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FEBRUARY 2025

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello February!

As you are no doubt becoming laser-focused on planning your kids' summer camps, Washington Parent has our annual Camps & Summer Programs Guide plus two articles in this issue to help. The ACA (American Camping Association) has a guide to how to afford camp, and we also remind you the many reasons your teen should go to summer camp, both for the fun and the many growth opportunities it provides.

Back to the present, are you looking for fun things to do for your kids – or with your kids – this winter and the entire year? We take a look at indoor climbing: the different types, how to gauge if and when your child is ready and a few of the many local gyms and rec centers you can head to for this challenging and exciting individual or family activity.

February is Black History Month, and we asked expert local oral historian Kelly Elaine Navies to share oral history projects she's worked on that shine a light on D.C. history and inspiring social justice activists you and your kids might not be familiar with. For your budding scientists, we've also got a list of Black scientific innovators, with hands-on projects your kids can do with their inspiration.

Valentine's Day is a sweet observance but can be a challenging one for introverted kids, so in this issue learn about respecting their challenges and how you can help them celebrate. There's also an article on 10 ideas for a creative party for your Valen-tween that will make their day! And of course we haven't forgotten you, the parents, so we've got a list of romantic movies couples will enjoy.

A less sweet but very important observance in February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. No parent wants to think their tween or teen could be a victim of dating abuse, but you should still read the article in this issue about the warning signs, what to know and how to talk to your child about it.

We have an article from a mom in the thick of a health crisis herself on helping your family navigate when a parent is seriously ill and building resilience for these and other crises. And if you're worried about your child's coping when you or your partner are traveling for work, a mom writer with a "road-warrior" husband gives her tips for managing your kiddo's separation anxiety.

Washington Parent is proud to share another valuable, thoughtful offering from our longtime partner PEP (Parent Encouragement Program). This month's Parenting Insights With PEP department is the first in a valuable two-part series on how to talk with your child about their neurodiversity diagnosis.

Finally, we've got two articles of interest to pregnant and new moms, one on trending ideas for stylish baby showers, and one on the reasons for and risks of cesarean sections.

What's your plan for staying warm, staying informed and staying inspired in February? Stay inside and read this month's engaging Washington Parent magazine!

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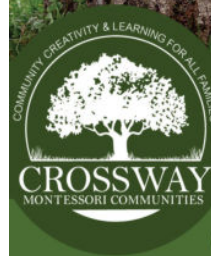
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FRIENDSHIP: AN IMPORTANT BOND

Stories about friends abound in children's literature – largely because it is such an important relationship. Classic buddies like Frog and Toad, Ivy and Bean and Jesse and Leslie from *A Bridge to Terabithia* attend to the joys and challenges of making and keeping friends. Such books explore how being a friend means sharing adventure, respecting differences, providing support and navigating loss.

Tots-age 7

Just What to Do

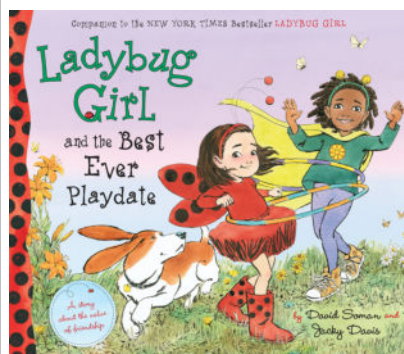
By Kyle Lukoff
Illustrated by Hala Tahboub
Dial, 2024, \$18.99

What might you do if a friend is sad or grieving? To avoid awkwardness, many of us tend to say and do nothing. But young Justin models a different approach. Each time someone suffers a loss – of a favorite plant, goldfish and so on – Justin offers a homemade card or joke or hug, only to be told by the recipient that they prefer another way of being cheered. Justin listens and complies. But when his best friend's beloved grandmother dies, he "wanted to do the just-right thing." He gently asks his friend to tell him how he might help and together they figure it out. A wordless spread shows comforting activities, including holding hands, picking flowers and quietly swinging on swings. Empathy shines from every page of this tender, lovely book.



Ladybug Girl and the Best Ever Playdate

By Jacky Davis
Illustrated by David Soman
Dial, 2015, \$18.99



With 26 books in the Ladybug Girl series, the titular character is clearly popular with young readers. In this engaging tale, she deals with a well-known aspect of contemporary childhood: the playdate. How do you treat a friend who is visiting? Or behave when

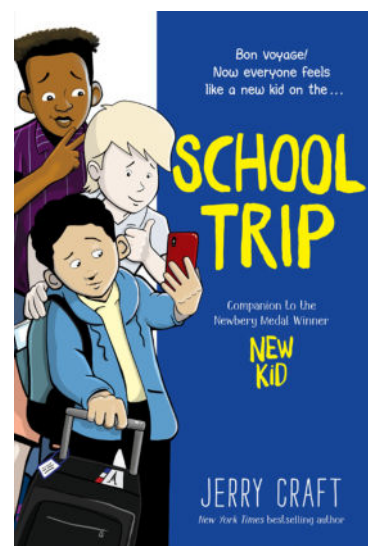
you are the guest? How do you go about sharing toys or deciding what to do? How do you handle disagreements? Like many kids, Ladybug Girl fixates on a certain toy and unwittingly ignores her friend. But when her friend's feelings are hurt, the two decide to play in ways they both enjoy. Their behavior models how to speak up rather than simply submitting or pouting and how to find mutually beneficial solutions.

Preteens

School Trip

By Jerry Craft
HarperCollins, 2023, \$14.99
pbk.

This is the most recent graphic novel in Jerry Craft's bestselling series, anchored by the Newbery-winning *New Kid*. Good friends Jordan, Drew, Liam and others from their prestigious private school prepare for a trip to Paris. As with the first two books, Craft delves into race, class and the imbalance of privilege between students. This fast-paced, vividly drawn graphic novel balances hijinks and heart for a compelling read about boy friendships.



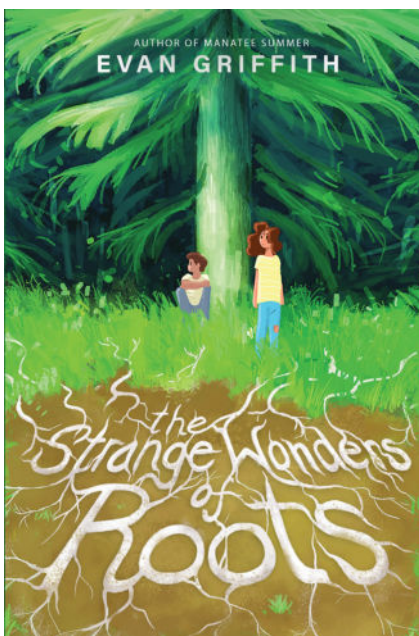
The Strange Wonders of Roots

By Evan Griffith

HarperCollins, 2024, \$19.99

After her parents' divorce and multiple moves, 12-year-old Holly, a budding forester, prefers to keep to herself. But the summer with her Uncle Vincent in a tiny Vermont town changes all that. As she works to save a local grove from destruction, Holly makes like-minded friends.

But will the plans she hatches with her uncle, lively Lionel and fierce elderly Beatrice make a difference? And what should she do when one of her new friends betrays the cause? This gently humorous, high-stakes novel keeps readers turning pages to discover what happens to the friendship and the grove.



Teens

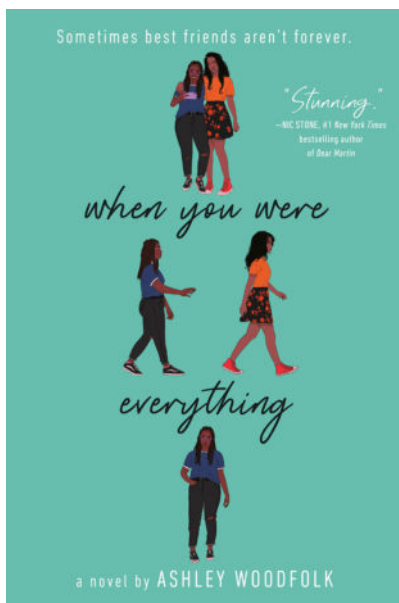
When You Were

Everything

By Ashley Woodfolk

Ember, 2020, \$11.99 pbk.

Loss is often part of friendship, whether due to a move, death, falling out or drifting apart. How does one deal with the pain? Move forward to make and trust new friends? Is closure possible? In this nuanced YA novel, 16-year-old Cleo grapples with these questions as she reflects on the complexities – and recent blow-up – of her friendship with bestie Layla. Cleo narrates across two timelines – present and past – which deepens her understanding of the relationship and her own growth.



Mary Quattlebaum lives in Washington, D.C. and is the author of 30 award-winning children's books, most recently *Queen Elizabeth II*, an early reader biography. She teaches in the graduate program in writing for children at Vermont College of Fine Arts, writes frequently for The Washington Post and is a popular school and conference speaker.



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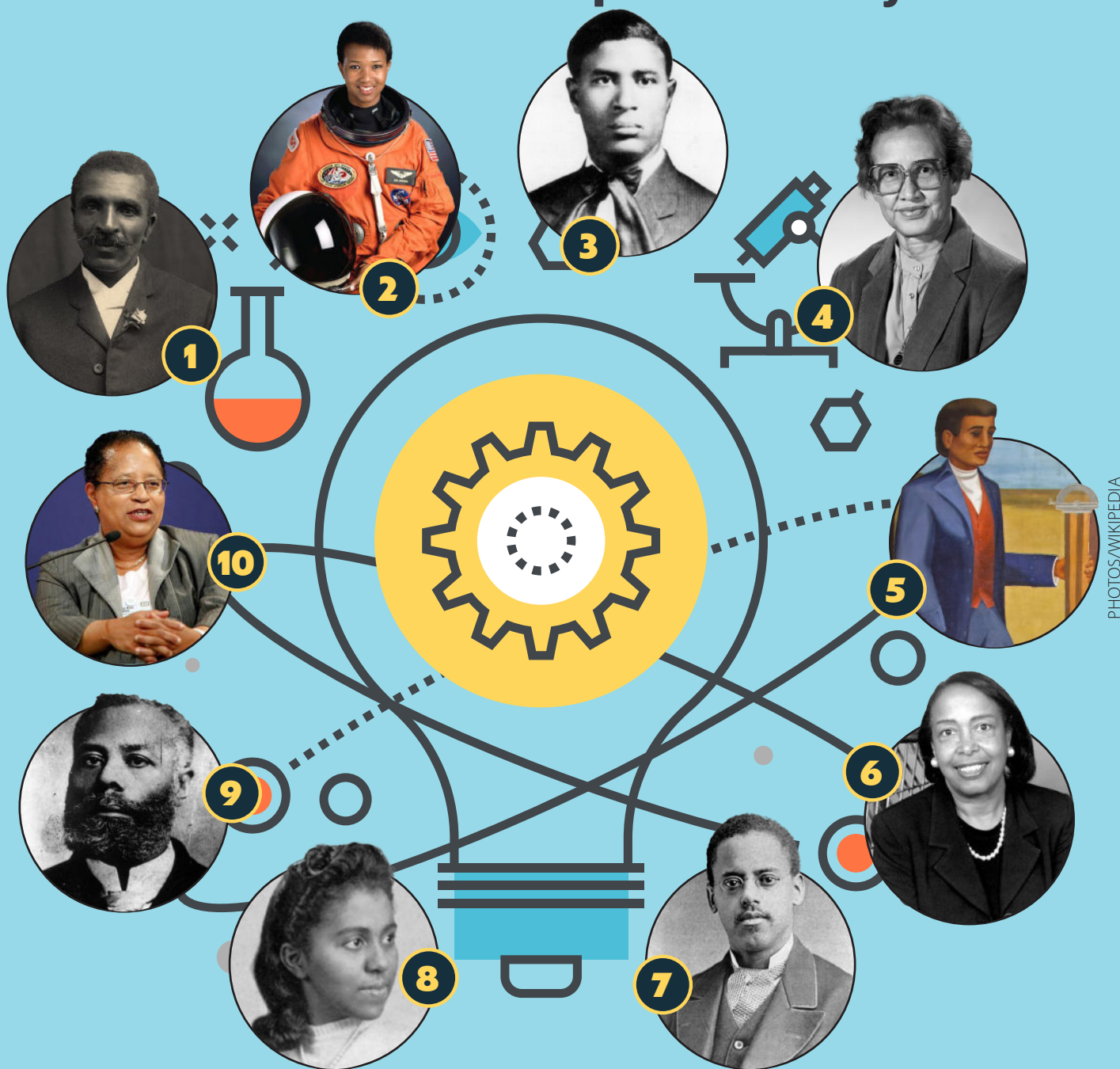
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40 YEARS WASHINGTON Parent

Science Stars:

Black Innovators Who Inspire Creativity in Kids



PHOTOS/WIKIPEDIA

By Rebecca Hastings

Throughout history, Black inventors and scientists have made groundbreaking contributions that shaped our modern world. From lifesaving inventions to advancements in space exploration, these pioneers inspire curiosity and innovation in young learners.

Here are the stories of 10 remarkable individuals with fun STEM activities to bring their achievements to life.

1. George Washington Carver

Known as the “Peanut Man,” George Washington Carver was a scientist and inventor who developed over 300 products from peanuts, including peanut oil and paper. He also worked tirelessly to promote sustainable farming practices.

Activity Idea: Try extracting oil from peanuts at home! Crush roasted peanuts, wrap them in a paper towel and press down with a heavy object. Observe how the oil seeps out.

2. Mae Jemison

Mae Jemison is a trailblazing astronaut, physician and engineer who became the first Black woman to travel to space in 1992 aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour. She also advocates for STEM education for young people.

Activity Idea: Create a rocket using a plastic bottle, baking soda and vinegar. Watch as the reaction powers your mini rocket into the sky – just like Mae Jemison’s historic journey.

3. Garrett Morgan

Garrett Morgan invented the three-position traffic signal, making roads safer for everyone. He also created a breathing device that became the prototype for modern gas masks.

Activity Idea: Design a traffic light model using colored paper, cardboard and a flashlight to understand how his invention manages traffic flow.

4. Katherine Johnson

Katherine Johnson was a mathematician whose calculations were critical to NASA’s space missions, including the Apollo 11 moon landing. Her work inspired the movie [Hidden Figures](#).

Activity Idea: Practice plotting a spacecraft’s trajectory by creating a simple math problem involving angles and distances. Use paper and pencils to calculate the path, just like Johnson did.

5. Benjamin Banneker

A self-taught mathematician and astronomer, Benjamin Banneker built the first clock made entirely in America. He also published almanacs that included information on astronomy and weather patterns.

Activity Idea: [Make a simple sundial](#) with a paper plate and a pencil. Place it outside and track the shadows to tell time, just as Banneker did with his astronomical observations.

6. Dr. Patricia Bath

Dr. Patricia Bath was an ophthalmologist and inventor who developed a laser technique for removing cataracts, restoring sight to countless patients.

Activity Idea: Explore the science of optics by creating a basic [pinhole camera](#) using a shoebox, wax paper and aluminum foil. Learn how light travels and creates images.

7. Lewis Latimer

Lewis Latimer worked with Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell to improve the design of the light bulb and the telephone. His carbon filament innovation made light bulbs last longer and be more practical for everyday use.

Activity Idea: Create a simple circuit with a battery, wires and a small bulb to understand how electricity powers light, inspired by Latimer’s work.

8. Marie Maynard Daly

Marie Maynard Daly was the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry in the United States. Her groundbreaking research explored the effects of hypertension on arteries and how diet impacts heart health.

Activity Idea: Conduct a fun kitchen chemistry experiment by testing the acidity of different foods like lemon juice, vinegar and baking soda with pH strips.

9. Elijah McCoy

Elijah McCoy invented an automatic lubricator for steam engines, ensuring trains ran more efficiently. His work was so exceptional that people supposedly asked for “the real McCoy,” which may be the origin of the famous phrase

Activity Idea: Build a model train or car and discuss how lubrication reduces friction and helps machines run smoothly. Try adding small drops of oil to gears in a toy to see how it works.

10. Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson

Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson is a physicist whose research led to advances in telecommunications technology, including innovations like touch-tone phones and fiber optics.

Activity Idea: Experiment with sound by creating a string telephone. Use two paper cups connected by a string to learn how vibrations travel, just like Dr. Jackson’s discoveries improved communication.

Inspiring the Next Generation

These inventors and scientists paved the way for future generations by breaking barriers and pushing the boundaries of innovation. By exploring their contributions through hands-on STEM activities, kids can see how creativity, perseverance and curiosity can change the world. Encourage young learners to ask questions, experiment and dream big – because the next groundbreaking discovery could come from them!

Rebecca Hastings is a former teacher who is passionate about authenticity, faith and family. Her books are available on Amazon, and she has been featured on sites such as The Washington Post and Parents. In real life, she can often be found typing words, driving her kids places or wherever there is chocolate. Connect with her at [RebeccaHastings.net](#) and on [Instagram](#).



PHOTO/ ALLISON ACOSTA

Frank Smith

Sharing D.C.'s Past Through Oral History

By Kelly Elaine Navies

I moved to Washington, D.C. 20 years ago, with my 1-year-old daughter in tow, on a quest to learn more about African American history and my own family's story through the practice of oral history and poetry. I had been to D.C. a few times, visiting relatives in the area, but it was still very new to me. Learning about the history of the nation's capital via oral history interviews has been like opening new window after new window onto this region's rich past.

Oral history is a great way to bring the generations together and introduce your children to the idea of living history. History is not just a topic we can learn about in books; it is literally walking around with us! Here are some important D.C. figures you and your kids can learn about through their oral histories.

When I worked as a special collections librarian in the Washingtoniana and Black Studies division (now People's Archive) of the MLK Memorial Library, I implemented the U Street Oral History Project and the 50th anniversary March on Washington oral history project. They introduced me to individuals in this area who were involved in the social justice movements of the 1960s and 70s. For the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, I interviewed several people who were there, including [A. Peter Bailey](#) and [Sondra Hassan](#).



Photo/Trudy Hutcherson, NMAAHC

A. Peter Bailey

to the diversity of opinions represented in the crowds that showed up that hot August day in 1963. Bailey went on to become a prolific journalist who remains a Malcolmite, committed to the struggle for human rights.

Activists, “Love Pioneers” and All That Jazz

Sondra Barrett Hassan was a Howard University student who became active in SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee): She was asked to escort Malcolm X to the march. Prior to that interview, I didn’t even realize that Malcolm X had attended the March on Washington. A third-generation native Washingtonian, Hassan is also a renown quilter. She has also been married to local jazz historian and radio personality, Rusty Hassan, since 1969. Married only a few years after the passage of Loving v. Virginia, the Supreme Court case that legalized interracial marriage in 1967, the Hassans are love pioneers, still married after 55 years. For the U Street Oral History Project, I turned to Rusty Hassan and several others with vivid memories of the storied cultural corridor known to some as, “Black Broadway.” Rusty brought the jazz scene of the 1960s to life with his memories of seeing legends like John Coltrane and Ramsey Lewis at Bohemian Caverns.



Photo/Hassan Private Collection

Sondra and Rusty Hassan

Malcom X Follower and Journalist Inspired by King’s Speech

A. Peter Bailey, a self-described “Malcolmite” (follower of Malcom X), attended the march with a bit of skepticism, but ended up being inspired by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech, especially the part where King refers to the “bad check” written to African Americans. His interview opened my eyes



Photo/Kelly Elaine Navies

Jeannine Smith Clark

Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. But Alva Marcus was a Democrat, while the more conservative Jeannine Smith Clark was a Lincoln Republican. Clark also held the distinction of being the first Black docent within the Smithsonian Institution, when she joined the National Museum of Natural History in 1968.

Sister Pioneers in Civil Rights

The U Street Oral History Project also introduced me to sisters Alva Lorena Marcus and Jeannine Smith Clark, fourth-generation Washingtonians. These dynamic women, who have since passed on, recalled attending the historic Marian Anderson concert at the Lincoln Memorial on April 9, 1939. I was intrigued by the contrast between them, both proud and outspoken women who were pioneers in the fight for

Cultural and Political Activists



Photo/Simone Bowden

Carole Mumin



Photo/Simone Bowden

Ibrahim Mumin



Photo/Simone Bowden

Joyce Ladner

Most recently, in my role as museum specialist in oral history at NMAAHC, I had the pleasure of training up-and-coming oral historians for the Social Justice Conversations Oral History Project. For this project, each talented intern was paired with a veteran social activist. They conducted conversational oral history interviews in four locations, including Washington, D.C. A. Peter Bailey, ever-enthusiastic about educating a new generation, answered the call

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to participate, but we also worked with Ibrahim and Carole Mumin, Paul Coates, Joyce Ladner and Frank Smith.

The Mumins share a lifelong commitment to grassroots political and cultural activism. [Carole Mumin](#) has written many plays addressing local and national historical themes, including *Where Eagles Fly*. [Ibrahim Mumin](#) began his activism as a teenager when he was arrested for protesting the segregated library in his community in Georgia.



Photo/Trudy Hutcherson, NMAAHC

Paul Coates

Coates, former head of the Baltimore chapter of the Black Panthers, is the [founder of Black Classics Press](#), and a passionate collector of books by and about African Americans. Joyce Ladner and Frank Smith are also veterans of SNCC, and lifelong community activists. Ladner is a prominent sociologist and author and Smith is the founding director of the [African American Civil War Museum](#), with a planned reopening this spring after major renovations.

The DMV boasts many landmarks, historical sites and museums that illustrate the significance of this area with its storied avenues, monuments and memorial parks. But equally as impressive are the many individuals walking amongst us who have been witnesses to and played integral roles in some of the most important events of the last century, folks who put their lives on the line to make our world a better, more inclusive place.

Kelly Elaine Navies is the museum specialist in oral history at the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#). She is also a published writer and poet. Navies has resided in Washington, D.C. for the past 20 years and her daughter is a proud graduate of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.



Photo/Kelly Elaine Davies

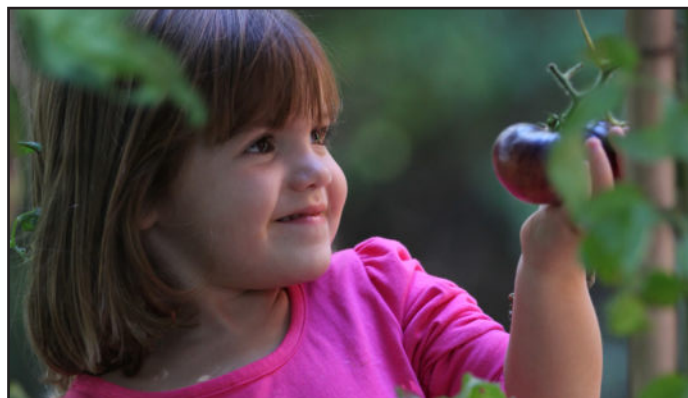
Summer interns in Social Justice Conversations Oral History Project, NMAAHC - Kiersten Simon, Elyse Martin-Smith, and James Gray.

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HOW TO AFFORD CAMP

From American Camp Association

The American Camp Association (ACA) believes the benefits of the camp experience are priceless, but we also realize that parents' pockets aren't bottomless. ACA also believes there is a camp for every child and every budget, and we want to show you the opportunities available.

ACA's [Find a Camp](#) has the most complete list of camps available. Finding out how to afford camp is easy – and there's plenty of help. There's a camp for just about every budget. Fees range from less than \$100 to more than \$1,500 per week for ACA-accredited overnight and day camps. There are a number of different options parents can turn to when trying to provide a camp experience for their child.

CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

ACA Supports Summer Camp Scholarships Indirectly

ACA does not grant scholarships directly to campers or camper families; instead ACA-accredited camps apply, through the UltraCamp Foundation, for support from the Send a Child to Camp Fund for campers in need. Through this fund, ACA provides scholarship dollars for day and overnight camps to distribute to children whose families may not otherwise be able to afford a camp experience for their children.

How Do Parents Find Camp Scholarships for Their Child?

Parents interested in receiving support for their child to go to summer camp will need to apply directly to the camp, as early

as possible. Typically, camps identify funding for camperships and make decisions about which campers they will fund prior to the camp season. Almost all camps have some sort of financial support for families in need. We recommend that parents [find the camps that suit their child's needs](#) and ask the director what sort of summer camp scholarship options are available.

Emphasis Is Placed on Children From Financially Disadvantaged Backgrounds

Every child experiences some summer learning loss – the loss of skills learned during the school year, resulting from a lack of organized learning during the summer. Children whose families are not struggling financially have more opportunity to participate in camp and other educational programs during the summer to help their minds stay sharp. ACA believes children whose families are financially disadvantaged should have the same opportunity. Send a Child to Camp scholarships help children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds to constructively learn independence and safe risk-taking, build essential mentor relationships and reap the benefits of connecting with nature.

What Kinds of Camps Can Participate in ACA's Send a Child to Camp Fund Camp Scholarship Program?

ACA accredited day and overnight camps are eligible to take part in the program. ACA does not directly select the camps to receive funding. ACA partners with the UltraCamp Foundation, which selects camps through a formal application process.



ASSISTANCE OFFERED FROM CAMPS

Camps offer various discounts – for everything from early registration, full-season, multiple enrollments from one family to late registration to fill an empty spot. For families who enroll early, some camps also offer a structured payment plan throughout the year, so camp costs are not incurred all at once. In addition, many camps offer “camperships” – partial or total scholarships and financial assistance. Parents shouldn’t assume their income doesn’t qualify. Ask your camp what payment or assistance programs they offer. Ask early.

ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Many organizations offer financial assistance for camp. A few ideas include:

- Your religious organization may have a fund that support campers.
- If the camper’s parent(s) or grandparent(s) served or are serving in the military, there may be funds available for camp.
- Other civic organizations and clubs, sororities and fraternities may have available funds.

The American Camp Association® (ACA) is a national organization serving the more than 20,000 year-round and summer camps in the U.S. that annually serve 26 million campers. ACA is committed to collaborating with those who believe in quality camp and outdoor experiences for children, youth and adults. For more information, visit ACAcampers.org or call 800-428-2267.

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Montessori Programs
AGE 2 - GRADE 8

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The advertisement features a collage of images: a child climbing a blue structure, a group of children in yellow shirts, a child with pink hair, and a child with a red hat. A paper airplane icon is also present.



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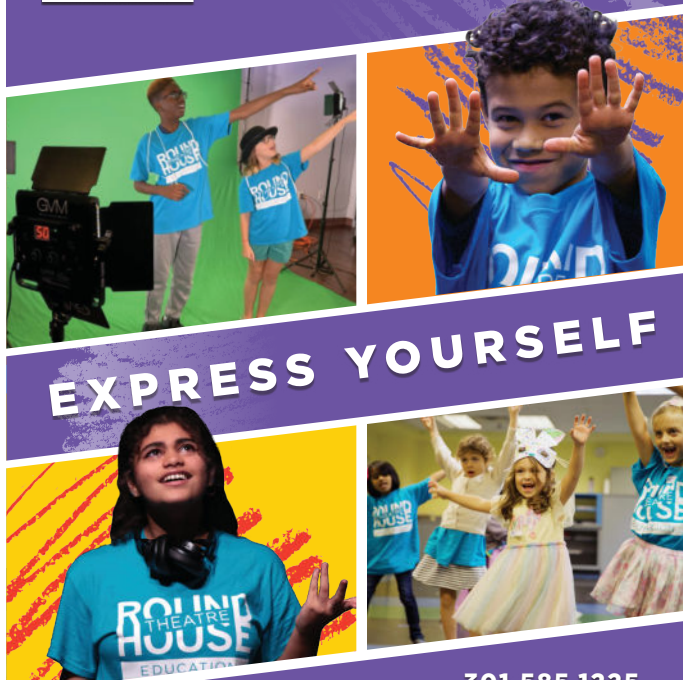
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CAMPS & SUMMER PR

Barrie Camp

Barrie Camp provides a range of traditional and new activities that make each summer unique. Through hands-on experience, collaboration and diversity of thought and culture, campers are encouraged to be themselves, try new things, explore, accept challenges and find joy in all that they do. 13500 Layhill Rd., Silver Spring, Md. 301-576-2818.

Beginner Fencing Camp

We teach people how to compete in the Olympic sport of fencing which can be applied to competing in life. We do this for our students, their families and the community. We do this through our philosophy of caring, inclusion and competence. Sterling, Va. 240-424-0749.



Camp Accomplish

We proudly serve campers with and without disabilities and chronic health conditions while promoting fun, safety, challenge and friendship for everyone. From climbing walls to nature trails to therapeutic riding activities, every child is welcome to explore, learn and grow. 9035 Ironsides Rd., Nanjemoy, Md. 301-870-3226. 202-600-4064.

Camp Arena Stage

Full-day, multi-arts summer camp, for young people ages 8-15, hosted on the beautiful grounds of Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School. Explore, discover and create with the encouragement and guidance of professional artists and educators. Campers choose their own schedules from a long list of classes in theater, dance, music, visual art, filmmaking and writing. 1524 35th St NW, Washington, D.C. 20007

Camp Griffin

Camp Griffin offers a fun-filled, unforgettable summer experience. Dive into 10 weeks of adventures including: STEAM, creative writing, water play, History, French, Spanish, art, sports and more! We provide flexible scheduling by offering early and extended-care options. Sibling and military discounts are available. Experience ~ Explore ~ Create. 3819 Gallows Rd., Annandale, Va. 703-340-7268.



Camp Shakespeare

June 23rd-August 16th. Ages 6-18. Under the guidance of theatre professionals, participants unlock Shakespeare's plays with text analysis; transform into characters through voice, movement and improvisation; learn the safety and storytelling of stage combat; and develop fundamental acting skills. Multiple sessions. 610 F St. NW, Washington, D.C. 202-547-5688.

Camp Woodend

Day, travel and overnight camps for D.C.-metro-area families. Camp Woodend is on a 40-acre nature sanctuary in Chevy Chase, Md. Our nature-themed camps provide high-quality environmental science education led by experienced outdoor educators committed to your child having the best possible experience and good old-fashioned camp fun! Chevy Chase, Md. 301-652-9188.

Congressional Camp

With over 80 years of experience, Congressional Camp prides itself on a wide variety of program offerings for campers ages 4 to 14. We are located on a beautiful, 40-acre campus in Falls Church, Virginia at Congressional School. Our diverse programs include day camp, travel camps and specialty camps. Falls Church, Va. 703-533-0931.

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PROGRAMS GUIDE



DC Fencers Club Summer

Fencing Camps

Discover the Olympic sport of fencing at DC Fencers Club summer fencing camps. Fencing camp activities include games, footwork, fencing technique and tactics, group lessons, fencing videos, competition, training with nationally ranked fencers and new friendships. 9330 Fraser Ave., Silver Spring, Md. 301-562-1990.

Gettysburg College Summer

Academic Camps

We offer three different academic camps: Civic Engagement Camp, Young Civil War Historians Camp, and Camp Psych. Summer camp participants will join our community of passionate achievers, on a campus where history and innovation meet to shape the future and enjoy a glimpse into life as a Gettysburgian. From enriching academic programming to meaningful social connections, the week-long experience is unforgettable! Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pa. 717-337-6924.

Glen Echo Park Summer Camps

Glen Echo Park offers camps for children & teens in visual arts, music, theater and nature and aquatic life. We present day camps all summer long. Most camps run 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and we have options for kids ages 5-17 (a few start at 4.) After-camp can extend your camper's day until 6 p.m. Glen Echo, Md. 301-634-2226.

Gym America -

Gymnastics & Dance Center

Gym America offers a variety of exciting programs for children and adults including preschool, recreational and competitive gymnastics instruction, High School and Adult Gymnastics, Cheerleading, Tumbling and Tramp, Ninja Fit classes, Birthday Parties, School's Out Camps, full-day and half-day Summer Camps and much more! Chantilly, Va. 540-300-7453.

Hammer & Stain Rockville

Kid's Art Camp

Join us for an unforgettable summer of creativity at Hammer & Stain Rockville! Kids ages 8-15 will craft personalized art projects, explore new techniques and enjoy a fun, hands-on experience. Limited spots available - secure your spot today! Hammer & Stain Rockville, 107B Gibbs St., Rockville, Md. 301-512-5003.

MedStar Capitals Iceplex

Summer Camps

Hockey Camps - building better hockey players one camp at a time! Learn to Skate FUN Camps - for beginners or any skater currently in our lessons. Figure Skating Camps - from the budding freestyle skater to the advanced competitive figure skater. Performance Camp - for your skater who loves the spotlight! Ice Sport Camp - learn a new ice sport each day of the week. 627 N. Glebe Rd, Suite 800, Arlington, Va. 22203

National Building Museum

Summer Camps

Rising 2nd to 5th graders can choose from two themes, each offered in a week-long camp session: "Brick City: World Architecture Brick by Brick" invites kids to explore iconic global architecture using LEGO® bricks and "Invention Lab: Build, Create, Innovate!" is a hands-on introduction to engineering through Rube Goldberg machines. 401 F St. NW, Washington D.C. 202-272-2448.



CONTINUED...

Gymnastics Summer Camps: Unleash the Gymnast Within!

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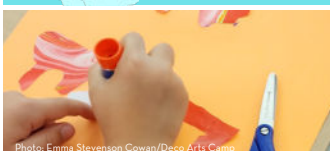
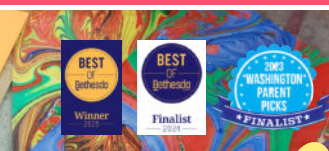


Photo: Emma Stevenson Cowan/Deco Arts Camp



REGISTER TODAY! Ages 4-17
glenechopark.org/camps



GLEN ECHO PARK
Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture

June 16 - August 22





SUMMER CAMP

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For The DISTRICT

CAMPS & SUMMER PROGRAMS

NatPhil Summer String Institute

Summer String Institute is back with two sessions from July 21st-25th and July 28th-August 1st. String students in grades 4-12 are immersed in comprehensive and engaging music experiences guided by NatPhil's world-class staff – including private lessons, chamber music, music theory, technique classes and orchestra performance, alongside enriching extramusical opportunities. *River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, Md. 301-493-9283 ext. 4209.*

Oeness-Family School Summer Programs

Discover Oeness-Family School's summer programs for ages 2nd-8th grade! Engage in hands-on Montessori learning, exciting field trips, environmental exploration and creative theater. From Little Explorers (ages 2-3) to Peace Weavers (3½-6), Earth Keepers

(Grades 1-5) and Summer Theater (Grades 3-8), there's something for every child to learn and thrive! *6701 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase, Md. 301-652-7751.*

Round House Theatre

At Round House, young artists of all ages and backgrounds can experience the joy of creating theatre and film. Our programs inspire creativity, exercise imaginations and promote artistic risk-taking in a supportive and fun environment. *Bethesda and Silver Spring, Md. 301-585-1225.*

Summer Enrichment Academy at UMBC

The Summer Enrichment Academy (SEA) at UMBC offers engaging one-week workshops for middle and high school students. Led by UMBC faculty, industry professionals and graduate students, SEA explores science, engineering, technology,

the arts and humanities, providing a stimulating learning experience. *Baltimore, Md. 410-455-8607.*

Summers at Seton

Designed for girls ages 7-18 (ages vary by camp), our dynamic lineup offers something for everyone—from sports to dance to music to entrepreneurship to STEM. Led by expert coaches, teachers and mentors, each camp is thoughtfully designed to inspire growth, build skills, and empower girls in a fun and supportive environment. *5715 Emerson Street, Bladensburg, Md. 20710, 301-864-4532.*

The Lab School of Washington: Summer 2025

The Lab School of Washington understands how important it is for young learners to maintain the skills they've acquired in order to progress in the year ahead. We've

designed a challenging summer program that develops academic readiness ... without neglecting the "fun factor." *The Lab School of Washington, 4759 Reservoir Rd. NW, Washington, D.C.*

The St. James Summer Camps

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Gettysburg COLLEGE 2025 Summer Academic Camps



Civic Engagement Camp July 7-12

The Eisenhower Institute's Civic Engagement program is designed for motivated students with a passion for civic engagement within the American political system. Students will face challenging academic questions and real-world situations.



Young Civil War Historians Conference July 13-18

The Young Civil War Historians Conference offers high school students an opportunity to become their own historians. Students will follow in the footsteps of a soldier who fought at Gettysburg through hands-on work with original archival documents. One of the highlights of the camp will be a trip to Washington featuring a visit to the National Archives to explore the official records of Civil War regiments.



Camp Psych July 13-18

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www.gettysburg.edu/summercamps

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May 4**
Session 1:
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More info at <https://nationalphilharmonic.org/SSI/>

CAMPS GUIDE



Washington Wizards Jr. Wizards Summer Camp

The Washington Wizards Jr. Wizards camps offer boys and girls ages 6 to 14 the chance to develop their basketball skills in a fun and exciting team-focused environment. These programs are designed for athletes of all skill levels. Register today! *Locations throughout the DMV.*

Woodberry Forest Summer Camps

Woodberry Forest summer camps are designed for boys to have fun, grow as young men and get to know Woodberry's incredible campus, students and faculty. Whether it's for the camaraderie, competition and skill building or to grow as a leader and adventurer, it will be the best summer of his life. *Woodberry Forest School, 898 Woodberry Forest Rd., Woodberry Forest, Va. 540-672-6025.*

YMCA Camp Conrad Weiser

Nestled in the foothills of the Poconos, this camp fosters leadership, friendship and independence through camper-centered programs. In a fun, supportive environment, campers build skills, confidence and lifelong memories. Our goal is to challenge every child while ensuring safety, growth and unforgettable experiences in our vibrant camp community. *Reinholds, Pa. 610-670-2267.*



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Boys ages 6-10

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Rising 7th-9th grade boys

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Boys ages 10-14

FOOTBALL CAMP

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Boys ages 12-16

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Boys ages 9-16

woodberry.org/camps | 540-672-6025

BarrieCamp

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Ages
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Camp Dates:
June 16 -
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Registration
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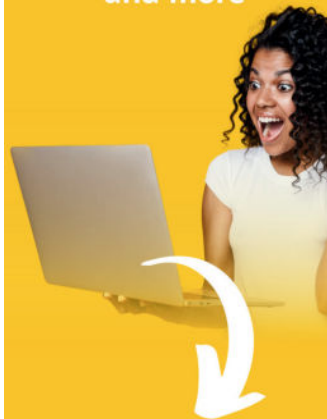


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STC

9 Reasons Your Teen Should Go to Summer Camp

By Kerrie McLoughlin

Maybe the thought hasn't crossed your mind that your teen might need to find a fun summer camp. Your teen should be babysitting, mowing lawns, working at the pool, making TikTok videos, hanging around with friends, right? Well, sure! But why not send teens off for a week or more of summer fun and learning this year for a break? Here are nine great benefits for teens attending [summer camp](#):

1. **Giving back.** Community service camps offer a great chance for your teen to make a difference and help out in the community while also learning skills that will carry them through their life. Kids get to spend their days helping others, which just feels good to everyone involved. Maybe your teen will learn how to pack food for the homeless, teach kids how to read or work on a project that will benefit the community, like cleaning up a playground or fixing equipment. They could even learn how to paint a house, care for a yard for an elderly person who is unable to do so anymore or even learn how to plan and build a house for someone who is in need.
2. **Making new friends.** It's important to continue to grow and change, and [adding new friends to one's life enriches it](#) at any age. Some teens attend the same camp or camps every summer and might find the same friends there year after year. Many are attending for the very first time and need to hone their social skills to make new friends and get to know other kids in their age range outside of a school setting. [Being in close](#) proximity for days or weeks helps kids get closer, faster.

3. **Learning new things you can't find in a textbook.** Whether your teen attends a camp to learn more about horses, adventure or a specific sport – or any other type of camp – they have an entire day, week or longer to focus on that one activity and really immerse themselves in it. Who knows? Your teen might find a new passion that they never thought of before that could be helpful in their educational or work life later down the road.
4. **Developing a hobby.** When your child is unplugged from the TV, video game player, smartphone, etc., they can really focus on developing a hobby in a creative way. It seems like these days there's a camp for pretty much any interest your kid has. There are camps for horse and other animal lovers, sports lovers of all types (think developing soccer skills, swimming, football, volleyball, baseball – anything!), Boy Scout camp (covers so many different hobbies and topics), Girl Scout camp (also covers so many great skills) ... the list goes on!
5. **Working as a team.** Your child will be meeting kids of different ages and from different backgrounds. Learning how to get along and work as a team is a huge life skill that will be reinforced at camp. Some camps even have kids do team-building and trust activities to help them get to know each other.
6. **Staying active.** Forget sitting around doing "screen time" all day long during the summer with a bag of Takis or Funyuns close by! When a teen attends summer camp, they often forget all about those things and focus on having fun with their friends going on hikes, paddle boating, swimming and more,



BIGSTOCK/CARLESITURBE

depending on the camp they choose. Bonus points for activity if your child chooses a camp targeted to a [sport](#) they're passionate about.

7. **Standing on their own.** Let's face it: As our kids get older, they start to grow away from us. They are simply preparing to head out on their own, and they are also preparing you for that by perhaps being a little distant. They are stuck in between childhood and adulthood, and it's a confusing time. Going away to camp for even a short period of time helps teach independence. There is a daily structure at camp that's already in place that teens need to follow. Parents aren't the ones doing the nagging, so teens don't tune it out and they learn to respect and learn from other adults.
8. **Appreciating everything.** Away from screens (yes, I keep focusing on this one), it's easier to focus on nature, learning, forming relationships and more. Being away from parents, kids will come home with a new appreciation for what it takes to be in a family and what it takes to help out in the running of the household. Your teen will probably also appreciate funny things, like a full pantry that's open all day, a comfy bed and privacy!
9. **Deepening their faith.** If your teen enjoys activities with youth groups at church, synagogue or mosque, an organized religious camp might just be the ticket. The day might begin with a service, followed by breakfast, a hike and then some time spent in the cabin with friends memorizing scriptures for a competition at the end of the week. Later there could be singing songs around a bonfire while roasting s'mores. The point is that making connections based on their faith can create strong bonds.

Teen summer camp has so many benefits that cover all the bases, from physical, social, mental and spiritual. As for the rest of the summer? Well, your teen can spend plenty of time doing those odd jobs to help pay for camp next year!

Kerrie McLoughlin is the seasoned mom of five who blogs at TheKerrieShow.com.

REGISTRATION FOR 2025 IS NOW OPEN!



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Indoor Climbing for Kids: “A Puzzle You Do With Your Body”

By Liz Bolton

“Are we going to be late?” my 5-year-old son asks as I step into the driver’s seat. I can hear my 10-year-old daughter drumming fingertips against her knees. They both count down the days to Wednesday, when they take their weekly rock climbing class together, and they don’t want to miss a minute.

“Nope,” I say. “We’re going to be right on time.”

It Runs in the Family

In my 20s, I loved the full-body workout of climbing and the exhilaration of being dozens of feet above the ground, my hands and feet pressing into the rock as though magnetized. Not long ago, I asked my children if they’d like to try indoor climbing themselves, and from day one they were hooked.

Intrinsic Motivation

Solo sports, particularly those that aren’t inherently competitive, don’t always get the attention they deserve. There’s nothing wrong with playing on a team, and some children thrive in a competitive environment. But childhood should also present opportunities to learn about intrinsic motivation – that internal drive that pushes us to push ourselves. Climbing does just that.

Bouldering vs. Roped Climbing

There are two main styles of indoor climbing available to children: bouldering and roped climbing. Bouldering can be especially fun for tree-climbing young kids who may appreciate both the freedom and the lower heights. [Bouldering Project](#) in Eckington in D.C. is a bouldering-only gym that’s worth a try. Good news: it’s still a [great workout](#), so your kids will sleep well.

Roped climbing allows students to move higher up the wall, their ascent and descent safely controlled by a certified belayer, so a slip off the wall means floating rather than falling. Either way, the mantra “[climbing is inherently dangerous](#)” is worth reminding your kids, so they don’t become complacent on the wall.

Courage

Whether roped or not, climbing will require bravery. It’s no wonder that [Sportrock](#) – with locations in Gaithersburg, Alexandria and Sterling – highlights courage first in their list of [reasons all kids should climb](#). Some children may need a warming-up period, but ultimately it can provide a major boost in self-confidence when they reach the top of their first route.

Fun with Friends

Climbing offers the opportunity to be social. In my kids’ class, the students clap for each other when they reach the top of a route and offer one another tips, which allows them to consider other people’s ideas about how to solve a problem. The result feels, perhaps surprisingly, like teamwork.

Many climbing gyms make a point of offering youth classes and teams. [Vertical Rock Climbing and Fitness](#) features climbing teams at its Manassas location and bouldering teams at its Tysons location, so your child can train in their preferred style. [Movement](#) – with locations including Rockville and Crystal City – offers age-specific after-school programs, as well as kids’ climb time, all supervised by expert climbing instructors.

Grip Strength

After a few months of climbing lessons, my 5-year-old son went from scribbling in coloring books to drawing inside the lines, and his letter formation seemed to improve dramatically. In trying to figure out what had changed, I conjured up a mental picture of him: hands firmly gripping the molded plastic holds as he moved up



the wall. I knew climbing would be good for gross motor skills, but I underestimated the fine motor skills it would also foster.

A Level Playing Field

Professional climber Sasha DiGiulian put it best when she wrote in The New York Times, “One of the beautiful aspects of climbing is that mountains don’t have genders, and neither do the grades applied to them to measure their difficulty.” With mixed-gender kids five years apart, it’s a big deal for me to find a class they can do together. My children tackle the wall differently, but they’re both able to meet the moment to the best of their ability, without questioning whether they have the right to be there. Perhaps equally importantly, climbing is not a sport they will age out of, proof of which is the 99-year-old woman who became a social media darling when she tried indoor climbing for the first time and found it “marvelous.”

Shared Language

One last benefit of climbing, at least in our house, is that it’s become a shared sibling language. My kids chatter about the routes they’ll take the next time they’re at the gym and sit together wide-eyed as they watch professional climbers scale impressive rock faces on the Nat Geo channel.

Price

One drawback to indoor climbing can be cost, but there are workarounds. Members of the Anthony Bowen YMCA in D.C. climb free during open climb hours, with shoes and harness included. Many kids’ classes also include shoe rental, but if your gym does charge, consider buying shoes for your kids rather than paying a rental fee each time. And if you’ve got generous family members, you might ask them to support your children’s interest as a birthday or holiday gift, which experts say can strengthen relationships.

“A Puzzle You Do With Your Body”

Back at the rock gym – right on time – I watch my children pull on their own harnesses and shoes as the teachers supervise their gear check. The kids make their way to the wall, chatting lightly with their friends, but with their eyes always looking upwards. My daughter once described rock climbing as “a puzzle you do with your body,” and it’s an apt description. It’s both physical and mental, and it’s a pretty great way to spend their Wednesdays.

Liz Bolton holds an MFA in creative writing from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Her essays have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net and the Best American Science and Nature Writing anthology, and she has been published widely in the parenting space.

10 Fun Ideas for a Valen-Tween Party!

By Pam Molnar

As anyone can tell you, tween years are hard, especially on Valentine's Day. You are too old to exchange boxed paper valentines and too young for serious romantic love. The good news is, the tween years are the perfect age to have a party at home with their friends. Here are a few ideas to get you started.



What to Wear?

Pink and red of course, but parties are always more fun with a theme. Guests can dress to fit any theme you choose – Pajamas, Fantasy Floral, Groovy Gals, Pride and Joy, Swifty Love, Glitz and Glam, Beach Babes, Disney characters, Dress Like Your Crush, Barbie, Hawaiian or I Love (fill in the blank) Night.

Sugar and Snacks

Let's face it, that's what they eat. The good news is, fruit is naturally sweet and many of them are conveniently pink and red. Healthier sugar and snacks include smoothies, sorbet, red beet hummus for dipping, tomato and mozzarella kabobs, white-chocolate-covered strawberries, shrimp cocktail and ham roll-ups.

Get Cooking

If you have a smaller group, they might enjoy cooking or baking. They can create heart-shaped foods like pizza, raviolis or hand pies filled with berries. If you have a super foodie group, they might enjoy making a more traditional Valentine's Day meal like beef Wellington or roasted chicken with fingerling potatoes.

Social Media Center

Purchase a frame for Instagram and photo booth props (Etsy is a great source for this) and dedicate a spot for your guests to snap a cute photo of themselves and their friends. Other helpful items for your social media Center include a backdrop, selfie stick, tripod and light ring. Come up with a hashtag like #valentinevibes2025 and a place for the guests to share their photos like Google Photos.

Play Some Games

- **Broken Hearts** – You will need a deck of cards. Deal one card facedown to each person. The object is to get the highest card. You may choose to keep the card you have or switch it with the person to your left. However, if the person to your left (or you) has a heart card, you may not switch. The dealer may take the top card of the deck if they choose to switch. The person with the lowest card is out and you play again until one is standing.
- **Love Birds** – You will need multicolored rubber ducks for this game. Place one of each color randomly at the end of a counter or long table. Players slide rubber ducks across the counter trying to touch a duck of the same color. The game can also be played with paper hearts taped to the counter. Players slide their ducks to land on a heart. You can give them a point for every duck they land on for their turn and the player with the most points wins a small prize.
- **Heart Hop** – You will need red and pink paper hearts taped to the floor in a straight line perpendicular to each other with room for the players in between. One person is the caller, yelling "red" or "pink" to get the players to hop from one side to the other. If a player makes a mistake and jumps to the wrong side, they are out. Play until there is only one player left.
- **Candy Heart LCR** – This is a fun way to play a popular dice

game, LCR. Players will be given three candy hearts to start. Every player will roll three dice and determine if they will send their candy to the left, center or right depending on which letter comes up on the dice. Play until all candy is in the center except the one in front of the last person who is the winner. Give them a small prize.

Craft Corner

- **Wax Melts** – Wax melts are a much safer option than candle burning in tween bedrooms. Gather white candles from Dollar Tree, essential oils, food coloring and Valentine-themed silicone molds. Melt candles and pour them into a measuring cup. Add your favorite scents and colors and pour them into molds. These only take an hour or so to set. To use, place wax melts in a glass jar on top of a candle warmer and enjoy the fragrance as it melts.
- **Polymer Clay Earrings** – Purchase different colors of oven-bake polymer clay, small cookie cutters, small rolling pins, jump rings, earring backs or hooks, sand paper and pliers. Use your creativity to mix and roll out the clay. Cut out shapes and poke a hole for the jump ring. Bake in oven per directions on package. When cooled, sand off any rough edges and add jump rings and earring attachments.

Pam Molnar is a writer, mother of three and survivor of the tween years. She enjoys party planning as much as her guests enjoy the party.

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Embracing Your Introverted Child's Needs on Valentine's Day

By Jill Morgenstern

With candy, cards and often a school party, Valentine's Day can be very exciting for children. But along with the excitement some children are feeling fear and trepidation. Even in elementary school, Valentine's Day is a high-stakes holiday and can be emotionally exhausting, especially for an introverted child. There are many steps parents can take to make sure that introverted children have just as much fun as their extroverted classmates. To discover some of these steps, I interviewed school psychologist Kayla Tucker.



At School

These days, most school classes have the rule that one valentine be brought for each child. However, if your child is anxious about this part of the day, it will help to find out from the teacher if this is true at your child's school.

Tucker emphasizes that talking to your child's teacher can be incredibly helpful. "Teachers generally appreciate knowing when a child may need extra support, and this opens the door for collaboration. Parents could start the conversation by saying something like, 'My child often feels overwhelmed during larger group activities, and I want to work together to make sure they feel more comfortable on Valentine's Day.' If the teacher is open to adjusting the celebration, it's helpful for parents to have some concrete suggestions ready to go. They might suggest their child hand out valentines in smaller batches or take breaks as needed. Then, the teacher can share their own ideas, and they can collaborate to find the best solution for the child."

There may even be another overwhelmed child in the same class, in which case she might set them up with a one-on-one activity that they would both like. Alternatively, a child (or parent and child) might set up a signal to the teacher so that the child can participate in high-energy activities while still having an easy out when needed. At this age, it is also helpful for children to begin learning for themselves when they need a break from the high energy of the classroom. According to Tucker, "At this age, children are still developing basic social-emotional skills, including self-awareness, which means they're just starting to understand their own limits and how to manage them. A child might feel the need for a break if they start fidgeting, go quiet or withdraw from group activities. Teaching them how to recognize these signs is important. Once they're aware, they can use simple strategies like raising their hand to ask for a break or move to a quieter part of the room if that's been prearranged with the teacher."

At Home

Once school is over, parents can help make the day even more special by hosting a low-key Valentine's Day. Any or all of these ideas might make your child's day extra special, especially if you can do them one-on-one while a sibling spends time with the other parent:

- Write them a special card or note. Any child would love this memento, but it may mean more to a child who enjoys a quiet moment.
- Why not add exercise and go for a walk together?
- Read a Valentine-themed book together. The public library is a great place to find many of them!

If you're wondering if your day is going as planned just check in with your child. The lessons they can learn about themselves will serve them well as they develop. This is the ideal time for your child to learn more about whether they prefer quiet or noise, for example, or one-on-one time with people or small groups. Ultimately this will give them a strong sense of identity and confidence in who they are, which will give them a strong start to becoming well-adjusted adults.

Teacher and writer Jill Morgenstern has four children and a master's degree in teaching reading.

"Teachers generally appreciate knowing when a child may need extra support, and this opens the door for collaboration. Parents could start the conversation by saying something like, 'My child often feels overwhelmed during larger group activities, and I want to work together to make sure they feel more comfortable on Valentine's Day.'"

February is TDVAM

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

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DATING ABUSE AND YOUR TWEEN OR TEEN:

What to Know and How to Talk About It

From love is respect

Dating Abuse is Happening

Young people are still learning what makes a relationship healthy, unhealthy or even abusive. The ideas and beliefs that enable abuse can be changed, so the earlier we intervene with education and support, the earlier we can prevent abuse. One [national survey of teenagers](#) showed that almost 70% of teens aged 12-18 who had been in a dating relationship in the past year reported experiencing some type of abuse. We know that the intersection of identities with youth on the margins presents challenges related to racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and more, which can create even more risks for marginalized youth navigating relationships. [Transgender people face significant discrimination](#), even from people in the gay community.

Types of Dating Abuse

Dating abuse is a pattern of destructive behaviors used to exert power and control, oftentimes through isolation and intimidation, over a dating partner. [Knowing the types of abuse](#) is critical for parents and influencers but can also lead to more questions.

- **Digital abuse:** Let's say your teen shares that their partner went through their phone, read their messages or made them download a location tracking app. That's a violation of privacy, and a key indicator that their partner is exerting power over them using technology.
- **Emotional abuse:** Emotional abuse is extremely common and often the first type of abuse someone experiences. You overhear your child telling a friend about their partner "always making them feel like they are crazy or imagining things." Gaslighting is a common tactic used by those causing harm to make someone feel like they are losing their minds in order to negate their experiences and feelings.
- **Financial abuse:** Financial abuse is lesser-known and is when someone attempts to control and/or limit someone's finances. This is one of the most significant barriers to leaving an abusive relationship. Examples for young people, depending on their own financial independence, can look different. Perhaps one partner is always expected to pay for movies or food, or one partner always borrows money but never pays it back. For young adults

or college students, it may show up when a partner is encouraged or pressured into skipping class, extracurricular activities or even work to be with their partner. This can have long-term effects on a young person's education or career path and financial stability.

- **Physical abuse:** Physical abuse is never okay, and it is important to ask questions like, "What does it look like when you and your partner argue?" if you observe bruises, marks, or witness their partner being "too physical" during disagreements. Once you find out more, you can start talking about ways they can stay safer and get support.
- **Sexual abuse:** Coercion into sexual contact or interactions is extremely damaging for young people – ignoring consent, pressuring for sex, refusing to use contraception or sabotaging birth control are just some examples.

Understanding and Responding to Warning Signs of Abuse

Unhealthy behaviors and dating abuse can be hard to spot, especially if the young person experiencing the abuse (or the person causing the harm) is trying to hide it. Responding to what you are observing is critical, and our suggestion is to approach the conversation from a supportive and nonjudgmental place by:

- **Listening:** Teens/young adults are more likely to be open with their parents when they don't feel pressured. Approach the conversation using curiosity: "I noticed your phone has been going off a lot lately, aren't you the popular one?" Depending on their response, you're likely to hear more about what's going on.
- **Asking open-ended and strategic questions:** "I noticed you haven't been hanging out with your friends much, I miss hearing you all laughing and playing music. Is everything okay?"
Let's say you observe that your child's normal activities have changed. They are more withdrawn, isolating from friends and family or not engaging in activities they normally enjoy. Perhaps they are missing classes or got dropped from the basketball team. Start a conversation by asking, "How are things going? I noticed you have been keeping to yourself a lot, are you okay?"

If you observe warning signs, please know there is support for you. The resources listed for parents in the sidebar here are a great first step if you have concerns that your child is experiencing or at-risk for dating abuse.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO PARENTS/INFLUENCERS

► **love is respect**

- Call 1-866-331-9474
- Chat at loveisrespect.org
- Text "LOVEIS" to 22522

► **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

- Call 1-800-799-7233
- Chat at thehotline.org
- Text "START" to 88788

► **National Parent Helpline**

- (only available Monday – Friday 10 AM – 7 PM PST)
- Call 1-855-427-2736

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO TEENS & YOUNG ADULTS

► **love is respect**

- Call 1-866-331-9474
- Chat at loveisrespect.org
- Text "LOVEIS" to 22522

► **Crisis Text Line**

- Text "HOME" to 741741
- Send a Facebook message
- The Trevor Project
- Call 1-866-488-7386
- Chat at thetrevorproject.org
- Text "START" to 678678

► **Your Life Your Voice**

- Call 1-800-448-3000
- Text "VOICE" to 20121
- Email at yourlifeyourvoice.org
- (response within 48 hours)

HEALTHY FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Talking to young people about finances may feel uncomfortable, but it's important. In a [recent survey conducted by Junior Achievement and The Allstate Foundation](#), nearly 1 in 3 U.S. teenagers aged 13-18 have experienced an unhealthy financial warning sign in a romantic relationship. The study also found that 61% of teens trust their parents or guardians the most to teach them about healthy shared finances with a romantic partner or friend. While pressure to skip class or work may feel small, the acceptance of these behaviors can have significant financial impact on a young person's financial future. You can model healthy financial relationship behaviors by sharing how you manage finances with a partner (budgeting, savings, credit cards, etc.). You can also have open discussions with the young person in your life to reinforce healthy behaviors of romantic relationships – such as being supportive of school and work and sharing costs such as a dinner out or concert tickets.

How To Have a Conversation About Dating Abuse

Navigating when and how to have a conversation can be difficult. Supporting a young person who has experienced abuse can be even more difficult. However, starting the conversation is one of the best things you can do to create a safe space for the young people in your life to share their experiences and ask for support. Important points to keep in mind when having the conversation include:

- **Give support:** Be supportive and non-accusatory or judgmental in conversations about the relationship. *"I can see that was hard to share, I appreciate you trusting me – You deserve to feel equal in a relationship."*
- **Validate, empathize, and create a space where they feel safe.** For example, if your teen tells you:
 - *"I feel like my partner wants to pressure me into doing things I don't like or know if I am ready for,"* you can respond by saying something like, *"That sounds like a really challenging thing to go through. Feeling like your partner is forcing you or not respecting your boundaries can bring up all kinds of hard emotions. What happens when you try to talk to them about it?"*
 - *"I really love my partner, but they keep demanding I skip work. I'm worried I might be fired,"* you can respond by saying, *"It's okay to communicate to them how that makes you feel. You have a right to space and responsibilities outside of your relationship and your partner should be supportive of your independence. Your feelings are valid."*
 - *"I am not sure why my partner wants my password, but I don't want to share it,"* you can respond by saying, *"Passwords are private, and it is important to have digital boundaries in a healthy relationship. Boundaries are yours to build."*

- **Accept what they are telling you:** Believe them, even if what they tell you is hard to hear. *"Thank you for being honest. I believe you, and what you are describing sounds like unhealthy behavior which could lead to abuse – what you are feeling is valid."*
- **Focus on behaviors, not the person(s) involved:** Remember, it is normal that youth may still have feelings of love, connection and compassion for the person who is harming them. *"The behaviors you are describing sound very unhealthy. It is not okay to be forced to do something you are not comfortable with. I am not saying they are a bad person, but calling and texting you constantly is very concerning."*
- **Talk about their safety in a nonjudgmental, supportive way:** Recognize that leaving the relationship may not resolve the issue, especially if they go to the same school or are in the same extracurricular activities or social circles. Learn more here: [When A Survivor Asks You for Help](#).
- **Decide on the next steps together:**
 - *"What do you feel comfortable doing next?"*
 - *"Do you fear your friends will judge you?" "What can I do to support you?"*
 - *"Do you think changing classes would be helpful?"*As a parent, especially if your child is under the age of 18, sometimes it is necessary to take immediate steps and help them find support, including reaching out to [love is respect](#) and getting information about [safety planning](#).

This article is excerpted with permission from [Parent Discussion Guide on Youth Healthy Relationships](#) from [love is respect](#). A project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, [love is respect](#) is the national resource to disrupt and prevent unhealthy relationships and intimate partner violence by empowering young people 13-26 through inclusive and equitable education, support and resources. The creation of this guide was funded by The Allstate Foundation.



When a Parent is Ser Building Resilience in

By Jill Morgenstern

At age 55 I had always considered myself healthy and strong. But my family's world was turned upside down when what doctors had assumed was a pinched nerve in my back turned out to be Stage 4 lung cancer. A three-month stay in the hospital was the beginning of a fight that continues today. As my husband and I struggled with our own uncertainty and fear, we sought advice from experts on how and how much to tell our youngest child, then age 11. Seeking counsel from child psychologists Dr. Nicole Carville and Dr. Taren Coley, I explore in this article how parents can navigate these challenging conversations and offer their children the support they need during a parent's serious illness.

As a parent I try my best to be open and honest with my children, but when something as scary as cancer rears its head, it may be tempting to downplay the situation. However, Dr. Coley says, "My number one piece of advice is to be both honest and age-appropriate in your communication with your child. Reassure them that they are loved and that they will continue to receive care and support. Creating an open environment where they feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their emotions is key to helping them process the situation."

It can be hard to find the right time to approach your child with this difficult subject matter. Dr. Nicole Carville suggests finding a suitable time without pressure or distractions. "Some children might find it easier to talk without direct eye contact," Carville says. If that's the case, going on a walk together or a drive might provide a good atmosphere for an open and honest conversation.

With serious illness will come serious emotions. Try to find a



iously Ill: Your Child

BIGSTOCK/FIZKES

time to talk to your child when you are both calm. Says Carville, “Start by asking what they already know about the illness and provide small, basic pieces of information. Offer them the opportunity to ask questions and ensure the information is clear and straightforward. Discuss any upcoming changes, such as someone else picking them up due to an appointment.”

The age of the child or children dictates much of the conversation. “Younger children need brief and simple explanations, and using books and stories can be very helpful. For primary-aged children, you can offer slightly more information, with books still being a valuable resource. Teens, who have more developed cognitive skills, can handle more detailed information, and it may be useful to direct them to appropriate websites for further content.” advises Dr. Carville. Dr. Coley adds that a child’s chronological age

“Everyone has some level of intolerance for uncertainty, which can cause anxiety. Children cope better when they can predict what will happen, and consistent routines help provide that sense of stability.”

and emotional maturity are not always equal, so it is important to tailor the information to the individual child.

A very helpful tool that can benefit both parents and children is therapy. During my illness I was lucky enough to find Wonders and Worries, a nonprofit that provides free, professional support to children and teenagers during a parent’s serious illness or injury. By reaching out to your own friends, coworkers and family you should be able to find professional help for yourself and your child. Says Dr. Coley, “Therapy can be incredibly valuable for children navigating the emotional challenges of a parent’s serious illness. In therapy, children have a safe space to express their feelings, process their experiences and develop coping strategies. A therapist can help them manage their emotions and address any behavioral changes, while also offering guidance to both the child and the family on how to handle the situation effectively.”

In my own journey through cancer I have tried my best to keep my youngest child’s routine as predictable as possible. Of course, there may always be a wrench thrown in just when you think you have all your ducks in a row. Dr. Carville agrees that consistency is crucial during uncertain times. She says, “Everyone has some level of intolerance for uncertainty, which can cause anxiety. Children cope better when they can predict what will happen, and consistent routines help provide that sense of stability.”

Talking with children about a parent’s serious illness can seem almost as scary as the illness itself. It helps to remember that you have been building a loving and strong relationship with your child all along, and an illness cannot take that away. By being open and honest, you can help them navigate this difficult time with strength and hope.

Teacher and writer **Jill Morgenstern** was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer in January 2024. She is a mother to four and has a master’s degree in teaching reading.



MANAGING YOUR MONEY:

Finance and Money Podcasts for Parents

By Tanni Haas, Ph.D.

To make the most of your hard-earned money, one option is to get advice from some of the many excellent finance and money podcasts available. The thing about podcasts is that you can listen to them whenever you have a spare moment, even when you're doing other things. Here's a list of some of the best podcasts aimed at helping parents manage their money.



Frugal Friends

(Available at: Apple, Audible, Spotify)

There are many sound approaches to money management including minimizing your spending, sticking to a set budget or investing in assets such as stocks, bonds and real estate. As the name implies, Frugal Friends advocates one specific approach: spend as little as possible. Hosted by two long-time friends, Jen Smith and Jill Sirianni, this podcast helps parents find creative ways to save on their expenses. Episodes focus on topics from how a good credit score can save you money to ways to spend less on groceries and your phone plan to negotiating medical bills.

Inspired Budget

(Available at: Apple, Audible, Spotify)

Inspired Budget takes a different approach to money management, namely how to save money by carefully budgeting your income with your expenses. The brainchild of Allison Baggerly, a former teacher who struggled to make ends meet on her and her husband's teacher salaries, this podcast explores questions like how to use cash envelopes to better stay within your budget and how to guard against impulsive purchases. Allison offers online courses on budgeting and is the author of Money Made Easy: How to Budget, Pay Off Debt, and Save Money.

Marriage Kids and Money

(Available at: Apple, Audible, Spotify)

Andy Hill, the creator of Marriage Kids and Money and the father of two kids, promotes yet another, more expansive approach to money management. Through interviews with financially successful parents and well-known personal finance experts, he explores how couples can work together towards financial independence. Recent episodes focus on whether it's better to pay off one's mortgage or to invest in bonds and stocks and the importance of paying off student loans in a timely manner. This popular podcast has received the Plutus Award for Best Family Finance Content.

Moms Who Money

(Available at: Apple, Audible, Spotify)

Unlike the other podcasts, Moms Who Money is specifically geared towards mothers. Hosted by Eileen Joy, a single mom of an 11-year-old son who managed to go from almost-broke to debt-free by educating herself about finance and money, this podcast aims to help women develop the confidence to take charge of their financial well-being. Instead of discussing specific money-management strategies and techniques, Eileen explores issues like how to reduce emotional financial stress and how to achieve financial compatibility with your partner.

The His and Her Money Show

(Available at: Apple, Audible, Spotify)

The His and Her Money Show focuses on showing couples how to successfully balance money and marriage. It's hosted by married couple Talaat and Tai McNeely, the authors of the aptly titled book, Money Talks: The Ultimate Couple's Guide to Communicating About Money. On their podcast, they also explore business and finance topics like entrepreneurship. Many of the episodes feature discussions of what couples need to do to build, grow and scale up any business venture.

Tanni Haas, Ph.D., is a professor of communication arts. He is the author of many books and articles, including many articles on parenting. He is married and the proud dad of a son. When he is not writing parenting articles, he can be found with a table tennis paddle in his hand ready for a game with friends.

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13 Ways Traveling Parents Can Ease Kids' Separation Anxiety

by Christa M. Hines

Going out of town on business is often a necessary part of the job for working parents. If your child struggles with you or your partner's absences, try a few of these ideas to soothe the stressful sting of separation.

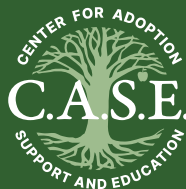
- 1. Clue your child in.** If you have an upcoming business trip, prepare your child a few days in advance. Talk about why you must go. Show them your destination on the map, visit the city's tourism and marketing bureau's website together, discuss the weather there and ask them what they think you should pack for the trip.
- 2. Start a project together.** Kick off a puzzle, start an art or sewing project or begin constructing a model airplane or car with your child to continue when you return home. This tactic helps your child look ahead to your return.
- 3. Got a budding writer?** Begin writing a story before you leave and have your child add a paragraph and email it to you. Add to their paragraph, send it back and so on.
- 4. Designate a special mailbox.** Whether it's a picture, a note or an A on a spelling test, ask your kids to put anything they want you to see when you return in a mailbox or basket. Make the mailbox stand out by having your children decorate it.
- 5. Plan out times to call.** Depending on the nature of your travels, find times to connect with your kids on a routine basis. Know your family's morning and evening schedule so you can call or video chat and say good morning and good night during periods of relative calm. Frequent phone calls also help your child grow accustomed to talking on the phone, an important communication skill.
- 6. Help track time.** Most small children have little concept of time. Make a paper chain with a link representing each day you're away. Hang the chain by your kitchen table, and your children can cut a link each morning at breakfast.
- 7. Write a note.** Leave a meaningful note in a basket or jar addressed to each of your children. They can open a note each day you're away and when the notes are gone, they'll know you're on your way home.

8. **Record your voice.** Kids love audiobooks, especially if they're listening to someone they love. Purchase a recordable storybook and record yourself reading the book. Your kids will enjoy listening to you over and over again.
9. **Send text messages and emails.** One of my favorite commercials was of a dad who finds his daughter's stuffed monkey in his suitcase while on a business trip. He takes pictures of the monkey at different places throughout the trip to text home to his thrilled little girl. In addition to personalized text messages to your child, send picture texts of landmarks that might interest your child. If your child has a passion for airplanes or cars, take a picture of one of the planes on the tarmac or of the rental car you're driving.
10. **Connect digitally in real-time.** Arrange a time to talk to your children on FaceTime or Zoom. Use the time to read or tell a bedtime story to your child or listen while your child reads a book to you.
11. **Mail a letter.** Remember the thrill of receiving personal mail? If you're going to be away for an extended period of time, mail a card, letter or postcard to your child. Living in the digital age, a handwritten note is extra special and something tangible for your child to hang onto.
12. **Back home?** Give your child the gift of your undivided attention for at least 10 minutes when you walk in the door rather than immediately checking those distracting email and phone messages. While you may feel anxious to address pressing business issues left in limbo while flying home, your

children want your immediate attention, too. Set a timer if it helps you focus on remaining present with your kids for the first few minutes of your reentry home.

13. **Schedule quality time together.** Plan an activity with your children for when you return, like going to a baseball game or movie, playing catch or mini-golf, coloring a picture, taking a bike ride or going out to breakfast together. Be flexible and remember quality times like these can turn into family traditions and memories you and your children will cherish for years to come.

Christa M. Hines is a nationally published writer. She and her road-warrior husband are the parents of two sons.



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THE DOCTOR IS IN

C-Sections: Reasons and Risks

By Amy Banulis, MD

If you are pregnant or are hoping to become pregnant soon, you may be thinking about whether you will need a cesarean section, or C-section.

You're not alone: C-section rates have gone up worldwide over the past few decades. In [some Latin American countries](#), C-section rates are approaching 60 %. In some Northern European countries such as Iceland, Sweden and Norway, rates are significantly lower, closer to 15% to 17%. [The United States](#) is in the middle of these extremes: Approximately 1 in 3 pregnant women deliver via C-section.

We know that cultural and societal differences play a role in C-section rates. In the United States, some of the increase in cesarean rates is thought to be due to women having babies at older ages; advanced maternal age (35 years old or older) is a risk factor for needing a cesarean section.

Also, obesity and diabetes in pregnancy have increased in the United States and these are also risk factors for needing a cesarean section.

In general, we can group the reasons behind C-sections into three categories:

1. Scheduled C-sections due to certain medical or pregnancy-related conditions
2. Unplanned C-sections due to challenges during labor and delivery
3. Elective C-sections (patient choice without a medical indication)



Scheduled C-Sections Due to Certain Medical Conditions

When I have a patient with certain medical conditions or risk factors, I may recommend a [C-section](#) to ensure the health of mom and baby.

- **Placenta previa:** The placenta covers the cervix in such a way that a vaginal birth would be dangerous. Normally, the placenta attaches to the inner wall of the uterus, away from the uterine opening. Placenta previa occurs when the placenta attaches so low that it blocks the opening.
- History of previous surgery on the uterus, including certain fibroid surgeries
- Being pregnant with twins if the first baby is not head-down. We usually can safely deliver twins with vaginal delivery if both are head-down and, in some cases, where at least the first twin is head-down.

- Being pregnant with three or more babies. For triplets or higher, C-section is usually the best approach.
- Breech babies. A baby positioned in the uterus in a bottom-first/feetfirst position is a breech baby. Sometimes we can turn the baby, but for patients who don't want to try that procedure, or if that procedure is unsuccessful, a C-section is the way to go.
- Expecting a very large baby, with an estimated weight more than 5000 grams (or about 11 pounds) in a mom without diabetes, and 4500 grams (or about 9.9 pounds) in a mom with diabetes. Large babies delivered vaginally are at higher risk for shoulder dystocia, a condition in which the baby's shoulder gets stuck during delivery. A C-section in these cases can reduce the risk of birth injuries.
- People who had a prior cesarean delivery. If you previously had a C-section and are interested in delivering your next baby vaginally, that may be possible. A VBAC – vaginal birth after cesarean – is successful for many patients. Your doctor can help you determine whether you would be a good candidate for a VBAC, taking into account your age, body mass index (BMI), how many prior C-sections you had and why you had them. The biggest risk of VBAC is a 1% chance that the scar on your uterus from the prior C-section could open (uterine rupture). That is a medical emergency and why I recommend patients who are trying a VBAC do so in a hospital with the ability to do an emergency cesarean section in case it is needed.

Unplanned C-Sections

Sometimes, people intend to have a vaginal delivery but something unexpected happens during labor. This can lead to an unscheduled C-section.

One of the main reasons women would need to have a C-section in the middle of labor is a situation called arrest of labor, or failure to progress in labor. In this situation, labor lasts for many hours with little to no progress.

Either the cervix stops dilating despite having adequate contractions, or the baby is not descending into the pelvis. This is usually not an emergency situation and one that your doctor will discuss with you along the way.

Abnormal fetal heart rate patterns (also referred to as fetal distress or fetal intolerance of labor) are another key reason behind unscheduled cesarean sections. For a variety of reasons, some babies are not able to tolerate the stress of labor, and a

C-section would be the best, safest approach.

What if the baby's umbilical cord is wrapped around the head? Most of the time, people are still able to have a vaginal delivery! A C-section may be needed if the cord is wound very tightly around the baby's body or neck and is causing decreased blood flow during contractions or descent in the birth canal.

Elective C-Sections

If a patient who otherwise is a candidate for vaginal birth chooses to have a C-section, that is considered an elective procedure. Some women choose to have a C-section because they want to have everything scheduled and planned. They fear going into labor at work or in the middle of the night or at another unexpected time or they fear the pain and unpredictable nature of labor itself. Having a planned surgery eases their concerns.

Some women also want to avoid vaginal delivery because they are concerned about future pelvic floor problems, such as incontinence or pelvic prolapse. I remind patients that even a C-section can be a risk factor for these conditions, so choosing a caesarean section is no guarantee.

C-Section Risks

For most women who do not have a medical situation in which a C-section is recommended, vaginal delivery is strongly encouraged. There are risks associated with C-sections, including risk of infection, bleeding that could require blood transfusion and, in extreme cases, a need for a hysterectomy. With a C-section, there is risk of damage to other organs, such as the bladder and ureter. Recovery from a C-section is generally longer than recovery from a vaginal birth. And for women who are planning more than one pregnancy, we strongly encourage a vaginal birth for the first child because the more C-sections someone has, the greater the risk of complications with future pregnancies.

Having a baby can be a truly exciting time, and your medical team wants to help ensure a healthy mom and a healthy baby. Talking to your doctor about your own unique situation can give you peace of mind that you are taking the right approach for you and your family.

Amy Banulis, MD, is a board-certified ob-gyn with the Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group. She sees patients at the Kaiser Permanente Falls Church Medical Center.



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7 Baby Shower Ideas Trending in 2025: How to Create Your Stylish Celebration

By Pam Molnar

Many baby shower invitations request unwrapped gifts or diapers so the mom-to-be can mingle with her guests. This more interactive party setting requires some entertainment for the guests including crafts, games and hands-on entertainment. Check out these baby shower trends that will take your baby shower from mediocre to memorable.

Themes

Everyone loves a themed party and baby showers are no different. You can choose one based on Mom's interests or bring the nursery décor theme to the party. This year, popular themes include elements of minimalism, eco-friendliness and sustainability. While there are dozens of ideas, these caught our eye for 2025.



An English tea garden

This beautiful theme is complete with flowers, serving high tea and finger sandwiches.



The minimalist

This is strikingly simple, with all white décor and a simple brunch buffet. Use real plates, glassware and silverware instead of disposable.



Locally grown

This is a cute farmers market theme that includes fruits, vegetables and flowers. Serve salads and other locally sourced foods and drinks.



Craft station

Some groups prefer crafts over games. If that is your mom-to-be, there are several ideas you can create at your craft station. You can ask the guests to decorate bibs, onesies and wooden hangers. If you are looking for something unique, ask guests to create felt book and nursery rhyme characters. Patterns are available on Etsy for guests to trace, cut out and glue together.



Grow baby's library

We love the idea of bringing a book instead of a card to fill up the baby's library. Instead of buying new, used books are the more eco-friendly choices. This is the perfect opportunity for the partygoers to go through their libraries and find gently used books to pass down. You can also look for used children's books at the library and ask the guests to sign those instead.



Fill the medicine cabinet

Babies need a bunch of different items that first-time moms don't think of. Make a small card for each item and place them in invitations asking the guests to include that item with their gift. You can set up a basket at the gift table and Mom can take home all the items she will need. Check out the sidebar for a list of items.



Homemade and heartfelt

A busy mom can always use a break, so why not get everyone to read a story to her baby? Ask all the guests to make a video of themselves reading a book to the baby. Upload the videos to a [private YouTube channel](#) and have access to the stories wherever you have internet. Not only will it be a chance for the baby to hear and see the special people in their lives, but it is also a wonderful keepsake to look back on down the road.



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Food and drink: Get the guests involved

Get the guests out of their seats. Bring in a bartender to teach everyone how to make signature mocktails and serve them in flights. You can also bring someone in to teach the guests how to make [salami roses](#) for charcuterie boards or, if your guest list includes a lot of new moms, how to make homemade pureed baby foods.

Play some fun games



Two truths and a lie

Print out sheets for mom guests to write down three sentences about their baby's birth which will be read aloud when complete. Let Mom-to-be guess what is true and what is a lie. For example: "My labor was less than an hour." "My daughter was born with a full head of hair." "My husband got a speeding ticket on the way to the hospital." After Mom-to-be guesses, the lie is revealed. Consider a prize for the craziest truth.



Baby dice

This is a great way to get the mom-to-be to stop at every table and chat for a few minutes. Purchase some small gifts for prizes and an alphabet die. The players work in teams to spell out BABY [SURNAME] by rolling the dice and marking them off on a sheet. The team to do so is the winner and moves up to the next table. Similar to Bunco, players switch partners and play again for a set amount of time. The player with the most wins and losses wins a prize.



Baby Doodle and Describe

Much like the old game of "telephone" where you whisper in someone's ear, this "telephone" for a new generation adds a twist. The first person picks a card with a baby-related term like "diaper change" and draws it on a piece of paper. The next person looks at that drawing and writes their guess as to what the drawing is supposed to be and hands that to the next person. They then create a drawing based on that term and so on until the end when all drawings and guesses are revealed.

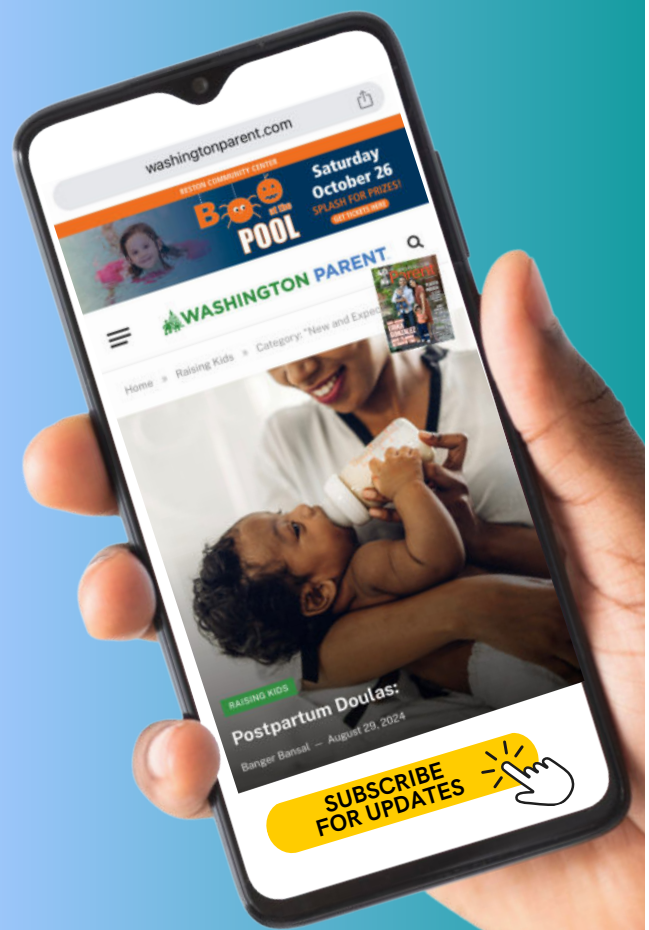
Pam Molnar is a freelance writer and mother of three. She enjoys planning the party as much as the guests enjoy attending them.

Things That Will Fill Baby's Medicine Cabinet

- ✕ Digital thermometer
- ✕ Petroleum jelly
- ✕ Rubbing alcohol
- ✕ Tweezers
- ✕ Cotton balls
- ✕ Non-aspirin pain reliever/fever reducer
- ✕ Medicine syringe
- ✕ Bulb syringe or nasal aspirator
- ✕ Saline nasal drops
- ✕ Antiseptic wipes
- ✕ Topical calamine lotion or hydrocortisone cream
- ✕ Antibacterial ointment
- ✕ Adhesive bandage strips in various sizes and shapes
- ✕ Gauze rolls and pads
- ✕ Adhesive tape for making bandages
- ✕ A pair of sharp scissors for cutting gauze and tape
- ✕ Electrolyte solution for hydration
- ✕ Boo-boo bunny ice pack
- ✕ Baby/children's sunscreen
- ✕ Baby/children's insect repellent
- ✕ Baby shampoo or baby wash
- ✕ Baby moisturizing lotion
- ✕ Diaper rash cream
- ✕ A pair of baby nail clippers or a small nail file
- ✕ A soft-bristled baby brush (especially helpful for handling cradle cap)
- ✕ Anti-gas drops

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Talking to Your Neurodivergent Child About Their Diagnosis:

Part 1 – The Why and When

By Jen Dryer

When my AuDHD (autistic + ADHD) son was 9, he asked me, “Mom, why does Zack get annoyed when I watch the same show over and over?” This was Max’s first query into how he moved through the world in a different way than his older brother did. I jumped on the opportunity, after patiently waiting for him to show some interest in how his brain worked differently than those of others around him.

I replied, “I know that can feel confusing for you and your brain. You have what’s called an autistic brain, and it’s common for autistic brains to love repeating things, because it feels comfortable and safe to know what to expect. Zack’s brain is not autistic, and his brain gets really bored and tired of watching the same thing over and over. His brain prefers to watch new things, and the new things feel more interesting to his brain. Isn’t that interesting how different brains like different things?”

This was the first of MANY conversations we have had about brains in general, and his in particular. Using “your brain” (or “your body”) language whenever it’s relevant shifts value judgment from seeing a child’s actions and behaviors as representative of their entire being and provides a window into understanding that many

of our behaviors are reactions our brains and/or bodies have to stimuli in our environment.

Below you can find the why, when, what and how to help your neurodivergent (ND) child understand their brain and their diagnosis.

The WHY

- Many parents feel reluctant to share their child’s diagnosis with them. Common thoughts that impede parents from doing so fall along the lines of:
- “My child will feel like they’re different, and it will hurt their self-esteem.”
- “My child will use the diagnosis as an excuse when things feel hard.”
- “I don’t want the world/my community/family/friends to know that my child is different.”
- “If they are labeled publicly, it can hurt their chances and opportunities for the future.”

These feelings and worries are real. It’s normal to want the road to be smooth and straightforward for your child, and embracing your child’s diagnosis recognizes that the road will involve many bumps, twists and turns, which can feel overwhelming.

Many ND adults have noted that as children they **knew** they were different before they learned about their diagnosis. Many ND adults who learned about their diagnosis later in life have

expressed frustration over not knowing earlier, because they didn't understand why so many things felt so much harder for them than for their peers. The energy they spent "masking" their ND traits to pretend to be more neurotypical took an enormous toll on their self-esteem, and for many caused significant anxiety.

ND kids' differences are rarely lost on their classmates, no matter how adept they are at masking. ND kids need factual information about their diagnoses to counteract what their neurotypical peers may say and do. They deserve to understand and feel good about the way their brains work. They will greatly benefit from having the right tools to help their brains feel regulated and calm.

Few ND children have the wherewithal to actively use their diagnosis as an excuse. When an ND child struggles to do something we think they can/should be able to do, it's key to step back and ask why. In his touchstone text, *The Explosive Child*, Ross Greene tells us that all kids do well when they can, and that when they're not doing well, it's a sign that they need more skills in that area or more support.

"Performance inconsistency" is also common for ND kids. Like those days when we haven't slept well and are more irritable than usual, ND kids often have inconsistent levels of regulation (the state of feeling good in your body, mentally alert and calm). When their nervous systems are dysregulated, they are often unable to access skills they may have demonstrated earlier. It's important to remember compassionately that their brains are already doing so much work just to be in a world not built for how their brains function.

We can choose to see diagnostic labels as helpful information. Neurodivergence via various diagnoses is not uncommon. The [National Cancer Institute](#) estimates that 15-20% of the world's population is neurodivergent. That's nearly 1 in 5 people, so it's important to accept and normalize brain differences. A diagnosis gives you and your child useful insight into how their brain works, what therapies or supports might benefit them and better access to insurance coverage for supportive therapies. A diagnosis will not impede their ability to find success at school and in the world, but rather will give them the tools to better forge their path.

It's empowering for ND kids to learn about how their brain works. When we help them identify what is easy and hard for their brain, we can help them find the tools to anticipate and navigate their big feelings when they get overwhelmed. They can develop self-compassion and increased self-advocacy skills, which are so important for helping them become more self-sufficient. When we help them reframe and reclaim their differences as simply a different way of seeing and being in the world, rather than "less than," it can greatly improve their self-esteem, which is key to counteract anxiety.

Jerome Schultz noted in *Scientific American*, "when kids have a better understanding of the condition that affects their learning, they tend to have a better self-concept, and they are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to self-advocate. These keys unlock a child's potential, resulting in better academic performance and better mental health."

The WHEN and WHERE

Like sitting down with your kids to have "The Talk" about sex, it can feel intimidating to start "The Conversation" with your child

about their diagnosis. There are a few signs of readiness to look for before starting:

- Are they showing signs of interest or curiosity about how they might be different?
- Are they developmentally able to understand the concept of their brain differences?
- Are they talking about how things at school feel too hard/boring/easy?

These are signs that your child is ready to begin the first of MANY conversations you will have about their diagnosis and their brain. When they're ready, plan for the first conversation to be short and concise, with factual descriptions and free from judgment.

It's helpful to have these discussions while doing a separate activity. This allows for a "third focus" other than you and your child, like walking the dog or doing a puzzle together. It will feel less intimidating for both of you to have an external focus during what may feel like a hard conversation.

The "right" age to have this conversation with your child varies. It's really never too late or too early if they are showing the right signs of readiness. This might be age 3 for some kids who are asking about why their preschool classmates can draw a circle and they can't. On the flip side, it might be age 13 for a child who has just begun exploring why they're struggling socially. It will be helpful whenever you start the conversation.

[Editor's Note: In next month's Washington Parent, Part 2 of this series will explain The What and How of Talking to Your Neurodivergent Child, and what to expect.]



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Stay In & Snuggle: A Heart-shaped Box of Romantic Movies

By Christina Katz

If you are weary of the half-hearted crimson roses, kissing bears and heart-shaped boxes of bonbons Valentine's Days often include, why not consider staying in and watching an oldie-but-goodie romance instead? You'll save a bundle on an evening out with a babysitter.

Of course, when it comes to romantic movies, spouses don't always see eye to eye. So, if one of you can't tolerate another sappy period piece and the other can't stand another testosterone-fueled action movie, don't worry, I've rounded up nine sweet movie treats that any couple can enjoy together.

Put the kids to bed a little early, pour some bubbly, pop up your favorite corn and select the perfect Hollywood confection to warm up a winter evening. To help you choose, I've compared each film to a type of bonbon. Let the snuggling begin!

An English Walnut Cluster: *Dead Again*

You'll love this movie to death. Once upon a time, Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson were a real-life couple. But that was then and this is now. Or perhaps then is now and the rest is payback. You might not be sure either, once you get knee-deep into this 1991 romance thriller that's artfully laced with surprises. Branagh is Mike Church, a private eye looking not for "Miss Right" but for "Miss Right Now." The woman he finds instead is Grace (Thompson), a mute mystery woman searching for her forgotten identity. Without their realizing it, the same karma that brings them

back together may also cleft their love in twain.

A Chocolate-covered Cherry: *Say Anything*

It's hard to find a first-time love story with staying power but this one makes the cut. Who wouldn't enjoy this late '80s romantic comedy written and directed by Cameron Crowe? Diane Court (Ione Skye) is graduating at the top of her class and facing a bright and ambitious future. But she realizes almost too late that she has missed out on all the usual high school rites of passage. Lucky for her that's where Lloyd Dobler (John Cusack) comes in. He's just the dare-to-be-great kind of guy who's looking to watch over a girl like Diane – much to her father's chagrin.

A Chocolatey Heart-shaped Crisp: *Notting Hill*

Can an unassuming bookstore owner and a movie star find lasting love? Hugh Grant's bookish William says it best in this 1999 hit romantic comedy, "I live in Notting Hill. You live in Beverly Hills. Everyone in the world knows who you are, my mother has trouble remembering my name." But there is something about William's stable, anonymous life (not to mention his quirky charm) that Julia Robert's Anna Scott can't seem to resist. And if that isn't enough, there's always the colorful vocabulary of Grant's ridiculing roomie, played by Rhys Ifans, and the incredulous reactions of his mates to keep you rooting for this unlikely relationship.

A Dark Chocolate Fig Truffle: *Frida*

You'll appreciate this celebration of colorful, messy and

enduring love, iconic-artist style. Director Julie Taymor elevates this 2002 biopic of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo to the heights of moving picture poetry. Selma Hayek plays the bold and colorful Frida, who takes as many risks in life and love as she does in her art. But her love affair with Diego Rivera is the one that will keep you watching. Alfred Molina plays Rivera, a man “physiologically incapable of fidelity.” Unfaithful is one thing; the real question becomes, can he be loyal?

Milk Chocolate Butter Cream: *The Philadelphia Story*

One of the prettiest sights in this fine pretty world is watching Katharine Hepburn try to make up her mind about which man she should marry. Even better when her character, Tracy Lord, seems about to teeter off her pedestal, as she tries to choose from three charming men including Jimmy Stewart and Cary Grant. Stewart, as Macaulay “Mike” Connor, is in his element, matching mercurial moods to Hepburn’s larger-than-life gilded girl on the verge of softening. A witty 1940s classic for a classy couple.

Chocolate-covered Nuts: *Benny and Joon*

Raisins play a pivotal role in a crush-inducing conversation in this quirky 1993 romantic comedy. A sometimes serious, (thanks to Aidan Quinn’s Benny), sometimes slapstick (thanks to Johnny Depp’s Sam) and sometimes thought-provoking (thanks to Mary Stuart Masterson’s Joon) romp into the complicated combination of love and mental illness. That’s oddball amoré. Think it’s inappropriate to traipse so lightly into the land of mental instability? Think again.

A Chocolate Caramel: *The Bridges of Madison County*

Francesca Johnson and Robert Kincaid are smokin’ hot at midlife despite the fact that Meryl Streep’s character is married

with children and Clint Eastwood is trying to pull off middle age at 65 (and succeeding very nicely). Director Eastwood plays National Geographic photographer Robert Kincaid, who awakens a volcanic passion in farm wife Streep she never knew she had. After four days, one of the most emotionally riveting moments in film history comes down to a car door handle. Slightly hokey, but totally worth it.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Crunch: *Reality Bites*

He loves me, I hate him. He loves me, I hate myself. Gen X-ers Winona Rider, Ethan Hawke and Ben Stiller (as Lelaina, Troy and Michael respectively) constellate at an early peak in their collective careers to deliberate yuppie vs. slacker values. Friend Vicki, played by a sassy Janeane Garofalo, thinks Troy and Lelaina should just “do it and get it over with,” but the rest of us won’t mind if they take their sweet time. Stiller directs a philosophizing phobia of ambition and a healthy dose of ‘90s ambivalence with a movie-within-a-movie flourish.

A Maple Cream: *Same Time, Next Year*

Give this ‘70s sleeper (based on the play of the same name) half a chance. By the time you get past the first interlude you’ll forget you’re watching Hawkeye Pierce. Performances by Alan Alda and Ellen Burstyn broaden and deepen as George and Doris return every five years to continue their affair. Film montages that replay historical highlights are stirring against the repetition of the musical score. If it just doesn’t work for you, tell your parents. They’ll enjoy it. The sweetest film about adultery you’ll ever have a chance to watch.

Christina Katz is an author, journalist and writing coach who enjoys a steady stream of chocolates and movies, preferably shared with her honey.

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Things to Do IN FEBRUARY

The Monsters of Seahorse Island

Through February 9. The people of Seahorse Island and the people who live under the sea in Seahorse Ocean have been enemies for as long as anyone can remember. But what happens when their worlds collide? This thoughtful and funny play from InterAct Story Theatre includes lots of audience participation and is best for ages 5 & up! Silver Spring, Md.

History, Heroes & Treasures: Sleepover at the National Archives

February 1-2. A night of adventure awaits at the National Archives! Come for a space-themed sleepover and spend the night next to America's most precious treasures, our founding documents. Campers will also meet special guest astronaut Nicole Stott and the Archivist of the United States. Dive into our nation's treasured records and learn about how space and science have changed the course of American history. The program will end on Sunday morning with a pancake breakfast. For children 8-12 years old; chaperones must be 21 years or older. All participants (both children and adult chaperones) require a ticket to participate. Arlington, Va.

Lunar New Year Parade

February 2. A vibrant, community-oriented parade featuring various cultural performances. Participants will include lion and dragon dance troupes, musical bands from diverse generational and cultural organizations, kung fu schools, beauty pageant representatives, members of the U.S. military from the Army, Navy and Air Force, local high school bands and more. The parade will culminate in a firecracker show accompanied by lion dance performances. Washington, D.C.

Sweetheart Parent & Child Dance

February 7. For all ages. Children are invited to a fancy "date" with their parents or guardians. Featured activities included a photo booth, a DJ playing some favorite tunes, craft projects and light refreshments. A parent or guardian must attend the event with their child/children and register individually. McLean, Va.

Black History Month Family Day

February 8th. Kids and families of all ages are welcome to drop-in for Black History Month Family Day. Enjoy hands-on activities including compass-making, sharing what freedom means to you, mapping your own family tree and more! There will also be story times at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Woodlawn Manor House. Sandy Spring, Md.

Georgetown University Strong Girls United Event

February 9. Free. Fun warm-up activities, team building games, mental health skills and girls empowerment stations with Georgetown female athletes. Participants are welcome to stay for lunch with athletes and watch the women's basketball game vs.

DePaul! (Discounted game tickets available.) Strong Girls United has a mission to empower girls and women to be strong, confident and resilient through sports, mentorship and mental health programming. Washington, D.C.



Valentine Card Extravaganza!

February 9. Kids, teens and adults, make a valentine for that special someone. We provide the cards, sparkles, stickers, hearts and flowers. You provide the creative touch. Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library, Alexandria, Va.



Washington Capitals Marvel Super Hero Day

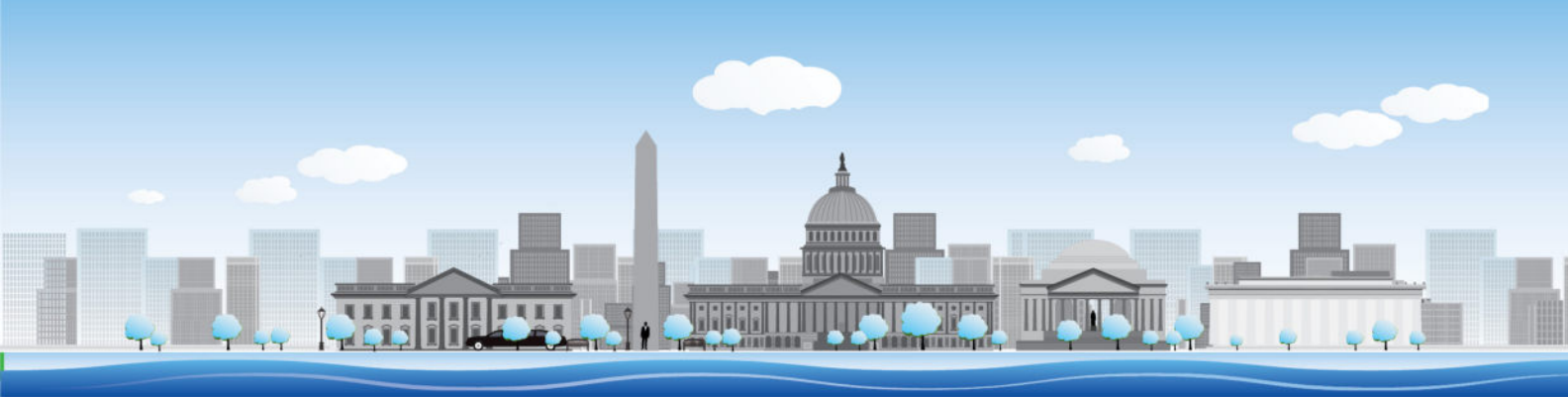
February 9. Come out to Capital One Arena for Marvel Super Hero Day as the Caps take on the Utah Hockey Club. All fans in attendance will receive a Capitals comic book. Get ready for in-game super hero features and fun activities for all. Buy tickets now. Washington, D.C.

Full Moon Salamander Search

February 12. Families will explore the park at night when the moon is full, searching for salamanders along Long Branch Creek. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight if you have one. This event will take place rain or moon-shine! Registration required. Arlington, Va.

From Wose to Farafina Kan: A Black History Month Musical Celebration

February 13. Get ready for a lively, family-friendly celebration of music and culture, curated by D.C. Jazz Festival Artist-In-Residence Corcoran Holt. This special concert features the D.C. Collective alongside the renowned drum and dance ensemble Farafina Kan and invites audiences of all ages to experience the joyful sounds of jazz and the vibrant rhythms of West Africa. Washington, D.C.



Wingspan Game Play

February 14 & 22. Registration Required. Wingspan is a beautiful, award-winning and locally designed board game all about birds. In Wingspan, each player controls a small wildlife refuge. Your goal is to populate your forest, grasslands and wetlands with a flourishing array of birds. Come for a friendly gameplaying session and learn more about North American birds in the process! Experienced and inexperienced players ages 12+ are welcome. Instruction will be provided for those who need it. Laurel, Md.

The Amazing Race: Long Branch Edition!

February 15. Families are invited to join a naturalist on a trek through Glencarlyn Park answering riddles and completing tasks to complete a challenge course for a prize! They'll visit habitats, meet live animals and take on challenges with other amazing families! Registration Required. Arlington, Va.

Play Date at NMNH: At Home in a Habitat

February 18. Ages 0–5 and their caretakers are invited to explore the different needs animals have that keep them safe and healthy in their habitat. Families will practice identifying the needs of animals and create habitats out of different play materials. Washington, D.C.

The World and Me: Ocean Clean Up Crew

February 22. Susan Stockdale will read and demonstrate how she created her new picture book, *Don't Eat the Cleaners!* Children will learn how ocean animals visit "cleaning stations" at coral reefs around the world. While there, tiny but mighty cleaner fish and shrimp remove their pesky parasites in return for a tasty meal. Susan will engage children as "picture detectives" to uncover the changes she made from her first sketches to her final, splashy illustrations and encourage them to create their own books! Families can join at any time during the duration of the event and stay as long as suits each family. Washington, D.C.

Omnium Circus - I'm Possible

February 22. A jaw dropping, awe inspiring and joyful entertainment experience for the entire family! The award-winning Omnium Circus, hailed as "America's most inclusive and accessible circus," is taking its extraordinary show *I'm Possible* back on the road this spring beginning with the historic Warner Theatre. Comprehensively inclusive and accessible at every performance. Washington, D.C.

MacMillan Pipe Band

February 22 & 23. Join us for an evening of traditional and contemporary music from all over the world – including classics such as Scotland the Brave and Amazing Grace, American standards like Shenandoah, and world class jigs, reels and more! MacMillan is one of the United States' most successful competitive traditional Scottish ensembles. From local performances in Maryland, D.C. and Virginia



to the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, the band is the torchbearer for a long history of world-class bagpipe and drum music from our area, with nearly a dozen world champion musicians in their ranks.



Black History's Groundbreaking Geniuses

February 25. This performance is recommended for Grades K-6. Genius comes in all shapes and sizes, and Black history is filled with amazing inventors, artists and thinkers who changed the world. This show focuses on the brilliance of over a dozen amazing characters: scientists like surgeon Daniel Hale Williams, mathematicians like Dorothy Vaughan, literary geniuses like Ralph Ellison and Maya Angelou and artistic geniuses like Alvin Ailey. Learn about them and inspire your young audiences to discover their own genius. Everyone must have a ticket to enter, regardless of age. Hyattsville, Md.



How to Reduce Your Family's Screen Time

by Joy Rains

Are your children spending too much time engaging with their tablets or smartphones? Although devices are part of our culture, you may be wondering how to balance their usage and reduce your family's screen time. Here are some tips to help.

Pay attention to your own behavior. If you have a habit of scrolling mindlessly, remember that your children constantly look to you for behavioral cues. Try to become conscious of your unconscious behaviors. If you want them to limit screen time, see if you can model that behavior yourself. Make sure you're not sending the message, "Do as I say, but don't do as I do."

Make screen time a conscious choice. Decide the time of day for your child's screen time. Write the schedule on a family calendar for all to see. Set time limits – for instance, one hour of television a day or 30 minutes of play on their tablet. Visual timers are a great way for younger children to understand time constraints. Alternatively, an old-fashioned hour glass can be a fun way to measure time.

Practice mindful eating. Consider making family meals a screen-free zone. You can even introduce your children to mindful eating, where they notice tastes, textures and flavors, paying attention to one bite at a time. They can also pay attention to the pace of their eating, noticing if they rush to eat the next mouthful before finishing the previous one. Mindful eating can be a fun practice, and one that engages the whole family.

Look for alternatives to screen time. Intentionally choose activities that don't involve screens. Take a mindful walk outside, as you listen to singing birds and rustling leaves. Go to the library and browse for interesting books to read. Play hide-and-seek with a favorite stuffed animal. Take out a big container of art supplies and allow your child's creativity to blossom. Dance to a lively song. You can even brainstorm together and develop a list of activities that are fun and engaging. The possibilities are endless.

Seek like-minded parents. In his book *The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt notes the harmful effects from social media and discusses steps to limit children's screen time. He also discusses support networks that some parents have formed, as they share information and socialize their children in screen-free environments. Consider checking with your local PTA, community, religious or other organizations about whether they have this type of group, or whether they'd be open to forming one.

Finally, if you want to reduce your family's screen time, it doesn't have to be complicated. It just takes making a conscious choice and being intentional about your goals, for both you and your family. Note: For in-depth research on children's media use, see Common Sense Media's report.

Joy Rains is a corporate mindfulness trainer and author of *Meditation Illuminated: Simple Ways to Manage Your Busy Mind*. Learn more at joyrains.com.

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