, the “ugly” (“Drones without loans,” p. 10) has us all goofy and geared up in VR headsets (kind of ug!) and ready to enter a world that unlike us, our kids “take to like ducks to water.”

As a bonus: We've put our wise “elves” to work curating a list of the hottest toys (“Gotta-have gifts for 2016,” p. 26). Their picks blessedly balance the perhaps less communal aspects of technology with all the screen time fun your kids will

want. “Whether you have artsy souls, fashion mavens, Seahawks fans or Pokémon catchers, these funky finds will thrill your kids.”

And with that, a happy Thanksgiving to you and yours!



Oct. 2008



Nov. 2008



Sheila Framke

ParentMap

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TECH TRENDS

Drones without loans

Expert tips for the hottest tech on a family budget

Jerry Berg, aka YouTube channel sensation Barnacles Nerdgasm, understands your struggle. He really does. See, Berg is a Duvall dad who totally digs technology (he has more than 700,000 channel subscribers) but doesn't want you to buy your fourth-grader a drone that will be destroyed in a crash five minutes after Christmas morning (or gets you sued for property damage). We talked to Berg about two of the hottest trends in tech (go online for a third trend, gaming laptops: parentmap.com/2016techtrends) and how to find the right version for your family.



Drones

"I've used all different types of drones, from ones under \$100 to more than \$5,000," Berg says. Generally, drone technology has staying power, so you can feel good about investing in it, he says. "It's going to be around forever, and I would even bet on this becoming a job skill."

Job skill? Now our ears are perked.

"It's great for hand-eye coordination," Berg adds.

There are two front-runners that Berg recommends, one for younger kids looking forward to their first drone experience, and the other for more mature users.

On the entry level, he suggests a low-end **Hubsan quadcopter**, which is in the \$30–\$50 range. "This price range is a godsend," Berg says. These indoor starter drones are very small and light (they're called nano drones), have a fast recharge and "you can slam them into the wall, your cat can attack them, they're the most likely to survive. It poses no threat to anybody if it crashes into your sister or parents."

For an older child or adult with better coordination, try a drone on the lower end from tech company **DJI**, ideal for outdoors and with much longer ranges than the nanos. "They can do damage, and you have to respect them," Berg says. These drones use satellite networks to orient themselves and hold themselves in space, which is good if your kid panics while using it and loses control. Plus, a "home" button brings the drone back.

Virtual reality

"Virtual reality is a bigger bet to the future than the drones," Berg says. For the older generation (us ancients in our 30s and 40s), we look at the technology and think it's magic, he says. "It's a very, very convincing representation of being in a different place. [And] kids take to it like ducks to water."

They put [a VR headset] on and interact with the world flawlessly."

Virtual reality (VR), like most technology, is available in a vast range of durability and cost.

For new users, Berg recommends that parents start with a cell phone and VR adapter, such as the **Samsung**



Gear VR, which works with an Android app (iPhone has comps as well). Essentially, Berg explains, it takes your screen and splits it in two, which simulates depth perception.

The technology is cheap and allows parents and kids to test it out. There are reasons to be careful: VR can bring on motion sickness (also known as cybersickness or sim sickness) and other effects, and Gear VR, powered by Oculus Rift,

is not recommended for kids younger than 13 by the manufacturer.

If older kids want to get serious with VR, become involved in gaming with friends online and use more sophisticated systems, there are two options, Berg says:

Oculus Rift: This system is geared toward users who remain in a stationary location, such as playing a game at a desk. It requires a high-powered PC, Berg says, so make sure your laptop meets minimum specs.

HTC Vive: This system requires an entire room that is 10 by 10 feet or larger, and uses cameras to translate all your physical movements — jumping, running, crouching — perfectly into the game as if you're standing inside of it. So imagine an archery game where you are standing in the middle of a colosseum and you have to draw your arrow back and let it go. The sensors track your actual movements and place them into the game. "Your brain accepts it all as being completely real," Berg says.

But beware: If your kid is younger, he or she might smash into the television, door or window, in real life. You need to monitor them, Berg says. Besides sim sickness and injury, parents need to be cautious about online gaming and other gamers' access to their children.

— Natalie Singer-Velush >>



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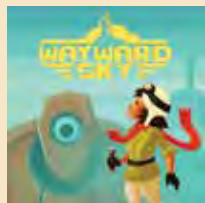
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WHY YOUR GAMING KID WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP TALKING ABOUT VR

The world's gone neon. You look up: a mint green sky. You look left: piles of orange boxes. Dead ahead: a giant red robot. This is **Wayward Sky** (playstation.com/en-ae/games/wayward-sky-ps4), one of the many newly released games that are taking full advantage of a little something called virtual reality (VR). Expect your kids to fall in love.

Virtual reality isn't exactly new, but it's become a lot more mainstream since 2014, when



Facebook bought VR gaming startup Oculus for a cool \$2 billion.

In the years since, Facebook has been doing cool things with Oculus (and committing ever increasing sums of money to the venture).

Most recently, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg strapped on a headset at the annual Oculus Connect conference to give a live demo of Facebook, the VR version. (Imagine instant messaging with talking, full-body avatars of your Facebook friends, complete with facial expressions.)

Should you be concerned about just how immersive VR is? Yes, perhaps, but let's, for a moment, put our (very valid) concerns about screen time on hold and consider the possibilities. Thanks to VR, you can "see" and "feel" in a totally new way while plugged in. It is an immersive experience that is equal parts terrifying and breathtaking, with the potential to change everything. We might as well face reality.

—Elisabeth Kramer



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TECH TRENDS

3-D printers: A maker family essential?

5 questions posed to the 3D Printing Nerd

Joel Telling is a Seattle-area dad of three kids (10, 9 and almost 8) who owns more than 15 3-D printers and is an ardent fan of the technology. In April 2015, he launched his YouTube channel, 3D Printing Nerd, to review, demonstrate and champion printers for fans of all ages. The channel now has about 40,000 subscribers.

1 Can you afford a 3-D printer?

“The first word that always comes out of my mouth is budget,” Telling says. Three-dimensional printers can be had for anywhere from less than \$100 to multiple thousands. “There’s going to be a printer out there for you, but don’t try break your bank.”

Start small, Telling says, and get to know the technology. “Like your first car, it probably isn’t a Ferrari.”

2 How do you figure out how involved you need to be as the parent?

If a kid is going to ask a question about the printer, the parent either should know the answer or know where to get it, Telling advises. Many printer manufacturers have support; plus, there are Facebook groups, Google+ groups, YouTube

channels, forums and blogs dedicated to every printer available. Parents should do their own research before buying by reading the questions and answers in some of these groups, Telling suggests.

3 What else should you look for in a printer?

Take into account the child’s technical level and what he or she will want to do with the printer. Some users want to print costumes, masks and props for cosplay; others want to make jewelry or Pikachu creatures, Telling says. Check out examples of items that have been made by each model you are considering. Read reviews and watch demos such as those on Telling’s YouTube channel.

4 What about safety?

FDM printers (the acronym stands for “fused deposition modeling” and is the type of printer Telling uses) build parts layer by layer from the bottom up by heating and extruding thermoplastic filament. There is some plastic smell, and parents will have to decide where to store the printer based on how much the smell bothers them.

“When melting plastic, we’re talking about extremely hot temperatures. So with young kids, be careful about that,” Telling advises.

SLA (stereolithography apparatus) printers, which work by curing resin with light, will be beyond many families’ budgets and have some more complex safety considerations, Telling says.

5 Is this technology here to stay, and will it really hold my kid’s attention?

“3-D printing technology is rapidly evolving,” Telling says, but there’s no reason not to buy now. “I’m a big advocate of exposing kids at a younger age to this type of technology, and to help get more girls and women into this technology,” says Telling, who consults with schools about printing technology and serves on the Shoreline Public Schools STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) advisory board. Exposing kids to 3-D printing while they’re young “is incredibly advantageous for their future,” he says. ■

— Natalie Singer-Velush





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ONE CLICK AWAY

**Your kid will see porn.
Here's what you can
do about it.**

BY ELISABETH KRAMER

Mary* was 8 the first time she saw porn. She was on her mom's iPad, as she so often was, and Googled a word she'd overheard or hit a link she wasn't supposed to or clicked an ad she didn't understand. Whatever the case, she found herself watching people do things she had never, ever seen before.

So she went back. Each time was accompanied by the thoughts: *This makes me feel different. This makes me feel weird. I shouldn't be watching this, but...*

"It's like picking a scab," says Amy Lang, a Seattle-based sexuality educator who runs Birds + Bees + Kids (birdsandbeesandkids.com). Lang is one of the few professionals to whom parents can turn when they learn their child did what Mary did: stumbled upon online pornography.

Oh no, you might be thinking. Not my kid. He's not interested. She would never.

Don't kid yourself, says Lang. Nearly half of

online users ages 10–17 had seen porn (two-thirds of whom had done so on accident), according to one study by the University of New Hampshire (UNH). The numbers were even higher in another UNH study: 93 percent of boys and 62 percent of girls said they saw online porn sometime during their adolescence.

The average age of exposure, experts say? Nine years old.

This ain't your old-school *Playboy*

Porn today means something very different than the porn of even five or 10 years ago, let alone decades back. It is predominantly amateur (whether produced to look that way by porn studios or actually so). It is also highly convenient; a 2010 American

Psychological Association (APA) report estimates 12 percent of all websites are pornography sites, and a quarter of all search-engine requests are for pornography.

"Before, we had to work to find it," Lang says. "Our kids don't."

What they find, whether accidentally or purposely, isn't your friend's older brother's crumpled *Playboy*, either. "These are graphic, moving, [high-definition] images," says sex educator and therapist Jo Langford (www.beheroes.net). "Those are pretty desensitizing and kind of scary."

They also present a portrayal of sex often stripped of such necessary elements as intimacy, mutual pleasure and tenderness, to say nothing of lacking variations in body type or sexual orientation.

**The average
age of
exposure,
experts say?
Nine
years old**

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"Porn gives our kids a script," Lang explains. "Kids think they know how to do sex because they've seen sex." That's bad, because porn isn't sex, it's sexual, says Langford. Adults can typically tell the difference between the two, but kids often can't.

That disconnect can lead to any number of issues, including concerns about body image.

"Nobody knows anymore what an average human penis is supposed to look like," Langford says. Plus, there's this thing about pubic hair. "Kids never see anyone with pubic hair anymore," Langford says. If kids or teens themselves do have hair, despite it being normal, "they feel dirty and unkempt."

Even a kid's concept of masturbation can be warped: "I've literally had kids say to me, 'You can't masturbate without looking at porn,'" Langford says.

Is this because the kids in question, after seeing porn, need more explicit visual stimulation to become aroused? Like so much of scientific research, it depends on whom you ask, but recent studies suggest viewing porn as an adolescent can have long-term impacts on many aspects of a person's sexuality, sex life and relationships.

"After 40 years of peer-reviewed research, scholars can say with confidence that porn is an industrial product that shapes how we think about gender, sexuality, relationships, intimacy, sexual violence and gender equality — for the worse," wrote Gail Dines, professor of sociology at


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ONE CLICK AWAY

continued on page 15

Wheelock College in Boston, for *The Washington Post* in April.

Dines cites one 2011 study that found that 83 percent of surveyed college men in the fraternity system at a Midwestern public university reported seeing mainstream pornography and that those who did were more likely to commit rape or sexual assault — as long as they wouldn't get caught.

Another study, this one conducted in 2013 by the Center for Innovative Public Health Research, found that 14- to 21-year-old perpetrators of sexual violence were more likely to have watched violent pornography. Note the use of the word "violent," says Michelle Ybarra, president of the Center for Innovative Public Health Research. "Not all pornography is the same," she told *Newsweek* in May.

Unfortunately, chances are good the violent kind is the kind children find. "They're not going to Google 'I want feminist porn. I want my porn

with a storyline. I want safe, healthy pornography,'" Lang says.

That lack of storyline, adds Langford, is one of the most unsettling aspects of kids being exposed to porn. "There's literally nothing left to the imagination," he says. "That bothers me, because you need imagination to have empathy and [you need empathy] to develop relationships with other people."

The influence of porn on sexuality is well-documented; perhaps you've heard the term "fifth base" in relation to the increase in straight young women trying anal sex at their male partners' insistence — or sometimes, coercion — rather than their own interest.

Also often reported are concerns about girls

This is also about how all kids of all genders and, perhaps most critically, all ages are using the Internet, and in doing so, often finding porn

growing up in a hypersexualized world as influenced by hardcore porn. As the 2010 APA report found, "There is evidence that girls exposed to sexualizing and objectifying media are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction, depression and lower self-esteem."

But this isn't just about teen boys demanding certain sexual acts, and it's not just about how girls identify and develop into women. This is also about how all kids of all genders and, perhaps most critically, all ages are using

the Internet, and in doing so, often finding porn. The problem: Pubescent and — as the statistics show is extremely common — prepubescent — children are developing their sexual selves out



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feature

ONE CLICK AWAY

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of a very narrow, very shallow pool of information, often to the severe detriment of themselves and their future partners.

And there's only one sure fix: You.

"Your children will see porn no matter what. Period. End of sentence," Lang says. "It's not their job to avoid it. It's your job to make sure they have healthy sexual education."

**Your children
will see porn no
matter what.
It's not their
job to avoid
it. It's your
job to make
sure they have
healthy sexual
education**

the skills to not do yet," she says.

So she and her husband cracked down. No computer in Alice's room. No smartphone. No access to digital porn — or so Josephine thought. Then one day when Alice was 12, Josephine picked up Alice's Kindle, a Christmas gift that

she figured, with its lack of high-speed Internet, would be safe. On it: a pornographic comic.

Josephine was at a loss. "No matter what I do," she told Alice, "you're going to dig deeper and deeper [to find porn]." And that, she said, was the last thing she wanted, to run the risk of her daughter being forced to go "so far underground" that she found even more adult content. "I knew I could not control her, and the harder I tried, the sneakier she got," Josephine says. So Josephine decided to stop trying to police Alice's usage and told her daughter as much.

"I let her know that I was worried about what [porn] was teaching her about sex and relationships, but that it was clear I couldn't control or protect her from it," she says. "I also told her that I was always there to answer questions or help if she needed it; I wanted her to know that she could always come to me if she was in trouble. Just to be clear, it did not stop my concern. I just didn't want her going deeper underground with it."

First, however, Josephine insisted they sit down together and go frame by frame through the comic.

Back to basics

That means books (*It's So Amazing!* is Lang's go-to, while Langford has written two books on the subject; parentmap.com/books). That means early prevention (Langford recommends conversations about porn start as early as 7, if not earlier). And, most importantly, that means talking.

"[My daughter] could not have a parent who could be more comfortable with the sex talk," says Josephine*. But this mom figured she should wait to talk about sex until her daughter showed an interest in the topic. "But [kids] don't need to do that anymore."

Instead, when she got curious, Josephine's daughter, Alice*, did what we all do: She Googled. They had parental controls set on the computer, Josephine says. "She's just smarter than I am at those things."

Alice was 9 the first time Josephine realized she was looking at porn regularly. She told her to stop, that this was not kids' stuff. It didn't work. "We're asking them to not do something they don't have

**Name has been changed for privacy*

“Education,” she says, “has been my go-to in situations like this.”

It took a week for Josephine to calm down enough to follow through on her plan but the resulting conversation — with Josephine asking Alice to explain what was happening in each scene, who was and wasn’t having fun and what each scene meant in terms of respect — was, she says, one of “my hardest, proudest parenting moments.” The exercise, as uncomfortable as it was for both Alice and Josephine, helped Josephine better understand her daughter. She doesn’t know if it influenced her daughter’s porn consumption, but it helped her teach Alice that healthy use of porn should include a framework for consent and reciprocal pleasure.

“It made a difference to me to know that I’d gotten the message of our [family’s] values through,” Josephine says. “That was really important.”

The birds and the bees — rebooted

Josephine, whose daughter is now 17 and doesn’t watch porn as much as she used to (“It seems so fake,” she says), doesn’t often discuss her experience with other parents. Like all the parents in this story, she’s worried about the harm doing so may inflict on her child’s reputation even though they know their kids aren’t alone. “I know my kid is not the only one,” says Lydia*, mom of 9-year-old Mary. But it sure can seem that way.

“I felt so alone because you can’t just Google ‘expert in pornography exposure for children’ and find a professional who can help you with that,” Lydia says. “I had to make a

lot of calls and tell my story to a lot of random people on the phone so I could get to the right person.”

The usual parachute cords parents pull when they come up against a difficult problem — talking to their own parents, going to a parenting group, chatting with the neighbor mom — don’t exist here. Porn kills the village, or rather, our own hang-up about talking about porn kills the village. Either way, by not talking about the reality of porn and the high likelihood our children will encounter it, we put our children at greater risk for exposure and risk having a negative impact on their healthy sexual development.

That has to stop.

“Talking about porn needs to become part of the assessment in your well-child checks,” Lydia says. “This needs to be part of the care of our children now.”

Or, as Lang puts it: “You don’t want to be the parent who gets the phone call from the other parent who says, ‘Your child showed my child pornography on their phone today.’ You do not want to be the parent who gets the phone call from the school reporting, ‘Your kid did this and exposed some kid to pornography today on the school bus.’ You don’t want to be that parent.”

That one click

Several years later and Mary is still working through much of what she witnessed during the year, perhaps longer, that she watched porn.

“I think, in her situation, it was almost a trauma,” Lydia says. “Some of the things that I think she saw, she was not emotionally, physically or cognitively prepared for. ... I

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ONE CLICK AWAY

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guess I was in denial that just one click can expose your child to some of the most horrific things you could imagine."

Lydia blames herself. "I'm ashamed that I let it happen," she says. "I feel terrible."

But, she's quick to add, letting those feelings stop her from helping her child would be the real defeat.

"Don't let your own shame or feelings that you failed somehow, or that something is wrong with your child because they looked at this

stuff, stop you from reaching out, because it's important," she says. "We can't let this just infuse into our children's understandings of themselves. We can't just think it's normal and OK." ■

Born in Seattle and raised in Portland, Elisabeth Kramer graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in magazine editing and writing. She's spent the time since using her words to earn a living and currently serves as assistant editor at ParentMap.

5 points to make during 'the porn talk'

- 1 **"You won't be in trouble."** Assure your children that when they see something that upsets or disturbs them, they won't get into trouble for telling you about it. "Kids have an innate sense that 'Oh, I'm not supposed to be looking at this,'" says sex educator and therapist Jo Langford. "Encourage them to come and talk to you and that they're not going to be in trouble."
- 2 **"It's for grown-ups, not for kids."** "Pornography can be a healthy part of adult sexuality, for sure," says sex educator Amy Lang. "It's like sex toys. It's like coffee. It's like alcohol. Used in moderation with thoughtfulness, it can be a great part of life." But like sex toys, coffee and alcohol, porn isn't for children, and you need to tell them that.
- 3 **"When this happens, say this."** When the neighbor kid brings up that weird, gross, pornographic video, prepare some lines for your children to use, like "Oh yeah, interesting. Have you seen this?" and give them a safe, non-pornographic video to call up as a quick distraction.
- 4 **"Your phone is not a toy."** Much porn exposure starts when kids get regular access to a smartphone, which is why Langford recommends setting rules and boundaries. "It's just like driving a car," he says. "You wouldn't give your kids the car keys and say, 'Go, learn how to drive a car.' You shouldn't give them a phone and never have a conversation again."
- 5 **"If you're going to do it, do it like a grown-up."** For teenage and adult children, discuss ways to find porn artists, directors and studios that focus on ethical treatment, including regular testing and contraceptive use. Consider subscribing to a non-digital pornographic resource like *Playboy* or suggesting books with sexual themes for a less graphic but still stimulating outlet. "It's a much safer place for them to get their jollies," Lang says.

Where to put all those school reports, crafts and papers



You don't want to throw them out but you feel swamped by all the finger-paintings, school report cards and other miscellaneous (but oh so cute!) papers your little one brings home. Solution: Make a memory box. And bonus: Unless you get really into craft mode, this is cheap and quick (well, depending on just how many papers you have). Here's what you do.

1 Gather your supplies You'll need a large box and 18 folders along with either stickers or markers. The folders tend to be cheap (18 cents at one place I visited) so the big expense here is that plastic tote. Even then, however, you should be able to do this without too big a hit to your wallet.

2 Label your folders Break out that labelmaker or, you know, pen. Number each of the folders from 1 to 18 to represent each year of your kids' young lives. (They are going to have to be responsible for their own memory boxes after the age of 18.)

3 Start filling! Here's the time-consuming part: Stuff the folders with everything you want to save from a given year. This could be art. This could be birthday and holiday cards. This could be anything you just can't bear to toss. Tough choices ahead, we know, but we promise you'll feel better once everything is squared away.



See photos of this activity at parentmap.com/memory-box

— Rebecca Mongrain

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Health screening

3 interactive tech trends that are good medicine

By Caitlin Flynn

While nearly 40 percent of Americans have never heard of the term “telemedicine,” it’s already changing how we stay healthy. In 2015, more than 15 million Americans received some form of medical care remotely, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. That number is only expected to grow — by nearly one-third this year alone, says trade group American Telemedicine Association.

On the forefront: parents who want to harness their children’s interest in technology for some much-needed aid when it comes to mental and physical health. Using electronic communications like apps and email to provide health care offers some surprisingly kid-friendly solutions.

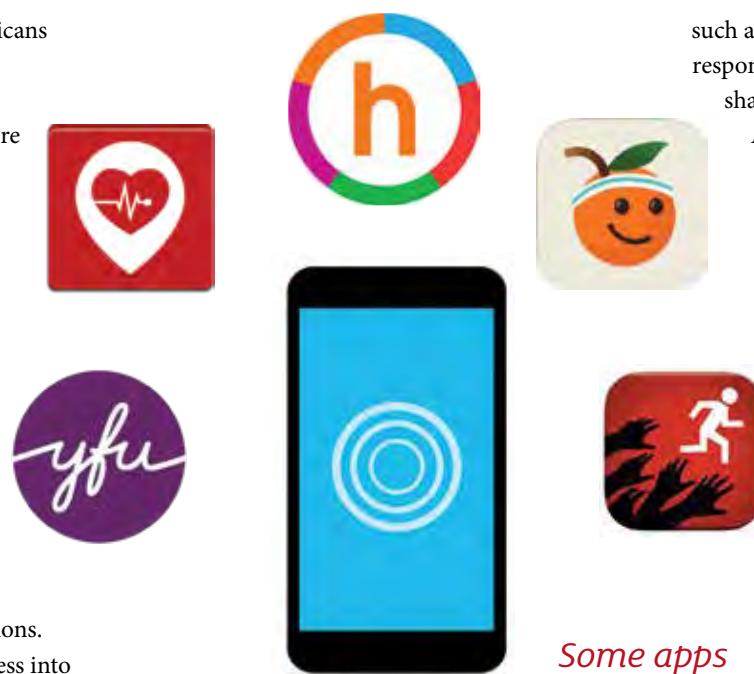
Take technology that turns physical fitness into a fun game, allowing families to get outdoors and engage in a little healthy competition, or apps that encourage children to develop positive thinking and coping skills. There are even online exchange programs that connect teens from opposite sides of the world, allowing them to see up close and personal what life is like for others and so foster a stronger sense of empathy.

So, while screen time may seem like the antithesis of staying healthy, the following three examples prove that plugging in can have its perks.

Get happy

Although happiness apps like **Happify** (*happify.com*) aren’t a substitute for therapy provided by a professional, they encourage families to focus on the positives and improve any negatives. This, says Happify head of content strategy Tiffany Sun, increases empathy between family members. “Happify cultivates valuable skills like optimism and gratitude in kids from a young age, which will serve them well as adults,” she says.

The app’s exercises can be adjusted based on a child’s age; Sun recommends “Raise Happy, Resilient Kids” and “Raise Happy, Resilient Teens.” Each includes self-reflection tasks,



real-world activities to do with your kids, as well as games, quizzes and polls.

An example from the “Kids” track: Parents and children work together to come up with five nice things to do for strangers in a single day. The activity was inspired by research from Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D. and professor of psychology at the University of California—Riverside, which showed that performing five acts of kindness in a day boosts happiness with lasting positive effects.

A popular Happify activity from the “Teens” program has parents tell their kids about their own childhoods by showing them family photos or taking them to memorable locations. The exercise was developed based on research from Emory University that found kids who know about their family history tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and resilience than their peers who don’t possess such knowledge.

Both “Raise Happy, Resilient Kids” and “Raise Happy, Resilient Teens” offer gratitude exercises

such as going around the table at dinner and responding to written prompts from the app to share what each family member is grateful for.

Another activity — Negative Knockout — has a user create a cannonball with a word such as “worry” or “anxiety” written across it. Then, the user holds her finger down on the cannonball, aims it with a slingshot and lifts it up when ready to release the negative emotion.

One Happify user, Barbara*, says Negative Knockout helped she and her daughter “find a common language for discussing feelings.”

“She will sometimes type in a subject she is having trouble with in school. She cheers when she knocks it out,” Barbara says of her daughter. “It helps her feel less stressed and more in control of her mood.”

Some apps even offer a literal lifeline for busy families

Keeping healthy

While, of course, there’s no replacement for licensed medical advice, physical fitness and healthy eating apps encourage day-to-day changes that can make a difference. Take, for example,

Zombies, Run!, an app that turns your regular run into an adventure. Before setting out on a jog, plug in your headphones, turn on the app and you’ll hear the sound of zombies in hot pursuit.

“The feedback from users has been that it makes running tolerable and makes fitness more fun,” says Julie Kientz, associate professor in the Human Centered Design and Engineering Department at the University of Washington (UW), whose research focuses on health informatics.

Another more familiar example is the ubiquitous **FitBit** electronic wristband. Families may use their FitBits for some healthy competition over who’s more physically active on any given day while others use it to monitor sleep. The tool, says Kientz, can influence how family members empathize with one another.

“Kids realize they never knew how little sleep

their parents get,” she says. “It makes them think, ‘Maybe I should be kinder to my mom or dad because they didn’t get much sleep.’ It raises awareness.”

For families making an effort to improve eating habits, Kientz recommends **Fooducate** (fooducate.com). The app allows you to scan the bar code on a food product and then grades it on a scale of A through F based on healthiness. If the food earns a low grade, the app recommends a better-rated option, such as swapping a can of soda for some sparkling water.

Some apps even offer a literal lifeline for busy families. For example, the app **PulsePoint** (pulsepoint.org) alerts CPR-trained volunteers when someone in their vicinity needs help. PulsePoint interacts with emergency dispatch systems that scan for codes showing someone is in cardiac arrest.

When the Med 7 code, which indicates cardiac arrest, comes through, operators send out an alert to PulsePoint volunteers, who are may be able to reach the emergency more quickly than emergency responders. They can then perform CPR until an ambulance arrives.

Beam in a buddy

Virtual cultural exchange programs: Consider them the penpal programs of the 21st-century. A variety of programs facilitate these online meetings, which provide an online platform for students to expand their worldview by discussing current events and and culture with peers all over the globe.

Earlier this year, **Youth for Understanding (YFU) USA**, an international education organization

with partners in more than 60 countries, began connecting U.S. teenagers with teens in the Middle East and North Africa. Similar programs are being used by high schools and colleges across the country, including American University.

“These programs demonstrate how technology is making these sorts of relationships possible in a more immediate way,” says Katie Headrick Taylor, assistant professor of learning sciences and human development at the UW, who specializes in social media use by children and underserved communities.

Instead of waiting several weeks to receive a piece of mail from a penpal, the relationship-building happens more quickly and feels more personal, she says of these programs.

“There’s something about the visual nature of seeing a person’s lived reality that’s a completely new experience and a different way of engaging with somebody else’s world,” Taylor says, adding that it’s the next best thing to being physically present with the other person. Taylor points out that the virtual aspect makes the connection more intimate, which enhances the learning experience and builds a stronger relationship.

“[These programs] add additional layers of experience and the experience to observe,” says Taylor. “These new mediations of experience are so much more nuanced and rich.” ■

Caitlin Flynn is Seattle-based writer whose passions include Fox Mulder, coffee and puppies. She is a Gemini, a former ballerina and frequent contributor to Bustle.

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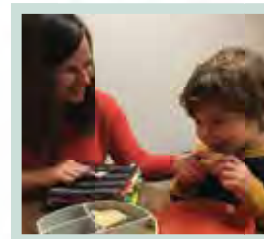
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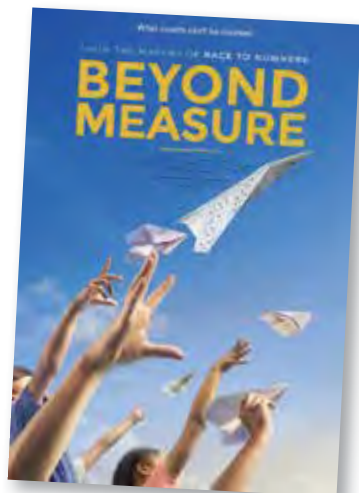


Mushroom Mania Family Hike, Nov. 6, IslandWood, Bainbridge Island



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FREE Entrance to National Parks, Nov. 11



6

Treasure Island. Young Jim Hawkins inherits a map leading to hidden treasure and adventure ensues in this Youth Theatre Northwest production. Nov. 4–20. \$13–\$17. Ages 6 and up. Mercer Island. youththeatre.org

Mushroom Mania Family Hike. Sign up early for this exploration of the fungus among us on IslandWood's fantastic trails. 10 a.m.–noon. \$5; ages 3 and under free; preregister. Bainbridge Island. islandwood.org

13

The Emperor's New Clothes. StoryBook Theater reinterprets the story of one vain and gullible guy. Saturday–Sunday, Nov. 12–20. \$12. Ages 3–10 with families. Kirkland Performance Center. kpccenter.org

Super Fun Party Time. Local indie band Recess Monkey and Teatro ZinZanni's amazing circus performers team up for a birthday adventure. Select weekend dates through Dec. 17. \$20–\$25. Ages 6 and up. Teatro ZinZanni, Seattle. zinzanni.com

20

Piper's Creek Salmon Celebration. Welcome chum and coho salmon back to the creek and mark the occasion with kids' activities, music and more. 11 a.m.–2 p.m. **FREE.** Carkeek Park, Seattle. kingcounty.gov/salmon

Fantasy Lights Walk. Take in the amazing light displays by foot, the only chance to walk, not drive, through the park. 5–8 p.m. \$3–\$4/person or \$9–\$12/family. Spanaway Park. co.pierce.wa.us

27

Santa Train. Ride a vintage train to visit Santa and have a treat. Nov. 26–Dec. 17; special departure for families with special needs on Nov. 27. \$24; under age 2 free. Northwest Railway Museum North Bend Depot. trainmuseum.org

'Twas the Night. This comic spin on the holiday story promises big laughs and new surprises every year. Saturday–Sunday, Nov. 26–Dec. 18. \$19. Ages 4 and up. Studio East, Kirkland. studio-east.org

TALALITO/PIVABAY

Día de los Muertos Celebration, El Centro de la Raza, Seattle, Nov. 1



7

Early Childhood Art Studio. Dress for mess and dig into paints, crafts, gluing, sculpting and more at this drop-in session. Mondays, 10–11 a.m. \$10. Ages 2–4 with adult. Kirkland Arts Center. kirklandartscenter.org

Let's Play: Hansel & Gretel. Olympia Family Theater invites little ones to enjoy an excitement-filled, 30-minute show, perfect for young attention spans. Nov. 7, 10, 11 and 12; 10:30 a.m. \$5. Ages 0–5 with caregiver. Olympia. olyft.org

14

Luke's Kids Drop-in Play Time. Tots and their grown-ups meet up to play at this Ballard church. Mondays, 10 a.m.–noon. \$5 suggested donation. Ages 0–5 with caregiver. St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Seattle. stlukesseattle.org

ONGOING EVENT

Tinkerlab Drop In. Stop by to try some tangram and other puzzle challenges, plus play around with construction and builder kits. 6–7:30 p.m. **FREE.** All ages. Seattle Public Library, Delridge Branch. spl.org

21

Lil' Diggers Playtime. This awesome giant sandbox is perfect for rainy day play. 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

ONGOING EVENT

Maker Mondays. Visit the Maker Space to experiment with 3D modeling and the 3D printer. Mondays, 3–8 p.m. \$5; preregister. Ages 11–18, under 15 with adult. Future of Flight Aviation Center, Mukilteo. futureofflight.org

28

Providence O'Christmas Trees Christmas Carnival. View the gorgeous trees and rock out to Caspar Babypants plus enjoy other kids' performances. 3–7 p.m. **FREE.** The Westin Seattle. washington.providence.org

Garden d'Lights. Plant and critter shapes created from over half a million lights sparkle and amaze. Daily, Nov. 26–Dec. 31, 4:30–9 p.m. \$5; ages 10 and under free; check website for free admission days. Bellevue Botanical Garden. gardendlights.org

1

Día de los Muertos Celebration. Gather with the community to honor the departed with *ofrendas*, kids' activities, performances and dinner. 5–8:30 p.m. **FREE.** El Centro de la Raza, Seattle. elcentrodelaraza.org

Classical Tuesdays in Old Town. Make Tuesday special with free live music for the community. 7 p.m. **FREE.** All ages. Slavonian Hall, Tacoma. classicaltuesdays.blogspot.com

8

Preschool Playtime. Need a breather? Drop your little ones for play and social time. Tuesdays, Thursdays; 9–11 a.m. or noon–2 p.m. \$10; call to reserve spot. Ages 3–6. Lynnwood Recreation Center. ci.lynnwood.wa.us

ONGOING EVENT

Toddler Time at the Aquarium. Stop by for fishy fun and marine-themed activities for little kids. Nov 6–8, 20–22; 9:30 a.m.–noon. Included with admission. Ages 0–5 with caregiver. Seattle Aquarium, Seattle. seattleaquarium.org

15

Shoreline Indoor Playground. Large play gym is a parent's lifesaver in foul weather. Monday–Friday, 9:30–11:30 a.m. \$3. Ages 1–5 with caregiver. Spartan Recreation Center, Shoreline. shorelinewa.gov

ONGOING EVENT

Tuesday Play Day. Drop-in play time just for families of children with special needs. Tuesdays, 10–11:30 a.m. Pay-as-you-will admission. Ages 1–6 with families. Children's Museum of Tacoma. playtacoma.org

22

Kidz Bounce Drop-In Time. Grown-ups get a breather while the little ones get their workout. Tuesday–Thursday, 9:30–11 a.m. or 12:30–2 p.m., plus Thursday 5–6:30 p.m. \$8. Ages 2–10. Preston. kidzbounce.com

ONGOING EVENT

30 Americans. Groundbreaking exhibit showcases the work of African American artists influencing the contemporary art scene. Through Jan. 15. Included with admission. Tacoma Art Museum. tacomaartmuseum.org

29

Swansons Reindeer Festival. Meet a real-live reindeer pair and their camel buddy. Daily, Nov. 12–Dec. 24. **FREE.** Swansons Nursery, Seattle. swansonsnursery.com

Play to Learn. Kids and caregivers gather for community play and circle time. Tuesdays, 10–11:30 a.m.; additional weekly times and locations. **FREE.** Ages 6 and under with caregiver. Charles Wright Academy and Puyallup Public Library. playtacoma.org

WEDNESDAY

2

Disney on Ice: Worlds of Enchantment. It's a fantastical mash-up of Disney faves including *Cars*, *The Little Mermaid* and, of course, *Frozen*. Nov. 2-7; also Nov. 10-13 at Xfinity Arena, Everett. \$27 and up; ages 1 and under free. ShoWare Center, Kent. showarecenter.com

Low-sensory Evening. KidsQuest invites kids to play with a bit 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

9

Conservatory Story Hour. Sit among the lovely flowers for stories and a hands-on project. 11 a.m. Suggested donation \$3. Ages 3-8 with caregiver. W.W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory, Tacoma. seymourconservatory.org

PEPS Lecture: Six Steps to Create Your Will. Local attorney shares step-by-step tips for parents to put their estates and wishes in order. 6:30 p.m. \$15 per couple or pay-what-you-can. Adults. Verity Credit Union, Seattle. peps.org

16

Toddler Time. Open-early play gym lets the little ones burn off energy with bikes, slides and toys. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-noon. \$2. Ages 3 and under with caregiver. Issaquah Community Center. ci.issaquah.wa.us

ONGOING EVENT

OmTots Play Gym. Bounce around, swing from the ceiling and play like a monkey. Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m.-noon. \$12; discounts available. Ages 1-5 with caregiver. OmCulture, Seattle. omculture.com

ONGOING EVENT

23

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

Disney's The Little Mermaid. Ariel longs to experience life on land in this dazzling production of the hit Broadway musical. Nov. 23-Dec. 31. \$36 and up. Ages 5 and up. The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle. 5thavenue.org

30

Gingerbread Village. This year's theme is a world of wizards built of cookies and candy. Daily, Nov. 22-Jan. 1. **FREE**; donations appreciated for the JDRF Northwest Chapter. Sheraton Seattle Hotel. sheratonseattle.com

WildLights. Experience the zoo after dark, illuminated in a wonder of holiday sparkle. Daily, Nov. 25-Jan. 1, 5:30-8:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 24-25). \$7.95-\$9.95; ages 2 and under free. Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle. zoo.org/wildlights

THURSDAY

3

Spacefest: Ladies Who Launch. Try out a virtual reality experience, learn about women who launched the U.S. into space and more. Thursday-Saturday, Nov. 3-5. Included with admission; **FREE** Thursday evening. Museum of Flight, Seattle. museumofflight.org

The Wizard of Oz. Lakewood Playhouse's annual Spotlight production features actors of all ages in a show for all ages. Nov. 4-13. \$15. Lakewood. lakewoodplayhouse.org

10

Seattle MathFest. Celebrate math and its awesomeness with carnival-like games and prizes for kids and their families. 5-8 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 3-11 with families. Rainier Community Center, Seattle. zenomath.org

Beyond Measure. Documentary film asks new questions of our country's education system: What if we valued personal growth over test scores? 7-8:30 p.m. \$15. Ages 12 and up with families. Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island. parentmap.com/beyondmeasure

17

Family Nature Class. Learning stations and a trail walk. Wednesday-Saturday, 9:30-11:30 a.m. \$18 per adult/child pair; preregister. Ages 2-5 with caregiver. Washington Park Arboretum, Seattle. botanicgardens.uw.edu

ONGOING EVENT

A Revolution You Can Dance To! Explore the local indie music birthed in the 1980s, **FREE** on this third Thursday. 2-8 p.m. Washington State History Museum, Tacoma. washingtonhistory.org

24

Norpoint Turkey Trot. Move your body before stuffing your belly; try the 5K run, 2-mile run/walk or kids' dash. 9 a.m. \$15-\$35. Center at Norpoint, Tacoma. 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. Seattle. seattleturkeytrot.org

FRIDAY

4

Time to Hibernate. Cozy up for stories and crafts about critters who nap through the winter. 11 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Ages 3 and up with adult. Lewis Creek Park Visitor Center, Bellevue. bellevuewa.gov

Family Bingo Night. Bring the fam and your own marker or dauber and for bingo fun with great prizes. 6:30-9 p.m. \$5; preregister. All ages. Meridian Habitat Park, Puyallup. piercecountywa.org

11

FREE Entrance to State and National Parks. Head for the hills or the lake or the ocean with a visit to one of our state's beautiful places, free today in honor of Veterans Day. nps.org, discoverpass.wa.gov

Veterans Day Free Skate. Highland Ice Arena open up its ice to all today. 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. **FREE** entry; skate rental \$4. Shoreline. highlandice.com

18

KidsQuest Visits BAM! KidsQuest Children's Museums brings hands-on art activities for little tots to stop by and play. 10 a.m.-noon. Included with admission. Ages 1-5 with caregiver. Bellevue Arts Museum. bellevuearts.org

FREE Admission Night at Imagine. Let off steam on a Friday evening playing **FREE** in the museum. 5:30-9 p.m. Ages 1-12 with families. Imagine Children's Museum, Everett. imaginecm.org

25

KidsQuest Gingerbread House Workshop. Sign up early for this fancy holiday outing to decorate a gingerbread house. Friday-Saturday, Nov. 25-26. \$50/family; preregister. Hyatt Regency Bellevue. kidsquestmuseum.org

Zoolights. Revel in the dazzling light creations — a hammerhead shark, a polar bear family and more. Daily, Nov. 25-Jan. 1, 5-9 p.m. (closed Dec. 24). \$8.50-\$10; ages 2 and under free. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. pdza.org/zoolights

SATURDAY

5

Veterans Day Parade. Honor our country's veterans and active-duty military at this downtown Auburn parade, one of the largest in the U.S. 11 a.m. **FREE**. Auburn. auburnwa.gov

Celebrating Diwali. Discover the Indian festival of lights and create a candle holder, watch dance and fashion shows and more. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. **FREE**; RSVP. Seattle Asian Art Museum. seattleartmuseum.org

12

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. Friday-Sunday, Nov. 11-13. Tacoma, Eatonville. pdza.org, nwtrek.org

Bye Bye Birdie. As a rock-and-roll star prepares to join the army, a publicity stunt sets off a series of unintended events. Friday-Sunday, Nov. 11-20. \$8-\$15. Ages 5 and older. Bellevue Youth Theatre-Crossroads. bellevuewa.gov

19

Edible City: A Delicious Journey. New exhibit unpacks how we find, grow, shop for, prepare and eat our local foods; opening day features nibbles, crafts and more. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Included with admission. MOHAI, Seattle. mohai.org

The Polar Express Train Ride. Bundle up for a charming trip to the North Pole and a visit with Santa. Nov. 20-Dec. 30. \$24-\$59; ages 1 and under free. Mt. Rainier Railroad and Logging Museum, Elbe. mtrainierrailroad.com

26

The Elves and the Toymaker. Can two clever elves save the day when a mishap strikes the holiday preparations? 6:30 p.m. \$10. Auburn Avenue Theater. auburnwa.gov

Holiday Tree Lighting. Gather with the community for this traditional welcome of the season; buy tickets for a singalong *Sound of Music* before the lighting. 5 p.m. Ninth and Broadway, Tacoma. broadwaycenter.org

JEN AU



Celebrating Diwali, Seattle Asian Art Museum, Nov. 5

SCHUCKE/PIYABAY



Piper's Creek Salmon Celebration, Seattle, Nov. 20

MOHAI, KING COUNTY NEWS PHOTO COLLECTION



Edible City at MOHAI, Seattle, opening Nov. 19

Gotta-have gifts for 2016





Toys that tap into kids' obsessions but will hold their interest long past December

BY KATE MISSINE

Prices are approximate and will vary by retailer

Year after year, as the holiday rush ensues, we face the same conundrum: finding treasures that will satisfy our kids' current interests yet won't join the pile of castaway plastic junk at the bottom of the closet a mere few days later. **Good news:** We have done the legwork for you! Our hard-working elves scoured the stores and grilled the experts to bring you a collection of the most sought-after and downright awesome toys of the season — and which also promise to engage kids all year long. Whether you have artsy souls, fashion mavens, Seahawks fans or Pokémon catchers, these funky finds will thrill your kids. **Bonus:** We've focused on local toymakers and stores, green materials and toys that offer plenty of open-ended, creativity-sparking fun.

Note: These are organized by category, and then by age.

Tumbles and touchdowns

Spooner Pro Board, \$65

Is this the year your kids discovered skateboarding? This simple-looking board is a triple threat, helping newbie shredders practice technique and develop balance, coordination and core strength for skateboarding, surfing and snowboarding. *Ages 3–8*

Two Bros Bow & Arrow, \$24.99

This beautifully hand-painted bow and arrow set is a fantastic way to introduce kids to the classic sport of archery. A bonus is that it's made by two Portland brothers. *Ages 6–10*

Nike Seattle Seahawks Custom Youth Game Jersey, \$109.99

This personalized jersey, custom-printed with your kid's name, goes above and beyond standard 12s garb. Prepare for jumps and shrieks from your Seahawk-crazy sports fan when he or she opens this. Order at nflshop.com. *Sizes start at youth small.*

Simone Biles: Superstar of Gymnastics, \$8.20

Part of the award-winning biography series "Gymnstars," this book chronicles the incredible story of Olympic medalist Simone Biles, starting with the day she first walked into a gymnastics studio in Houston at age 5. *Ages 8–12 >>*





PHOTO COURTESY PICTURETHISCLOTHING.COM

continued from page 27

Dressing (up) to impress

Picture This Clothing, from \$49

Over winter break one year, Jaimee Newberry sewed a dress for her daughter based on a drawing the girl had done. "I'm wearing my imagination!" Zia proclaimed. Newberry turned the idea into a business that turns children's artwork into beautiful custom-made dresses. Get started at picturethisclothing.com. *Ages 4 and older*

Faber and Castell Creativity for Kids Special Occasion Fashions Playset, \$32.95

Aspiring couturiers will adore honing their skills with this dressmaking tool kit, which includes everything from a sketchbook to sewing essentials, fabric and even a vintage-style dress form. *Ages 8 and older*

Uniqlo Artist Series Graphic T-shirt, \$14.90

Girls don't have dibs on cool fashion: Stylin' dudes will appreciate these funky tees from Japanese retailer Uniqlo, a socially responsible company that emblazons T-shirts with hip graphics by up-and-coming artists (as well as franchises kids love such as Lego and Marvel). *All ages*



Arts, crafts and maker mania

Honesty Handmade Beeswax Crayons, \$22.99

Go beyond Crayola for your little artists. The perfect first tool, these chubby, honey-scented crayons are easy for small hands to grasp and are made of natural, safe-to-gnaw beeswax. *Ages 12 months and older*

Pikachu Press Fold Your Own Pokémon Origami, \$10

Looking to drag your Pikachu hunter away from the phone? This origami set is a creative, screen-free way to indulge the Pokémon obsession while learning about the traditional Japanese art form and encouraging development of fine motor skills. *Ages 6 and older*

Minecraft Stop-motion Animation Studio, \$24.97

Making Minecraft movies — what could be cooler? This studio set taps into kids' artistic side, providing everything they need to try their hand at animation and filmmaking, creating their very own Minecraft videos. *Ages 6–12* >>





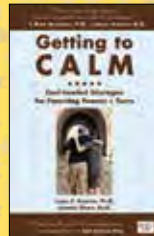
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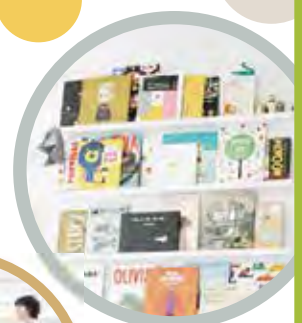
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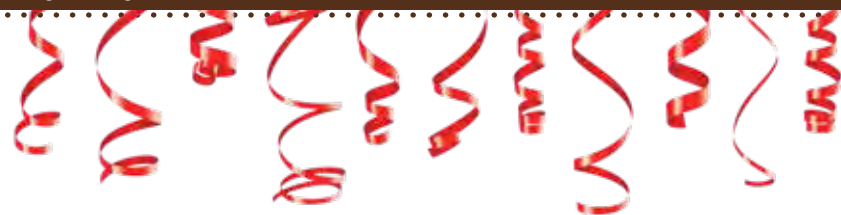
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KidsDentist.com

18833 28th Ave, Suite B, Lynnwood By the Alderwood Mall, In the Shane Company Plaza

gift guide



continued from page 28

Rocking, rolling and grooving

ALEX Toys Gigantic Step and Play Piano, \$40.99

You want them to learn about music; they just want to wiggle. This giant piano dance mat lets tiny dancers have a blast getting their moves on while learning about the instrument, with a variety of play modes. *Ages 2 and older*

Jambanz 2.0 Wearable Bluetooth Speaker, \$27.99

Tech- and music-loving kids will love these wristband speakers, a great way for kids to listen to music without headphones. Bonus: With interchangeable straps in cool colors, they double as funky accessories. *Ages 8 and older*



Hamilton: The Revolution by Lin-Manuel Miranda, \$27

If your kid has been singing tunes from the Broadway hit *Hamilton* for months, this one-of-a-kind, beautifully illustrated edition will keep them (finally) quiet. The hardback book, packed with photos and stories, reveals the captivating story of Miranda's musical from conception to stage.

Ages 9 and older

super stocking stuffers

These small gifts pack a big punch, unleashing imagination and fun for kids all year. (Organized by age, from tots to teens.)

Seahawks Champ

Mini Figure: Lego lover or football fan? No need to choose with a miniature figure of your fave Seahawks champ! Available at fireworksgallery.net.



NogginStik:

This small light-up rattle will keep babies entertained and learning (the light encourages visual tracking).



Be Amazing!

Toys Energy Stick:

Zap and shock — safely! — while learning about the electric science of currents and conduction.



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Critters and going wild

Folkmanis Puppets, \$9.99-\$29.99

The 40-year-old craft puppet maker is well known in child development circles for its beautifully made puppet critters that are surprisingly lifelike, letting tots' imaginations run wild while learning about curious new species through dramatic play. *Ages 3 and older, but younger babes can enjoy with adult supervision.*



PHOTO COURTESY KIDSBOKSANDPUPPETS.COM
SLOW LORIS HAND PUPPET BY FOLKMANIS

My Fairy Garden Magical Cottage, \$26.95

Kids get to turn their fairy obsession into a tiny, living garden with a kit that nurtures hands-on nature skills and comes complete with growing seeds, soil and whimsical woodland friends. *Ages 4 and older*

Spy Gear Video Walkie-Talkies, \$40.89

Spies in training can turn the backyard or park into ground zero for top-secret missions with a pair of high-tech walkie-talkies that open up into sneaky spy cameras. *Ages 6 and older* >>

Cubebot Micro:

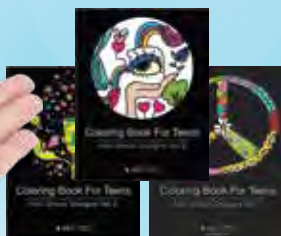
Bend, build, fold and fidget — this flexible wooden bot makes an awesome car companion or desk buddy for kiddos and grown-ups.

Cheerson Mini RC

Quadcopter: Doubting the drone on your big kid's wish list? These micro palm-size flyers are an affordable, low-risk starter version.

Anti-stress Coloring Book for Teens:

Coloring books are all the rage, and this chill teen version will help adolescents find their happy place.



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Photo by Chris Bennion

Nov 25—Dec 28



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continued from page 31

Robot training and code jammin'

Magformers My First Set, \$49.95

These colorful magnetic shapes that click into 3-D forms are a fantastic introduction to building and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities. A new version offers brighter hues and never-rejecting neodymium magnets that will appeal to the younger engineer set. *Ages 3 and older*

Yellow Scope Foundation Chemistry Kit, \$44

This slick, award-winning chemistry set is made by a Portland company and is designed to get girls interested in STEM. It includes everything young scientists need to mix up their own experiments and reactions. *Ages 8–12*

Ozobot 2.0 Bit, \$59.99

A friendly round robot serves as an ideal gateway into coding for kids. They will learn programming skills as they get the bot to move, dance, play and complete challenges. *Ages 8 and older*



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Stories, spells and scribbles

World of Eric Carle Apple Playset, \$17.50

Carle books continue to enchant young kids. Now, little bookworms (and caterpillars) can bring their favorite characters to life in hands-on imaginative play, with soft sensory pieces and a peekaboo apple that encourage tots' spatial awareness and motor skills. *Ages newborn–3*

Write Brain Wordless Book Kit, \$24.99

Have a budding author on your hands? This kit lets youngsters compose and write their story to accompany the imaginative illustrations, and then publish a real hardcover or softcover book of their very own. Available at writebrainbooks.com. *Ages 5 and older*

The Unofficial Harry Potter Cookbook, \$11.50

It's been a Harry Potter kind of year, with the release of a new book (*Harry Potter and The Cursed Child*) and spin-off movie due for release in November (*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*). This cookbook will keep your wizards- and witches-in-training busy trying magical concoctions and Hogwarts favorites, from treacle tart to cauldron cake. *Ages 9–12* ■

Kate Missine is a Sammamish-based lifestyle writer, food lover and girly girl raising two little boys.



independent toy and gift shops

Eastside

BELLEVUE

Bricks and Wheels
(also in Kent)
bricksandwheels.com

Fireworks
(seven locations)
fireworksgallery.net

KidsQuest Children's
Museum store
kidsquestmuseum.org

Lakeshore Learning
Materials
lakeshorelearning.com

Mox Boarding House
moxboardinghouse.com

Uncle's Games
(also in Redmond
and Tacoma)
unclesgames.com

Wee Tots
shopweetots.com

KIRKLAND

Simplicity ABC
simplicityabc.com

ISSAQUAH

White Horse Toys
whitehorsetoys.com

MERCER ISLAND

Island Books
mercerislandbooks.com

REDMOND

Marbles, The Brain Store
(also in Seattle)
marblesthebrainstore.com

Snapdoodle Toys
(also in Kenmore)
snapdoodletoy.com

Seattle

BALLARD

Card Kingdom
cardkingdom.com

Clover Toys
clovertoy.com

Secret Garden Books
secretgardenbooks.com

COLUMBIA CITY/ CENTRAL DISTRICT

Retroactive Kids
retroactivekids.com

DOWNTOWN

Magic Mouse Toys
magicmousetoys.com

GREENWOOD

Top Ten Toys
toptentoys.com

Couth Buzzard Books
buonobuzzard.com

MADISON PARK

Red Wagon Toys
redwagonmadisonpark.com

MAGNOLIA

Nifty Toy + Gift
Facebook, "Nifty Toy Gift"

MAPLE LEAF

Math 'n' Stuff
mathnificent.com

QUEEN ANNE

Blue Highway Games
bluehighwaygames.com

UNIVERSITY VILLAGE/DISTRICT

Kid's Club
shopkidsclub.com

University Book Store
(five locations)
bookstore.washington.edu

Village Maternity
villagematernity.com

WALLINGFORD

Alphabet Soup
Facebook, "Alphabet Soup
Children's Books"

Archie McPhee
mcphee.com

Bootyland
bootylandkids.com

WEST SEATTLE

Curious Kidstuff
curiouskidstuff.com

Max & Quinn's
Atomic Boys
atomicboysseattle.com

Meeples Games
meeplesgames.com

North Sound

BOTHELL

Toys That Teach
toysthatteachbothell.com

Zulu's Board Game Café
zulusgames.com

EDMONDS

Teri's Toybox
Facebook, "Teri's Toy Box"

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

Calico Cat Toy Shoppe
calicocattoys.com

South of Seattle

OLYMPIA

Captain Little
captainlittle.com

RENTON

Learning Express Toys
learningexpress.com

Retro Game & Toy Exchange
retrogameandtoyexchange.com

TACOMA

ChildTrek
childtrek.com

Learning Sprout Toys
Facebook, "Learning Sprout"

Teaching Toys and Books
teachingtoysandbooks.com

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Gender blind

Removing the 'pink and blue' stereotype from the toy aisle

By Rebecca Hill



When her brother wanted a Hasbro Easy-Bake Oven for Christmas but it only came in traditional “girl” colors of pink or purple, 13-year-old McKenna Pope felt she had to do something. So she went to Change.org, a website that allows people to create petitions, and petitioned the CEO at Hasbro to make the iconic toy more accessible to boys. After more than 45,000 signatures, they took notice. Now, thanks to Pope, Easy-Bake Ovens come in black and silver, too.

Of course, Easy-Bake isn't the only toy clearly marketed to just one gender. “Pink for girls! Blue for boys!” scream toy aisles everywhere. Often, toy packaging emphasizes beauty and appearance for girls, heroics and physical prowess for boys.

Recently, some stores have sought to change this. Chains like Target have been applauded for bucking the norm and not “genderizing” their toy departments. But while this may seem like a breakthrough — and remains something to celebrate — it's not really new. Toys placement has always been a mixed bag.

Toys through time

In 2013, sociologist Elizabeth Sweet, Ph.D., reviewed toy advertisements in the Sears-Roebuck catalog throughout the 20th century. She found that from the 1920s through the 1960s, genderizing toys followed cultural distinctions. Girls' toys mirrored how society saw women as domestic and nurturing while toys for boys emphasized preparation for working in an industrial economy.

That started changing in the 1970s as wider societal events like more women in the workplace influenced cultural norms. In response, toys started to appear more gender-neutral.

“In the wake of those demographic shifts and at the height of feminism's second wave, playing upon gender stereotypes to sell toys had become a risky strategy,” explains Sweet in a 2014 *Atlantic Monthly* article.

But by the 1980s, that neutrality shifted once again with changing views regarding feminism and books such as John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, which argued women have “some innate preference” toward certain roles. This wasn't a new narrative, says Sweet, just a rebranding of long-held stereotypes.



ScienceTechnologyRoboticsEngineeringArtsMath

“The reformulated story does not fundamentally challenge gender stereotypes; it merely repackages them to make them more palatable in a ‘post-feminist’ era,” Sweet writes of attitudes of the time. “Girls can be anything — as long as it's passive and beauty-focused.”

By the 1990s, these distinctions only grew wider, a trend that has continued into the 2000s. These days, as Sweet wrote in a 2012 article for *The New York Times*, “finding a toy that is not marketed either explicitly or subtly (through use of color, for example) by gender has become increasingly difficult.”

Nature vs. nurture

But why segregate toys by gender in the first place? Because, Sweet says, companies found segmenting the market sells more toys. It also plays upon what many parents “feel” about their sons and daughters: They innately like different toys. Girls tend to reach for nurturing toys, and boys like “rough and tumble” toys, right? Well, maybe not.

Gender distinctions occur throughout a person's life, says Erica Weisgram, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. Humans create gender stereotypes because sorting and labeling things

Editor's note: Science, technology, robotics, engineering, art and math: In our schools and communities, there is more demand than ever for STREAM. Yet only about a third of eighth-graders score “proficient” in math and science. In this ongoing series, sponsored this month by **Top Ten Toys**, we'll explore how schools and organizations are approaching STREAM in new, game-changing ways.



Gender blind

continued from page 35

into neat categories helps hectic lives go more smoothly, even if the labels are biased.

From infancy, children are natural categorizers, says Weisgram. “They take in information from the environment and try to put it into categories to simplify their thinking about the world,” she says. Part of that information is society’s emphasis on gender. “Children begin to categorize themselves and others according to gender,” she explains. “[They begin] seeking out information about the things, such as toys and clothing, [that are] associated with their own group.” In other words, your daughter may not naturally like pink; she may like pink because she thinks that’s what girls are supposed to like.

Kids are basically the same until they are exposed to society’s stereotypes, adds Christia Spears Brown, Ph.D., the author of *Parenting Beyond Pink and Blue: How to Raise Your Kids Free of Gender Stereotypes*. We’ve become really obsessed with gender and, she says, “the entrenchment makes it hard to change.”

Adults, she says, “latch onto gender and use it with kids.” “We color code everything so kids think that it must be important so they start to look for these differences, believing that it is important because everyone talks about it,” Spears Brown says. Kids don’t start out as different, she adds, but get so over time.

Only recently have scientists started looking to the human brain for the origins of such actions, and some say biology may also influence children’s personal play preferences.

“Much of this is set before birth,” says Dr. David C. Geary of the University of Missouri Department

of Psychological Sciences in an email interview. “These play preferences are influenced by prenatal and early postnatal exposure to sex hormones so most kids play with what’s available to them.”

As evidence, Geary points to the play of children raised in homes where parents avoid gender stereotypes. It doesn’t differ much from that of children raised in more traditional homes. As such, “I doubt that gender neutral toys will strongly influence children’s play preferences,” he says.

Clearly divisions exist in the research, but that’s not of much help to parents in the thick of raising their children. “Parents are frustrated because, in reality, our kids are really just individuals with their own unique strengths, characteristics and things that they enjoy and don’t enjoy,” Spears Brown says. “Parents are forced to figure out what their kids need while surrounded by all these stereotypes in pink and blue. You are almost forced to make a political statement when you are in the toy aisle when all you want to do is buy your kid a toy.”

What kids think

In her 2014 study “Pink Gives Girls Permission,” Weisgram of the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point found girls don’t show a preference for pink until age 2½. Boys start avoiding pink at about the same age in what Weisgram calls the “hot potato effect.”

They’re reluctant to cross over

and play with girls’ toys regardless of the color. If it was a girl toy and the boy knew or thought that it was a girl toy, he wouldn’t play with it, says Weisgram. The same was true for girls; they’d avoid an attractive toy if they believed it was for boys. One way kids could tell: the colors associated with the toy.

“Pink is a signal that a toy is ‘for girls’ and ‘not for boys,’” Weisgram says. “[It’s] an implicit label that is put on toys.”

That’s what makes those pink, purples and pastels — traditional “girl” colors — you’re seeing on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math)-related toys like Legos — traditional “boy” toys — such a big deal.

It’s also leading to toys that use gender stereotypes to introduce a new way of play. Take toy company Roominate (roominatetoy.com); the company sells building sets that encourage kids to create their own toys or, as Roominate co-inventor Alice Brooks explains, Roominate combines “the more traditionally ‘girl’ play patterns of storytelling, crafting, doll play and design with engineering, circuits, and construction.” The toy maker seeks to reflect that in its color palette of teal, purple, pink and other pastels.

As with Roominate products, toys created by KiwiCrate (kiwicrate.com) focus on science, engineering, technology, arts and math (STEAM) and feature more gender-neutral colors



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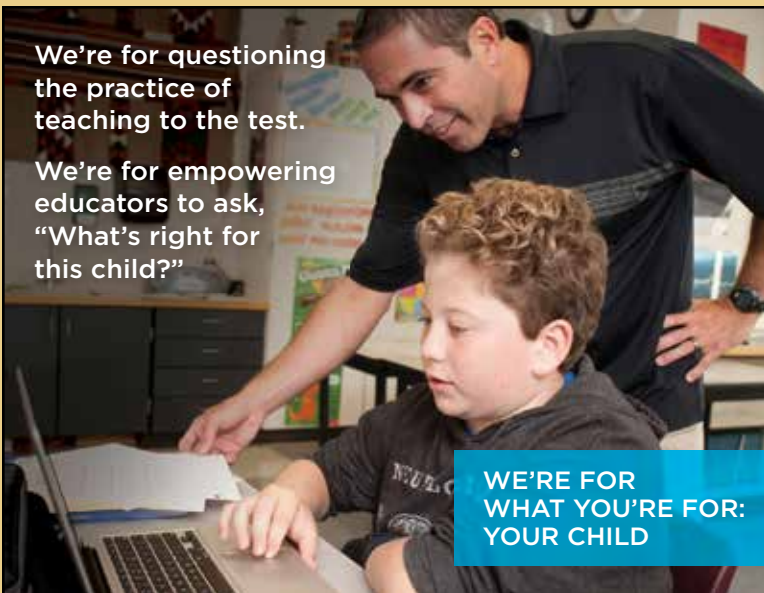
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Gender blind

continued from page 36

including green, orange and gold. With blueprints and building materials, KiwiCrate sets are project-oriented; among other options, you can build a hydraulic claw or a trebuchet.

The toys are “very intentionally designed for tinkering,” says CEO Sandra Oh Lin, who founded KiwiCrate because she wanted to give her sons and daughter the same opportunities “to explore, discover and experiment without barriers or limits.”

But does it work? Is it really possible to take the gender out of toys and by doing so, can we get more girls interested in science, math, technology, engineering and robotics? It’s a question Allison Master, Ph.D., often finds herself asking.

A research scientist at the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences at the University of Washington, Master wonders if girls’ documented hesitation around stereotypical boy activities like math and science is actually “their choice, or is it because they’ve been given so many messages that STEM is not for them?”

It could take decades to get a clear answer, Master says. In the meantime, “We need to introduce girls to STEM from an early age in a way that makes them feel like they belong to STEM. Otherwise, we’ll never know which girls might have discovered a passion for STEM.”

Early signs are promising, however. In one group of 6-year-olds Master worked with, boys reported being more interested and confident

in STEM than girls, but when given the same activity — playing with an animal robot programmable by smartphone — the girls became just as confident and interested as the boys. In other words, the toy helped girls get more interested in STEM.

What you can do

Parents and teachers should encourage children to ask questions about the messages they receive from society at large.

Adults can also

lead by example. In the classroom, for example, teachers can create gender-neutral environments by using diverse materials,

toys and books, Weisgram says, and they can celebrate all scientists, regardless of gender.

At home, parents can talk to their children early, as young as age 2, about stereotypes, including those related to gender, says Spears Brown. Perhaps point out the differences while shopping together. Such actions draw attention to stereotypes and help kids understand them.

“Even though you can’t censor everything, if your kids are young enough to learn the stereotype, they are old enough to recognize that it is a stereotype,” Spears Brown says. “You want your voice in their ear rather than society’s voice in their ear.” ■

Rebecca Hill is a freelance writer who writes about education, literacy, libraries, parenting/family and science. She has been published in a variety of national and online publications.



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Is your child screenwise?

Raising digital natives with Devorah Heitner

By Nancy Schatz Alton

I'm unable to figure out our TV and yet, here I am, raising two digital natives. But instead of proclaiming myself a Luddite, I read *Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World* by Devorah Heitner. A former media studies professor at DePaul University and Lake Forest College, Heitner founded the website Raising Digital Natives (raisingdigitalnatives.com) in 2012. She's been talking with kids, parents and schools about how to grow a culture of positive digital citizenship ever since.

I found it comforting to read an entire book on this subject, as opposed to online articles. I underlined words like "slacktivism" and dog-eared crucial pages. I learned parents fall into one of three main groups when it comes to leading their children through the digital landscape. The first are **limiters**, who use a restrictive screen time approach without meaningful interaction. The second, **enablers**, take on a laissez-faire mindset, with kids left to their own devices (literally). The third, and the one Heitner recommends: **mentors**, who engage with their children and technology, from playing Minecraft alongside them to discussing plagiarism by looking through QuestionCopyright.org together.

Inspired and trying to be a mentor, I asked my teenager why she's not on Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook. I learned she thinks social media is one way to become better acquainted with new friends, but right now, she prefers talking in person or by text. Insisting on those answers taught me something about my teen that I've wondered about for years.

Wanting to learn more about becoming a digital mentor, I spoke with Heitner. Here's what she had to say.

There are so many great tips in your book, but boil it down for me: What's a simple, smart way for parents to make changes when it comes to their children and technology?

Pick one area of focus that is stressing you out or one thing you'd like to change about your family's



media usage. For example, I ask my son what's one media habit he'd like me to change, I pick one for him and we work on them for a few weeks.

Why is it important for parents to help their children navigate the digital landscape?

Everyone wants someone else to mentor their children, but nobody is going to care about your kids as much as you. Kids have buy-in if parents co-create solutions with them. ... If you tell them every solution, they won't learn about self and emotional regulation.

We also should talk openly about our mistakes. I told my son about a conflict that occurred over email, how I called my friend to apologize and I'm working to repair this relationship now. This example shows him why it's good to walk away from your phone [when you're] upset. I've told my son that even raised voices by phone are better than a bad email.

In *Screenwise*, I loved reading about the pretend empathy app a group of your students created. Tell our readers about this.

I often have the kids in my workshops design apps to solve everyday stresses and challenges of living in a digital world. This group of kids

designed a pretend app called Sparkle Chat (raisingdigitalnatives.com/stop-texting-enjoy-life) that asks the sender, 'Are you really sure you want to send that text?'

This app they created made me realize that empathy is the app [and] that we all need to remember another human is on the other end of that text or email or app. When kids don't hear back from a text immediately, sometimes they fire off many texts and become distraught. They're forgetting that person might be doing homework or eating dinner.

Parents are responsible for teaching kids we live in a tricky world. Sometimes I send texts I wish I could take back. We're creating problems if we're super reactive to someone who's made a mistake. Let's teach them to move on after explanations and apologies have been issued.

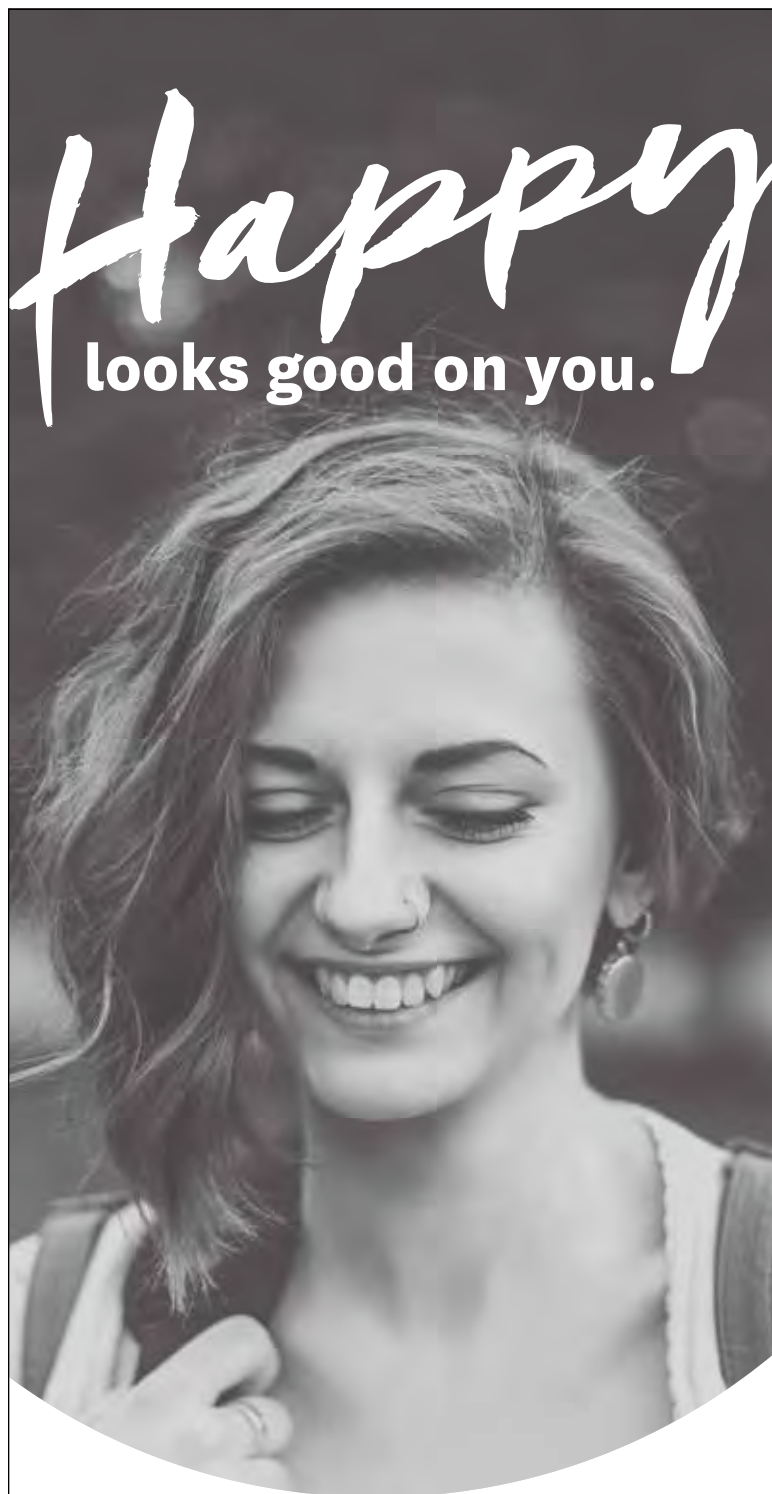
Should parents be freaking out when their kids, who are typically tweens, add social media to their lives?

Some freaking out is merited. Age 12 is vulnerable and hard. Often kids at this age judge themselves harshly and think they are being judged by everyone, [and] here's this additional place to have hurt feelings about and mess up in. We don't want our tweens to crowdsource their identities from



As part of ParentMap's 2015–2016 "Making It Work" theme, this profile is one in a series on how Seattle-area parents creatively balance work, home and family life.





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Screenwise

continued from page 41

what the social media crowd likes and doesn't like, or quantify their popularity with their numbers of likes [as kids may feel,] 'If I receive less than 200 likes, I'm a loser!' but who knows 200 people? It's our job [as parents] to help our kids have a sense of humor about social media. Make sure kids know turning down a follow request or not following back isn't rude. Help them create criteria and boundaries for being connected.

How does mentoring change as your kids get older?

Mentoring your older child is about making sure they're living a balanced life. Are they playing an instrument, on a team, hanging out with friends, attending a church or synagogue, riding their bike for fun? If they are doing many

different things beyond living on their device, parents don't need to worry so much about limiting device time. But if your daughter quits her volleyball team and now she's spending a huge portion of her waking hours on Instagram, limit her time!

We're always setting an example for our kids, too. When my own device usage gets out of hand, I apologize to my son and decide how to be more present and unplugged. If I don't want my son to be on his phone during dinner, I better not show up for a meal with my smartphone. ■

Nancy Schatz Alton is the coauthor of two holistic health care guides, The Healthy Back Book and The Healthy Knees Book. Find her blog at Within the Words.

top online picks for parents

Many of the dog-eared pages in my copy of new book *Screenwise* link to items author Deborah Heitner recommends checking out. Here are some of her favorite online resources for parents.

"Status Update" on This American Life (thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/573/status-update): Three young women in ninth grade break down the high school social scene and Instagram etiquette for host Ira Glass.

Scarleteen (scarleteen.com): Want your kids to find honest and positive info about sex? Share Scarleteen's website with them.

Heitner's "How Screenwise Are You?" quiz (raisingdigitalnatives.com/how-screenwise-are-you): This could be a great conversation starter with other parents in your community.

Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org/reviews): See reviews on video games, movies and apps written by both adults and kids.

"Personal Technology and the Autistic Child: What One Family Has Learned" (wsj.com/articles/personal-technology-and-the-autistic-child-what-one-family-has-learned-1466993100): This *Wall Street Journal* article presents writer Alexandra Samuel's personal story along with plenty of advice for all parents.

Heitner's Minecraft Resource Roundup (raisingdigitalnatives.com/minecraft-resource-roundup-for-parents): A must if you're desperate to keep up with your little Minecrafter.



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1 Keep it short. Everyone's busy, including teachers. Even when the school day is done, there's lesson planning, paperwork and grading to be done. So keep your conversation quick and, if possible, schedule an appointment. It's much more effective than a lingering "hallway conference." Even better: Send an email.

2 Keep it sweet. This is your kid we're talking about, I know. And so does your child's teacher. But until you know the teacher better, there's no harm in being a little overly positive in all of your interactions. Pro tip: Chocolate never hurts.

3 Keep it going. You are your child's educational coordinator, coach and comfort. You care about her education as no one else will. If you're not getting the answers you need from your student's teacher, consider whom else you should speak with, keeping in mind the earlier two tips for all your interactions.

Read more (including a template for sending that email!) at
parentmap.com/teacher-talk.

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