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EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello March!

Washington Parent is thrilled this month to have on our cover one of our favorite local moms, Deborah Porter, and share with you how she's working to make workplaces in the DMV more family friendly. She was Coach Deborah to us and to our readers several years ago with a monthly column as well as articles for Washington Parent that offered practical advice for parents while keeping it real about embracing our imperfect parenting. Read our article in this issue about this inspiring and inspired local thought leader!

Continuing a favorite theme of Deborah's (and mine), which is taking it easier on ourselves as parents (especially busting the myth of the Super Mom), we've got Drs. Emma Basch and Jillian Neill's article on *Parenting in the Age of Instagram: How to Silence the Noise and Feel More Easeful*. These local mental health experts recommend not drowning yourself in social media advice chatter, clarifying your goals and trusting your own instincts more.

As you continue the search for the right camp for your kids, Washington Parent is here to help with our Camps & Summer Programs Guide plus articles on the best strategy when sending siblings to camp, and how you can ensure your anxious kid still enjoys camp.

We continue last month's popular article with *How to Talk to Your Neurodiverse Kids About Their Diagnosis PART 2*.

For spring break and beyond, we've got an article on traveling with kids with food restrictions and, if spring break is a staycation this year, how to make it fun while keeping it frugal.

If you've got young kids, or even just remember the days when your kids were younger and you had to scramble every time they lost a baby tooth, you'll enjoy the humorous and helpful essay, *10 Reasons Why the Tooth Fairy Did Not Come Last Night*.

Need some help preparing to talk with your tween daughter about her period? We've got tips for talking with her, but don't forget about your son(s) – boys should know what it's all about, too. Silence makes for stigma!

Here's hoping your March is a merry (and mild) one!

Karen

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If March comes in like a lion, then it will go out like a lamb. Or so went the folkloric forecast of the past. Certainly, today's increasingly sophisticated weather technology has supplanted such iffy predictions and now allows for greater accuracy.

Broadly defined, weather is the state of the atmosphere relative to moisture, wind speed, temperature, etc. But that's a rather prosaic summing up of what to kids often seems magical. Why does rain suddenly fall on a sunny day? How can a tornado appear so quickly and wreak such destruction? What makes the wind blow? These books address general questions and consider weather extremes caused by climate change and environmental damage.

Tots-age 7

Weather

By Lisa Gerry
National Geographic Kids, 2018, \$4.99
As part of National Geographic's popular Explore My World series, this book is the perfect go-to for curious youngsters. Color photos and accessible text describe clouds, storms and even

ways to watch the weather (windsocks, anemometers, satellites). It ends with a rainbow, which occurs "when sunlight shines through tiny raindrops floating in the air."



Wind Is a Dance

By Debra Shumaker

Illustrated by Josee Bisaillon
Kids Can, 2024, \$19.99

What is wind? Opening with this key question, local author Debra Shumaker then explains wind as something ever-changing, something felt but not seen. "Wind is a dance ... warm air leaps high, while cool air bows low." Apt textual metaphors also appear in the art. This helps kids better understand what happens when wind grows stronger and faster. Across double-page spreads, they see it morph from nudging teammate (tailwind) to "ornery opponent" (headwind) to hurtling train (derecho). Four pages of back matter encourage additional investigation. The National Council of Teachers of English selected this lyrical, lovely title as a 2025 Notable Poetry Book.

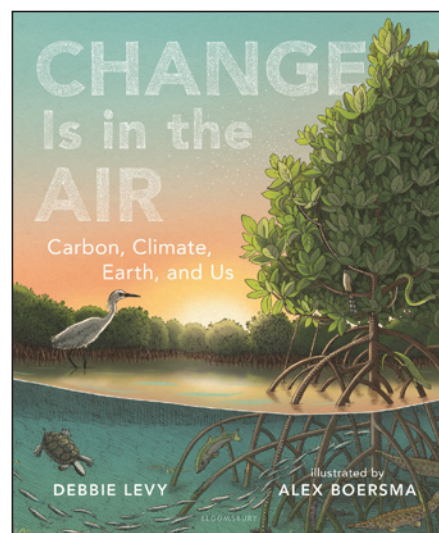


Change Is in the Air

By Debbie Levy

Illustrated by Alex Boersma
Bloomsbury, 2024, \$18.99

Given the scope of the climate crisis, can we create positive change if we act quickly? Bestselling Washington author Debbie Levy describes the beneficial role of carbon – and the damage caused with the release of too much when fossil fuels are burned. She then examines how the earth repairs itself and the effect of kelp, mangroves and dirt on this process. But though mighty, "they are not enough." Humans, too, must do their part, by changing their power sources, agricultural practices and modes of transportation. The back matter provides practical examples of people and communities taking these steps. Hopeful and helpful, this nonfiction book should prove an inspiring resource for the whole family.



Preteens

Extreme Weather

By Thomas Kostigen

National Geographic, 2014, \$12.99

This informative book seems especially timely given last year's major disasters in the United States: Hurricane Helene, devastating California wildfires and more than 1,700 tornadoes. And because so many disasters are tied to climate change, their number and severity should only increase with time. Stunning photos accompany clear explanations of droughts, blizzards, thunderstorms, heat waves and so on, and sidebars on safety tips and nature's warning signs appear throughout. The book ends with actions that kids might take to protect the environment so that "weather doesn't get worse."



Teens

Down Came the Rain

By Jennifer Mathieu

Roaring Brook, 2023, \$19.99

This gripping, heartfelt YA novel focuses on the aftermath of a weather disaster – the physical, emotional and economic toll. In alternating chapters, Eliza and Javier share how Hurricane Harvey upended their lives in Houston in 2017. Environmental activism gives them purpose and a recognition that "we must change our way of living" across the entire planet.



I Survived Hurricane Katrina, 2005

By Lauren Tarshis

Art by Alvin Epps

Scholastic, 2022, \$10.99

It's hard for young people to grasp the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 – the danger, flooding, destruction and loss. This compelling graphic novel immerses them in the experience of extreme weather. As the turbulent waters rise in New Orleans, Barry is swept away from his family. He must rely on himself and the frightened dog he rescues. Together they contend with snakes, swim through debris and spend a sleepless night on a rooftop – before reuniting with family. Back matter includes the account of the illustrator (a New Orleans native), details of heroic rescues and new safety measures.



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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Why Summer Break Can Feel Unsafe to Orchid Kids: **PERCEPTION IS REALITY**

As people who have been adulting for a while, a whole summer off can seem like the most desirable thing in the world. We long for the days when we were kids and had nothing to do. We reminisce about long stretches of time where we played or read or watched TV. We didn't have to be anywhere. We didn't have to do anything.

Sounds like paradise, no?

Not for [Orchid Kids](#).

For many Orchid Kids, a whole summer off can seem like a black hole of anxiety. And even if our Orchid Kids are scheduled for camps and other activities, summer can feel disorienting.

Why?

Routine is Critical

Lots of Orchid Kids rely on routine to give them boundaries. When they have a routine, they know what to do. They know who they're with. They know what comes next. They can keep their brains and bodies calm and regulated (more often). Or, if they're not able to keep their brains and bodies calm, at least they know what they are fighting against.

Without routine, life can seem unpredictable.

Life can seem unknown and unknowable.

Life can seem like it has no guardrails.

Life can seem UNSAFE. (!?!?)

It's not that your Orchid Kid's life is actually unsafe. Of course they're not in danger. Of course you have their back. Of course you're taking care of their needs. And watching out for them.

It's that their brain **perceives** life as being unsafe. Their brain **perceives** danger everywhere. Their brain is wired to **perceive** any change as a threat.

Which, it turns out, is basically the same thing as actually being in danger, since perception creates reality. There's no difference in your child's brain between actually being in danger and the feeling of being in danger. No difference. (!)

I'm going to say that again because it's big: There is no difference (in your child's brain) between actually being in danger and the feeling of being in danger.

How to Make Summer Feel Safe

Here are some things you can do to help your child feel safe – even if there's no external structure planned this summer:

Make a routine even. A routine can be as simple as:

Wake up – Eat – Play outside – Play inside – Eat – Rest – Eat –



BIGSTOCK/ANNA KRAYNOVA

There is no difference (in your child's brain) between actually being in danger and the feeling of being in danger.

Play outside – Play inside – Eat – Sleep

Tell your child the plan each day. Review it in the morning, at midday and again at night.

Cut back on the variety of different activities and opt for the favorites. If your child likes to go to the same park every day, go! It's ok.

The strategies might seem simple. They might even seem unnecessary. But will you try them and see if you notice any difference in your child's behavior?

Knowing what to expect goes a long way to calming anxiety and reducing related behaviors. Because it makes life predictable. It makes life known. And therefore, it makes life **safe**.

And only when we feel safe can we truly function and operate in the world.

Gabriele Nicolet is a toddler whisperer, child development specialist, parent coach and host of the Complicated Kids Podcast. She is passionate about showing families how to help their complicated kids thrive and not just survive. Reach her at gabrielenicolet.com.



By Liam McCrickard

But varied play is not always easy to access. Financial barriers, lack of spaces designed for play, transportation issues and more all throw up obstacles to providing children with the opportunities for play they deserve. Fortunately, there are many organizations in the DMV that seek to help promote play, each providing access to forms of play that might otherwise remain out of a family's reach.

Volo Kids Foundation is an organization focused on providing free opportunities for kids to participate in team sports, through their seasonal programs that feature a variety of sports, changing with the seasons, including popular staples like soccer and basketball, but also more unique offerings such as pickleball! Jeffery Pabon, their national program manager, “Volo Kids is on a mission to build communities of active, resilient and confident kids. Our vision is to unlock the power of play for every kid, everywhere!” With a focus on helping kids build up their fundamentals, their six-week programs are perfect for kids looking to try new sports. Volo Kids even provides water and a snack at each session, alongside a T-shirt and the necessary equipment.

Let's Play America on the other hand, has less emphasis on sports and prolonged programs, instead focusing on individual events. With a goal of building a community of play, Let's Play America hosts "Play Days" that are free for the community, with a variety of activities, whether your child is sporty, crafty or anything else. These are not as frequent as Volo's programs, but are supplemented with paid opportunities like a parent's night out, which helps the organization fundraise for the free community days.

Even getting to these various programs, however, can sometimes be too great a barrier for some of the most vulnerable members of our community. That's where organizations like **Playtime Project** come in. They meet housing-insecure community members in D.C. and Prince George's County where they're at, working with shelters to help children in these difficult situations to experience play that would otherwise be out of reach. Sometimes, that takes the form of after-school or evening programs, and other times, it's in the form of play kits of age-appropriate toys that families can take with them. There are even opportunities for field trips, allowing children who may spend most of their time in school or a shelter to explore new locales and see more of the world.

But one of the most notable organizations promoting play is one hidden within a public institution: the library. Library systems across the DMV host a variety of free events for every age group, ranging from crafts to performances to opportunities for gaming via board games, video games and even VR headsets. Registration is sometimes required, but the events are always free, and while you're discovering events for your child, you may see events that appeal to you as well!

These organizations know the value of play, and whether you make use of their services or volunteer to help their operations, engaging with them is a way to help keep the spirit of play alive in the DMV!

Liam McCrickard holds a B.A. in creative and professional writing from Goucher College. He currently serves as assistant editor at Washington Parent. He also works as a freelance designer, writer and editor of tabletop role-playing games.



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The Benefits of Reading Entire Books

By Cheryl Feuer Gedzelman

Everyone has hobbies, and mine is reading novels. Aside from the members of my book groups, most people I know have other hobbies. Some think of reading as a more sophisticated pursuit and lament that they would like to read more books but just don't have the time. This is true for schoolchildren as well. The older they become, the longer their age-appropriate books become, and the less time they have to read them.

I recently read an article in *The Atlantic* magazine titled *The Elite College Students Who Can't Read Books* by Rose Horowitch (Nov. 2024). Based on multiple interviews with college professors, classroom teachers and students, Horowitch pointed out that students at every grade level are reading fewer books than previously. Several professors lamented that since so many high school and middle school teachers now assign excerpts, poetry and articles instead of whole books, students are overwhelmed when assigned whole books in college. Many struggle to attend to details, different points of view, characterization and subplots while keeping track of the overall plot. Some students shut down when confronted with ideas they are unfamiliar with.

Why are People Reading Fewer Books?

- People are spending their time on social media instead of reading books.
- Students are required to take many standardized tests, which measure reading comprehension and other skills through short passages. Therefore, teachers assign fewer whole books.
- Media offers more movies, television series and YouTube videos than ever before.
- Over the years, people have altered how they spend their leisure time.
- Advantages of Reading Whole Books
- Reading fiction and rooting for a character teaches empathy and appreciation of different cultures and walks of life.
- Reading for pleasure automatically improves fluency, writing skills, critical thinking and self-reflection.
- Nonfiction books can teach you about anything with great detail. By regularly reading a variety of genres, students can be better prepared for standardized tests and college work.

- Reading a whole book helps improve one's attention span, focus and discipline, which translates into other areas.
- Readers are thinkers; thinking deeply and being comfortable with ambiguity are valuable career and life skills.
- If you choose the right book, reading it can transport you to another world, providing ultimate insight and relaxation.

According to Horowitch, "Books can cultivate a sophisticated form of empathy, transporting a reader into the mind of someone who lived hundreds of years ago, or a person who lives in a radically different context from the reader's own."

Identifying with Fictional Characters

According to Hanna Rosin in *The Joy of Reading Books in High School* (Radio Atlantic, Dec. 2024), "Books you read in high school are your oldest friends, made during a moment in life when so many versions of you seem possible, and overidentifying with an author or character is a safe way to try one out." This quote made me think of characters that resonated with me:

- High School – *A Separate Peace*, *Catcher in the Rye* and *Tender is the Night*
- Middle School – *The Outsiders*
- Elementary School – *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and any book by Judy Blume
- More Current – *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series.

Slowly getting to know compelling characters from various settings helps children of any age explore their own identities.

Turning Reading into a Hobby

- Watch a miniseries together and compare it to a novel; you get to know the characters and look forward to continuing the book each day until it is finished.
- Help your child choose page-turners – stories with good plots, characterization, intrigue and an absorbing writing style.
- When your child finds an author or series that they enjoy, encourage them to go on to the next book.
- Set aside daily reading time for the entire family.
- Encourage all family members to bring their books or devices to trips, doctor's appointments, and other locations.
- Listen to recorded books together on car trips; many are narrated by the author or a well-known actor or personality.
- Encourage your children to read both physical and online books and choose the best fit.

Since most schools have been assigning fewer and fewer books over the last several years, it is more important than ever for students to fill in the gap by reading books on their own. Following a character through a journey with sustained immersion in a book provides the opportunity for self-reflection and discipline. Taking the time to find books that will be page-turners is worth the effort.

Cheryl Feuer Gedzelman is the president of **Tutoring For Success**, a company that has been providing in-person and online tutoring, academic coaching and standardized test preparation in Northern Virginia, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and beyond since 1994. She has a master's degree in curriculum and teaching from Columbia University.



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MUSIC PRACTICE:

A Routine to Set Your Child Up for Success

By Megan Maxwell

If you're anything like me, you LOVE the idea of a routine. You get all your schedule lined up perfectly. You work your plan the first day, second day ... and then the wheels start to feel like they fall off the track? Anyone else relate?

I am always frustrated, honestly even sometimes angry, when I tell my kids to go practice their piano, and I don't hear what I want to hear.

Understand the Routine Time Frame

A quick search on Google shows you that it actually takes anywhere from 18 to 254 days to form a new habit. Read that again, my friend! **"254 days. 8 1/2 months."** So giving your kids (especially your little ones) instructions for a practice routine once or twice and expecting them to follow it consistently seems overly optimistic. But if you commit to the investment, it will reap amazing rewards.

Understand the Parent's Role in the Routine

Establishing a practice routine isn't just about telling your children what to do and expecting them to comply. It's a collaborative effort that requires thoughtful planning and **consistent support** from parents.

Here are some strategies to make this process smoother for both you and your children.

- 1. Select a Consistent Practice Time:** Young children often struggle with understanding abstract concepts like time. To make it easier for them, choose a consistent time of day tied to a routine activity, such as a meal or snack time. For instance, practicing before school works well for early risers, allowing them to focus while you prepare breakfast.
- 2. Consider Their Schedule and Attention Span:** After a long day at school, children need some time to unwind before diving into their practice routine. Be mindful of their energy levels and give them space to relax mentally before starting practice.
- 3. Use Visual Timers:** Younger kids who can't read a clock benefit from visual timers. These timers provide a tangible representation of time passing, helping them stay on track.



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Keep practice sessions short and sweet, as consistency is more effective than sporadic, lengthy sessions.

- 4. Ensure All Necessary Materials Are at Hand:** Join your child in the music room and help them set up. Ensure they have the correct music sheets and discuss how many times they should play each piece. Keep essential items like pencils, notebooks and metronomes within easy reach.
- 5. Minimize Distractions:** Create a conducive practice environment by removing distractions from the room. A focused space enhances concentration and productivity.
- 6. Implement a Reward System:** Explore different reward systems to motivate your child. Some children respond well to intrinsic rewards, while others may need external incentives. Discover what works best for your child's unique personality.
- 7. Set Reminders:** Children may struggle to remember their practice times initially. Set reminders on your phone to help both you and your child stay on track. Consistency is key.
- 8. Be Consistent and Patient:** Remember that forming a habit takes time, even for adults. On average, it takes 66 days to establish a habit. Be patient and committed to working on the practice routine daily with your child, especially in the initial stages.

Understand the Routine Pays Off

Establishing a practice routine, whether it's for piano lessons or any other skill, is a journey that requires time, effort and patience. By understanding the time frame involved and implementing the right strategies, parents can empower their children to develop the habit of discipline, which will serve them for their entire future.

Consistency, visual aids and a supportive environment can all contribute to a smoother path toward success. So, as you embark on this journey with your child, remember that while it may take time, the rewards of a well-established practice routine are well worth the investment.

Happy Practicing!

Megan Maxwell is a bilingual mom who has been teaching piano, voice and early childhood classes for the past 20 years. She is co-founder of Little Chords Online Learning, offering personalized music and Spanish learning from home. This article was reprinted from her blog post *Unlocking the Secrets of Establishing a Successful Practice Routine*.

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Minting Women's History: The American Women Quarters™ Program

By Wardah Kamran

In honor of Women's History Month, Washington Parent takes a look at a program that commemorates 20 outstanding women in our country's past: you may not be familiar with the program but its outcomes could be passing through your hands every day!

The [American Women Quarters™ Program](#) is "the first circulating and numismatic quarter program that exclusively honors the achievements of women." The program began in 2022 and will continue through 2025, with five new women honored every year.

Created to Honor American Women

The program was proposed by Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, Sen. Deb Fischer, Former Rep. Barbara Lee and Former Rep. Anthony Gonzalez. The legislation was passed to honor American women for their contributions and accomplishments.

"It's clear that the contributions of women to our history are often overlooked," said [Sen. Cortez Masto](#). "This legislation would ensure generations of Americans learn about the unsung pioneers who blazed a trail forward for women and girls in the Silver State and across the country."

A Collaborative Selection Process

Honorees were chosen through a collaborative effort from the Secretary of the Treasury, the Smithsonian Institution's American Women's History Initiative, the National Women's History Museum and the Congressional Bipartisan Women's Caucus. In 2021, the United States Mint even invited the public to submit online recommendations for honorees through the National Women's History Museum web page.

"Over the years, there have been so many influential women ... who fought for what is right. Their courage, brilliance, and leadership changed this country and the world. I'm proud to ... honor these women and make sure future generations know what an incredible difference they made in our nation's history," said [Senator Fischer](#).

The Exceptional Women Honored

2022

- **Maya Angelou** – celebrated writer, performer and social activist
- **Dr. Sally Ride** – physicist, astronaut, educator and first American woman in space
- **Wilma Mankiller** – first woman elected principal chief of the Cherokee Nation
- **Nina Otero-Warren** – suffrage leader and the first woman superintendent of Santa Fe public schools
- **Anna May Wong** – first Chinese American film star in Hollywood

2023

- **Bessie Coleman** – first African American and first Native American woman licensed pilot
- **Edith Kanaka'ole** – indigenous Hawaiian composer, custodian of native culture and traditions
- **Eleanor Roosevelt** – leader, reformer, first lady and author
- **Jovita Idar** – Mexican American journalist, activist, teacher and suffragist
- **Maria Tallchief** – America's first prima ballerina

2024

- **Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray** – poet, writer, activist, lawyer and Episcopal priest
- **Patsy Takemoto Mink** – first woman of color to serve in Congress
- **Dr. Mary Edwards Walker** – Civil War era surgeon, women's rights and dress reform advocate
- **Celia Cruz** – Cuban American singer, "Queen of Salsa," cultural icon and one of the most popular Latin artists of the 20th century
- **Zitkala-Ša** – writer, composer, educator and political activist

2025

- **Ida B. Wells** – investigative journalist, suffragist and civil rights activist
- **Juliette Gordon Low** – founder of Girl Scouts of the United States of America
- **Dr. Vera Rubin** – astronomer who pioneered work on galaxy rotation
- **Stacey Park Milbern** – activist for people with disabilities
- **Althea Gibson** – multisport athlete and first Black athlete to break the color barrier at the highest level in tennis

Honorees with D.C. Connections

While most of the honored women spent time in the DMV, the following had strong connections to the region.

► **Eleanor Roosevelt**

- From 1933-1945, Eleanor Roosevelt spent time in Washington as the first lady and fought for civil rights.

► **Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray**

- Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray later attended Howard University Law School, and while there wrote a paper challenging the "separate" part of the Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) Supreme Court decision. Murray also organized sit-ins in Washington, D.C. restaurants to challenge segregation.

► **Dr. Vera Rubin**

- Having had some secondary schooling in Washington, Dr. Vera Rubin attended Georgetown University for her astronomy Ph.D. program. She later was the first female scientist at the Carnegie Institution's Department of Terrestrial Magnetism in Washington, D.C.

► **Zitkala-Ša**

- After moving to Washington to fulfill her role as the secretary for the Society of American Indians, Zitkala-Ša joined the women's suffrage movement and created the National Council of American Indians with her husband.

How to Get Your Kids Involved

■ **Lessons That Make Cents**

Check out the U.S. Mint Coin Classroom [newsletter](#) for fun monthly trivia and information about specific coins being released. In March 2025, Lessons That Make Cents features Ida B. Wells, the first 2025 American Women Quarters™ Program honoree.

■ **Coloring Pages**

Take a creative approach to learning and have your kids color some coins. The U.S. Mint Coin Classroom offers [printable PDF](#) coloring pages of all 20 of the quarters from the American Women's Quarters Program.

■ **Designing Your Own Coin**

Inspire your kids to appreciate the women in their lives by having them design their own coin. The U.S. Mint Coin Classroom offers [printable PDF](#) coin outlines for your children to fill in with their own women heroes.

■ **Complete Coin Boards**

Order free American Women Quarters™ Program Coin Boards to encourage your children to start collecting the limited-edition coins. The coin boards offer information about each woman honored and have a slot for each coin. The boards are limited to two per order.

Wardah Kamran is a former editorial intern with Washington Parent. She is a fourth year English and psychology major at the University of Virginia.



DEBORAH PORTER:

Workplace Warrior, Parent Partner and Caregiver Counselor

By Kristi Guillory

When I learned that I was expecting, I was elated, but concern set in as I realized that I would have to share this information with a supervisor whom I already had a rocky relationship with. When I told her, she wasn't happy for me but rather asked me if she could share my personal news with others – to which I responded no, that my pregnancy was my business.

Her inappropriate and illegal question set the tone for the many workplace ups and downs that I navigated during this time. During my pregnancy, a companywide reorganization began which led to mass exits, and my position was reclassified. During my maternity leave, most of my team left the organization. While I was in awe of the new life that I brought into the world, I was also worrying about my job security. When I returned to work, I had a new supervisor, the saga of job reclassification continued and I was ultimately let go. While my experiences were extreme, the feelings of concern and worry when individuals become working parents are shared by many.

Deborah Porter

Luckily, there is a local mom expert whose mission is to help parents, organizations and caregivers be their best. Based in Northern Virginia, [Deborah Porter](#) is a sought-after media and voice influencer, coach and consultant on parenting, motherhood and work/life balance. She partners with employers to create workplace cultures that retain working parents and caregivers. Porter used to write an advice column for Washington Parent, "[Balance Life With Coach Deborah](#)," and facilitated [Washington Parent Facebook Live events](#) on important topics like executive functioning and cybersafety for kids.

Porter is personally aware of the plight of working parents because she is a mother of three adult children. She has worked on workplace family-friendly policies with many notable organizations including Google, Verizon and The Kennedy Center. When I met her, I immediately knew that I was in great company when she said, "We need to do better by working parents."



The “Invisible Load” of Motherhood

The “invisible load” of motherhood describes the uncompensated and unnoticed physical, mental and emotional labor that women experience as they try to keep their households running smoothly. It’s a feeling of constant exhaustion as mothers try to keep up with constant to-dos. When partners are confronted with a request to assist, this can lead to further resentment as they may ask to be assigned tasks which further adds to the motherhood load. All of these feelings can lead to what has been called “mom rage.”

Porter is not afraid to acknowledge the “invisible load” of motherhood, but to also boldly advocate for lightening this load. She would like to engage more men in this discussion to open their eyes to the true, lived experience of mothers.

The Family-Friendly Workplace

When women seek employment, they are often drawn to “family-friendly” environments, but what is a family-friendly workplace? Porter thinks that we throw this term around without really understanding what it means for organizations.

Porter describes several hallmarks of a family-friendly workplace:

Flexibility – Flexibility doesn’t just mean a remote work environment but can be an environment that allows parents the freedom to attend events that are meaningful in their children’s lives.

On Site Child Care – She views this as a “game changer.” It demonstrates commitment and dedication to working families.

Child Care Stipends – These stipends can be given to employees or to child care providers. Stipends are important as they can increase accessibility and affordability of child care.

Several of the organizations Porter has worked with see “family-friendly” as a way to create a culture of care for working parents and caregivers. This allows them to bring their whole selves to work every day.

A recent trend is the [return to office](#) movement post-pandemic.

A complete return to the office isn’t always beneficial for caregivers and working parents, and Porter sees this trend continuing in 2025. Organizations should be cautious when requiring employees to return to the office. Porter believes that employers should consider the costs of losing employees alongside the cost of retaining good employees who simply desire workplaces that allow them to be effective employees and effective parents.



“We need to do better by working parents.”

— Deborah Porter



Can We Have It All?

This is a question that has been asked since time immemorial. How about also asking, “Can parents have it all?” Porter says, “Yes, you can have it all but not all at the same time.” She thinks that we need to do some introspection to determine what “all” means, because our needs change over time.

Porter would like to see parents be allowed to be parents everywhere – including the workplace. Often, we choose to not put on our “parenting hat” in the office. Instead of seeing the usual, sterile out-of-office email message, she would like to see people include why they are out of the office, especially if it relates to parenting responsibilities. An out-of-office message could simply state, “Going to take the kids to get braces.” Porter has started to see this practice gain increasing popularity but would like to see especially male organizational leaders make this a practice. “Let’s make real life ‘normal’ for working parents,” she recommends.

The Motherhood Penalty and the Fatherhood Bonus

When women announce their pregnancy, they often don’t receive a bonus but when men announce that they will become fathers, their salaries increase. This is the “Motherhood Penalty and the Fatherhood Bonus.” According to Bankrate in a [Newsweek article on that topic](#), “In 2023, full-time working mothers with children under 18 earned a median salary of \$55,276 while fathers in the same category earned \$72,280, according to Bankrate. This gap translates to a loss of approximately \$1,400 per month, or \$17,000 annually for mothers. Over a 30-year career, this could amount to as much as \$510,000 in lost wages.”

CONTINUED...

Caregivers

At any moment, any of us may be placed in a caregiving role. Caregivers, whether caring for a relative and/or children, should not feel their job or advancement is at risk because of family dynamics. “Does your organization make it easy for caregivers to be available for their families when life happens?” Porter questions. If you don’t know, ask them. She adds, “needing to be present for one’s family does not mean [employees] aren’t committed to their job.”

Working Parents and Caregivers Support

Deborah Porter is here for us. If you need assistance navigating the tough and ever-changing terrain of being a working parent or an organization that wants to do better for working families, Porter can help. She provides specialized programming for employee groups and affinity groups on topics such as addressing the load of working mothers, imposter syndrome at work and distilling the [myth of work/life balance](#). She also offers coaching for moms. Porter seeks to create dynamic work environments where working parents, mothers and caregivers can flourish and be more at ease, understanding that we can’t do it all, all of the time, but we can at the right time.

Kristi Guillory is an attorney, policy consultant and a children’s book author. She is the author of *Harper Counts Her Blessings*.



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One Camp or Two for Siblings?

By Rebecca Hastings

Summer camp sounds fun, but how do you handle siblings? Should they go to the same camp or have independent experiences?

While some siblings thrive in the same camp setting, others may benefit from separate experiences. Deciding on the best option requires careful consideration of your children's unique needs, dynamics and interests.

Here are key factors parents should consider when deciding whether one camp or two is the best choice for their family.

1. Do Your Kids Like the Same Things?

Children are unique, with their own hobbies, skills and preferences. Some camps specialize in specific activities, such as sports, performing arts or science, while others offer a broad range of options.

If your children have shared interests, the same camp might be a perfect fit. They can enjoy activities together and strengthen their bond. However, if one child prefers rock climbing and another loves theater, it might be better to consider separate camps where their individual passions can flourish.

Involve your children in the decision-making process. Letting them voice their preferences will help ensure they are excited about their camp experience.

2. What Are Their Ages and Developmental Stages?

The age gap between siblings can play a significant role in determining if they should attend the same camp. Camps typically group children by age to tailor activities to their developmental needs.

For siblings close in age, attending the same camp might provide comfort and a sense of camaraderie. If there's a wide age gap, one child may feel left out or overshadowed, especially if the camp's programming is skewed toward older or younger age groups.

Check whether the camp offers programs for different age brackets so siblings can share the environment while participating in age-appropriate activities.

3. How is Their Relationship?

Sibling relationships vary greatly. Some siblings are inseparable,

while others thrive with a bit of space. Evaluate how your children interact with each other in everyday settings.

If they have a supportive and cooperative relationship, the same camp can enhance their bond. On the other hand, if they are highly competitive or frequently argue, separate camps might provide a healthy break, allowing them to grow individually without the influence of sibling dynamics.

Even if they get along well, establish boundaries ahead of time, such as encouraging them to participate in separate activities or form their own friendships so they each have positive experiences.

4. How Independent Are They?

Summer camp is an excellent opportunity for children to develop independence. Consider whether one sibling might lean too heavily on the other if they attend the same camp.



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For some kids, having their sibling around provides a sense of security. For others, it may hinder their ability to step outside their comfort zone and fully engage in the camp experience.

Talk to camp staff about how they can encourage independence while fostering positive sibling interactions. Many camps are experienced in navigating sibling dynamics.

5. What Are the Practical Considerations?

While your children's needs should take priority, practical factors like logistics, cost and scheduling can also influence your decision. Sending siblings to the same camp may offer family discounts and simplifies transportation and coordination. However, separate camps may allow each child to access programs more tailored to their interests.

If you're considering separate camps, look for sessions that overlap or stagger them to ensure your family still has summer downtime together.

Making the Final Decision

Choosing between one camp or two is a decision that depends on your family's unique situation. By considering your children's interests, dynamics and developmental needs – and balancing them with practical logistics – you can make the choice that best supports their growth and enjoyment.

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](https://www.instagram.com/rebeccahastings).



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13 TIPS for Helping Anxious Kids Enjoy Summer Camp

How to clear the fear to make way for a formative experience

From The Child Mind Institute

Portraits of summer camp showcase sun-splashed children playing sports, swimming and getting freckles. Not pictured is any sign of anxiety, a natural reaction to a new adventure and a several-week separation. All children experience a mixture of excitement and nervousness when summer camp approaches. For most, excitement trumps nerves, but some children develop anxiety serious enough to get in the way of what should be a fun, formative experience.

Summer camps hone many skills useful for future success: resilience, self-reliance and social adaptability. The camp experience – being away from home among peers – can help kids develop social skills, separate in a healthy way from parents and cultivate independence. Camp activities can help them build confidence by demonstrating mastery. Children are often ready for sleepaway camp around ages 10 to 12, although preparedness varies depending on age, experience and temperament.



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Tools for Taming Anxiety

The key to helping your child get over precamp nerves is to acknowledge their feelings and give them tools to help them tame them.

1. Let your child feel a sense of ownership over the experience. Involve them in picking the summer camp; familiarize them with the camp environment and teach them about camp activities so they can formulate expectations.
2. Help your child get excited about camp: Take them shopping for new gear and focus them on fun things about camp that they can anticipate.
3. Avoid focusing on what makes children anxious. Instead of asking leading questions like, "Are you nervous about horseback riding?" ask open-ended questions like, "How are you feeling about the horses?"
4. Don't trivialize their concerns or offer glib reassurances. "There's nothing to worry about!" or "Everyone loves camp!" may discourage your child. Instead, show that you have empathy and acknowledge their concerns.
5. Focus on concrete details in conversations leading up to and during summer camp. Avoid abstract issues like what it's like to be away from home in favor of cabin details, meals in the lodge or campfire rituals.
6. Reflect on your own formative experiences away from home and share positive aspects of them with your child. Show that you are willing to talk about the new things they'll be doing, whether it's eating new food, sleeping in a bunk bed, getting along with cabinmates or coexisting with insects.
7. Go through "rehearsals." A shorter-term sleepover or a night at Grandma's will make it easier for your child to be away from home.
8. Don't linger at the bus stop. Keep the goodbyes short, as delaying just causes more mixed feelings.
9. Make communication easy and accessible: Pack envelopes and stamps, outline a schedule for phone calls or emails if they're part of the camp's routine and make sure your child understands how easy it will be.
10. Have goals for each letter or conversation, so your child will come away focused on how they are adjusting, rather than on how much they want to come home.
11. Try not to communicate your own anxiety; your child can pick up on your feelings even if you don't verbalize them. What you want to share is your confidence in your child and the summer experience.
12. Help your child formulate realistic, goal-oriented plans for making friends or toasting the perfect marshmallow or passing a swimming test. The thrill of completing these plans can give your child a feeling of success and take his mind off his anxiety.
13. If your child has psychiatric or learning issues, don't keep them a secret. Make sure the staff and counselors know anything they need to know to head off problems and maximize their experience. Do they wet the bed? Are they anxious about water? And let your child know that counselors are there to support them, whether they have a simple question or a larger problem.

Are You Ready for Your Child to Go to Camp?

For parents who are anxious about sending kids to summer camp, remember that the cost of a good camp covers more than the arts and crafts; it includes a team of professionals and counselors committed to fostering social learning in your child.

Summer camp is a unique situation where your child engages with a large community of peers and learns how to interact socially in a less-structured environment than school. This is a time for them to actively make decisions for themselves and develop a sense of self-reliance. Though you may be concerned and wish to intervene, your supportiveness will give your child room to take ownership over the experience themselves.

When should you worry that a child's precamp anxiety is something problematic? You might be concerned if they demonstrate physical symptoms of fear: cold or clammy hands, butterflies, faintness, headache or nausea. Excessive tearfulness and hiding are also signs that something out of the ordinary is going on. A child might have nightmares about separation, or ask questions like, "What if something happens to me or you when I'm away?" If a child's reaction is so severe that it interferes with normal functioning, it might be time to consult a mental health professional.

Reprinted with permission. The Child Mind Institute is a nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families facing mental health and learning disorders through excellence in science, education and care. For more information, visit childmind.org.

A promotional poster for "Washington Parent Picks Kids' Stuff". The background is dark blue with yellow stars. At the top left is a circular logo with "WASHINGTON Parent PICKS" and stars. To its right is a QR code with an arrow pointing to it and the text "SCAN TO FIND LOCAL TOP PICKS". Below the logo, the text "Washington Parent Picks" is in white, followed by "KIDS' STUFF" in large, bold, white letters. Underneath, it says "Looking to discover our top picks for all things, such as shopping and haircuts for your kids!". At the bottom, there's a "40 YEARS WASHINGTON Parent" logo with a tree icon. At the very bottom are two children's faces: a boy with red hair on the left and a girl with dark hair on the right.

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Camp Woodend

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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.*

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CAMPS GUIDE



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Round House Theatre

At Round House, young artists of all ages and backgrounds can experience the joy of creating theater 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.



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Young Civil War Historians Conference July 13-18

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CAMPS & SUMMER PROGRAMS

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Summer Musical Theatre Training Program

Provides students in rising grade 7–12 with foundational and expanded understanding of technique in ballet, jazz, music and acting. The program takes place Monday through Friday at Wintergreen Plaza in Rockville – 9 a.m.–4 p.m. daily and includes a trip to see a Washington D.C. area or Broadway production! *Rockville, Md.*

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 St., Bladensburg, Md. 301-864-4532.*

PENNSYLVANIA

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.*

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.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BSC Buddy Camp

At Bethesda Soccer Club Buddy Camp, high-level coaches and elite youth soccer players join forces with children with physical and de-

velopmental disabilities to improve their soccer skills and to share in the love of the game. *Walter Johnson High School, 6400 Rock Spring Dr., Bethesda, Md. 240-477-2504.*

Camp Forget-Me-Not/Camp Erin D.C.

Campers ages 6–17 will enjoy a full day of traditional camp activities, grief focused groups and workshops to help them explore a variety of ways to express themselves while developing skills. All the activities are specially designed to help campers express themselves and develop bonds with others. Camp Forget-Me-Not/Camp Erin DC is provided free of charge. Meals and snacks will be provided during the day camp. *4201 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 300, Washington, D.C. 202-624-0010.*



GRADES K-9

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CAMPS GUIDE



Camp Holiday Trails

A camp for children and teens with medical needs and their siblings, aged 6-17. CHT was incorporated as a nonprofit in 1973 and, since that time, has provided over 10,000 kids with medical needs the opportunity to experience a positive camp experience. 400 Holiday Trails Ln., Charlottesville, Va. 434-977-3781.

Camp Inclusion

Camp Inclusion is a summer day camp for any student with or without a cognitive, social or physical disability. At Camp Inclusion, campers participate in many group games and sports such as soccer, kickball and handball. Campers also participate in art & crafts activities such as tie-dye and painting, as well as developmentally appropriate board games. Games are age appropriate and adapted for all needs. Glenwood Middle School, 2690 MD-97, Glenwood, Md. 443-398-8537.

Camp Ramapo

Based on a 250-acre campus in Rhinebeck, New York, Camp Ramapo is a residential summer camp that serves young people who are affected by social, emotional or learning challenges, including those on the autism spectrum. Rhinebeck, NY. 845-876-8403.

Summit Camp DC Weekenders

Weekenders are tons of fun for teens! Plus, Summit offers many opportunities for learning and growth as part of our weekender offerings. Your teen may participate in the following class activities during a weekender experience: Managing Money 101, Travel Safety and Awareness for Teens, Creative Arts Paint and "Sip" Class, Orienteering, Ropes Course or Archery Instruction, Team Building Games, Karaoke and Talent Night and much more! Md. and D.C. 570-253-4381.



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A Midsummer Night's Dream



PARENTING IN THE AGE OF INSTAGRAM

How to Silence the Noise and Feel More Easeful

By Dr. Emma Basch and Dr. Jillian Neill

I feel so bad that he's not on a schedule yet!" new mom Erin confessed about her 8-week-old in our therapy session. She had been generally adjusting well to motherhood, but a glance at Instagram threw her for a loop. After 8 weeks of following his cues, she was feeling guilty for not knowing about "wake windows," newborn "playtime" and feeding schedules. She was convinced that she was setting him up for failure or that she had already failed him. She followed an account that promised to provide her with an ideal newborn schedule for him. And just like that, what had once been a space for funny reels and animal videos became an endless pit of parenting advice.



BIGSTOCK/HOZARD

"Being comfortable with not having all the answers and not parenting 'perfectly' will get you a lot farther in improving your parental confidence than any social media account."

When someone tells you in 90 seconds or less how to be a "better" parent, of course you want to listen! We are hardwired to want to do what is best for our children. From parenting professionals with tips for tantrums to moms "just like us" hawking the "perfect" schedule to fix all your woes, as soon as parents open social media, we are bombarded with ways to parent more peacefully, more gently, more aesthetically. In a word: better.

And the more we consume, the more the algorithm feeds us, showing us all the possible parenting challenges we may encounter, even ones we've never considered. [Social media can leave us feeling insufficient](#) even have. So how do we cut through the noise and focus on what matters to us?

Our Top 5 Ways to Parent with More Ease in the Age of Instagram

► Solidify your parenting values

When everything is important, nothing is. Social media bombards us with a myriad of things we are supposed to worry about. Identifying your parenting values becomes your trailhead, making it easier to make parenting decisions and filter out advice that doesn't resonate with you.

Start by asking yourself questions like:

- What matters to me as a parent?
- What do I want my children to learn from me?
- A values questionnaire like this [one](#) can help.

► Cleanse your feed

If you walk away from social media questioning your parenting, how might the accounts you're following stoke self-doubt? Even if you followed with good intentions, perhaps that parenting page, influencer, coach, friend or even therapist is not helping you tune into your sense of what works for you and your family. If it isn't helping you, it's OK to unfollow, block or ignore.

► Identify what problem you're trying to solve before looking at the solutions

There's nothing wrong with turning to others to support us in the challenges of parenting; we were meant to parent in community. But before diving headlong into #momstagram,

ask yourself: what problem am I trying to solve? Perhaps it's better answered by your pediatrician or a family member, or maybe the problem is rooted in parental anxiety that would benefit from meeting with a therapist. The internet has infinite solutions out there, but they may not be the right ones for you.

► Identify when you are being "sold" a problem so you can pay for a solution

So much social media content is designed to get us to buy into a program. We have so many resources at our fingertips and influencers need to lure us in a big way. They present the big problem, tease a solution and then encourage you to sign up for their program for even more content. There's nothing wrong with seeking or providing solutions, but be aware of this trap.

► Stop scrolling and get present with yourself and with your kids.

Guess who knows your kid better than any expert or influencer ever could? You. Being present with your kids is a powerful tool for understanding who they are and what makes them tick. Not only can this help you know how to parent them, but also to identify if and where you might need more support in parenting them.

It's great to live in a world with easy access to so much information, but sometimes more is not better. With parental stress at an [all-time high](#), social media can so easily stoke our anxiety and prey on our best intentions. Being comfortable with not having all the answers and not parenting "perfectly" will get you a lot farther in improving your parental confidence than any social media account. So put the phone down and trust yourself: You've got this!

Dr. Emma Basch is a licensed clinical psychologist based in Washington, D.C. She is the founder and director of [Dr. Emma Basch & Associates](#), a group practice specializing in the mental health needs of women and families. Dr. Jillian Neill is a licensed psychologist based in North Carolina and a therapist at Dr. Emma Basch & Associates. She specializes in working with parents and aspiring parents on the challenges of creating and growing thriving families.

Listen Up:

Are Your Child's Headphones Safe for Their Hearing?

By Sandi Schwartz

We are always looking for ways to keep our kids quiet and entertained during a long car ride. Whether they are listening to music, playing video games or watching a movie in the back seat, they are most likely wearing headphones. Have you ever wondered if this is safe for their ears?



Why It's a Problem

With the explosion of smart phones, portable gaming systems and media players, more children and teenagers are listening to earbuds and headphones at dangerously high volumes that can damage their hearing. According to the [American Osteopathic Association](#), 1 in 5 teens has some form of hearing loss. This rate is about 30% higher than it was in the 1990s. Many experts believe this change is due to the increased use of headphones.

Listening to devices at levels greater than 80 decibels (dB) for extended periods of time may be dangerous. Over time, the hair cells in the ear start to break down because they are not receiving proper blood flow and oxygen. This essentially exhausts the auditory system, causing hearing loss. Unfortunately, hearing loss is permanent and cannot be reversed. Even mild hearing loss due to excessive noise could lead to developmental delays in speech and language.

Children are especially susceptible to this damage because they are not aware of the dangers and do not fully understand what it means to be too loud. How our children listen to their music and other devices can greatly impact their chance of having hearing issues down the road. Unfortunately, according to [World Health Organization](#) experts, a rise in hearing loss is predicted due to unsafe use of personal audio devices.

What to Watch Out For

How will you know if the headphones are affecting your child's hearing? The type of hearing loss due to headphones is usually gradual over a long period of time and without obvious warning signs. The only way to determine if your child has hearing loss is to have them undergo a thorough hearing test and medical examination by a hearing specialist. If your child experiences any of the following symptoms, it is a good idea to have them evaluated:

- Ringing, roaring, hissing or buzzing in the ear.
- Difficulty understanding speech in noisy places or places with poor acoustics.
- Muffled sounds and a feeling that the ear is plugged.
- Listening to the TV or radio at a higher volume than in the past.

How To Protect Your Child

You do not have to ban your children from ever using headphones again. By taking the following important steps, you can help protect them from damaging their ears.

► Choose External Headphones

Experts suggest that children use larger, external headphones that rest over the ear opening as opposed to earbuds that are placed directly in the ear. External headphones consist of small speakers that are held close to the ear, while earbuds focus sound more directly into the ear. Earbuds also allow more background noise to seep in, so children often turn up the volume to compensate, causing more damage to their ears. Additionally, earbuds are not typically designed for children's smaller ears, which can prevent them from hearing properly.

► Try Noise-Cancelling Headphones

Background noises can be distracting to headphone listeners. Their first reaction to this extra sound is to turn the volume

up, drowning out the unwanted noise. Children especially tend to do this. By investing in high-quality noise reduction headphones that cover the entire ear, you can solve this problem. They will keep outside noise from interfering with the sound coming out of the headphones and eliminate the need to turn the volume up to dangerous levels.

► Set Specific Volume Limits

Most MP3 players can produce sounds up to 120 dB, which is the equivalent of the volume of a rock concert. At that level, hearing loss can occur after only about an hour and 15 minutes! The consensus among experts is that children should avoid extended exposure to volumes above 80 dB. Above this level – even for short periods of time – can result in hearing loss. By keeping below 80 dB, children can safely listen for about eight hours without damage.

Although the maximum volume limit is adjustable on many devices, your children may be able to disable the function and increase the volume on their own. It is critical to set strict guidelines about the maximum volume level allowable in order to protect their hearing.

► Look For Headphones Designed Especially For Children

Some headphones on the market are designed to keep the volume at a safe level to prevent noise induced hearing loss. Look for headphones with a built-in volume limiter to prevent sound levels from exceeding 80 dB.

► Limit Listening Time

The amount of time your children spend on their headphones plays a major factor in how their hearing is impacted. Moderation is key in protecting your children's ears. Avoiding excessive use of listening devices will go a long way in preventing hearing loss. The American Osteopathic Association suggests using the "60/60 rule" as a guideline. This means using only 60% of the device's volume level for no more than 60 minutes at a time. After 60 minutes, your children should give their ears a break for at least an hour.

► Monitor Use

Educate your children about the risks of listening to their devices too loudly. Explain to them how important it is to be aware of the volume level. Check in periodically to make sure your child is keeping the sound at a safe volume. You should be able to gauge the volume just by standing next to them while they are wearing headphones. If you can hear sound coming from the headphones, then it is too loud. Also, make sure to check the volume setting on the device.

Sandi Schwartz is an award-winning author and journalist, and mother of two. She has 25 years of experience writing about parenting, wellness and environmental issues. Her books *Finding Ecohappiness* and *Sky's Search for Ecohappiness* inspire families to build a nature habit to feel happier and calmer. Learn more at ecohappinessproject.com.



BIGSTOCK / IVANKO80

Spring Break Staycation: 8 Fun and Frugal Ideas

By Jill Morgenstern

Spring break can be both a blessing and a curse as parents try to make each year more memorable than the next. This pressure to provide a fun-filled vacation can be particularly true when both parents are working. While summer break is full of sleepaway camps and day camps, there can be fewer options during spring break. But spring break does not have to be lavish and over the top to be memorable. By having an inventive staycation in your own home, you don't have to break the bank to have a great time. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Have a Karaoke Night

If you don't have a karaoke machine, there's a chance that a friend has one you could borrow. Not only that, but these days there are [karaoke apps](#) you can use on your phone!

Build Blanket Forts Galore

Now is the time to get out maybe not the prettiest pillows, but at least the bulkiest ones. And once the fort is built, activities planned for inside become that much more exciting – board games, reading time or even a movie night if the screen is small enough or the fort big enough!

Create a Mini Indoor Golf Course

What? You have no golf clubs? Even better! Let the children use their imagination to make something they might use. Paper towel rolls could be turned into golf clubs, for example. And who says the golf ball has to be one certain size?

Have a DIY Home Spa Day

No need to go bankrupt if you already have nail polish or bath bombs on hand. Plus the [Korean face masks](#) that are so popular right now can be bought for under \$10. No Korean skincare store or Asian store in your area? You can find them on Amazon or even sometimes at Walmart.

Make Homemade Ice Cream

If you want to splurge, it can be great fun for kids to see ice cream being made in a real ice cream maker. But if not, they can still have the satisfaction of creating their own sweet treat! [Look on YouTube for plenty of instructive videos on how to make single serving ice creams](#) in ziplock bags!

Backyard Camping

If you happen to have a backyard, a strong sense of adventure and favorable weather, this activity will be sure to make your spring break memorable. Use your senses to enjoy the outdoors – look for stars, smell the outdoors, listen for leaves blowing or critters crawling, all while knowing that, if necessary, a warm bed and hot shower can be only moments away.

Have a Scavenger Hunt

These can take a little while to set up initially (you provide clues to get from one destination to the next until players finally find a prize at the end) but children love them. Done often enough, children will start doing them for each other and if you're lucky, they may make one for you!

Create and Perform a Family Play

Especially if Mom and Dad are both working, this can give children something to do during the day, culminating in an after-dinner performance that everyone can enjoy.

By participating in these activities, or ones you think of on your own, a spring break vacation can be just as memorable and meaningful as an extravagant vacation, but without the extravagant cost. The key is to have an open mind and a sense of fun. If both Mom and Dad are working, it can be challenging to fit in the time for fun activities but as children mature they will take on more and more of the responsibilities for making their Spring Break a time to remember.

Teacher and writer [Jill Morgenstern](#) has four children and a master's degree in teaching reading.

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WASHINGTON
Parent

For parents of children with severe allergies or celiac disease, those practical realities can feel overwhelming. Where we do stop for dinner on the road? Does the airline serve peanuts? Parents can feel torn between wanting to introduce their children to new experiences and keeping them comfortable in their safe, vetted routine.

But the truth is, you can have it all (at least in the food department) on a family trip. It's all in the preparation.

Advocate Before You Leave

Parents of children with allergies are always advocating, but so much of this hard work can be done in advance.

For air travel, research airline allergy policies and book with an airline that takes your needs seriously. Many airlines offer allergen-free meals when preordered in advance, including [American Airlines](#) and [United Airlines](#). Some airlines do not serve peanuts as a policy ([American Airlines](#); [JetBlue](#)) while others, such as [Delta](#), will refrain from serving peanuts on a flight if notified of an allergy in advance. Airlines will also often accommodate preboarding requests to allow passengers the opportunity to clean their seat areas for traces of allergens.

For food, research the restaurant options in advance as well. My son has celiac disease, so I rely heavily on the [Find Me Gluten Free](#) and [Atly](#) apps, platforms which help me identify gluten-free friendly restaurants. For broader allergy restrictions, consider [AllergyEats](#), a guide to finding allergy-friendly restaurants across the United States.

And don't forget about your local community and parent groups! Allison Wiseman, RD, CDE, LD, of [Wiseman Nutrition & Wellness](#), reminds us that "Parents are a mighty force." She recommends leaning on community groups to find those who might have navigated the same issues while traveling. "Word of mouth can be really powerful for finding something accessible and kid friendly," she says.

Once you've found potential restaurants, review the menu and call the establishment to understand the safety practices. A menu might list a food item as "gluten free" but is it safe for celiacs? How do they handle other allergens and cross contamination? Wiseman advises, "the less you're navigating on the spot with your child there, the better." While it's important that they understand their own food restrictions, your kids don't necessarily need to know all of the legwork involved on vacation.

It helps to identify a couple of family-favorite chain options where you know your child can eat safely (and happily). [Chipotle](#), for example, does not use peanuts, tree nuts, sesame or shellfish in any of its dishes, nor does it use eggs except at locations which serve breakfast. Having a few trusted standbys can take the guesswork out of eating on the road.

And, if you're planning to travel with friends or family, make sure that they are fully aware of your child's needs in advance. Set expectations. Offer to bring food as a way to contribute, or plan to eat separately when needed. If everyone can act as a team, there's less risk of disappointment or resentment.

Pack Your Bags

You've researched and planned and set expectations, but now it's time to pack. Here are a few key items to put on your list:

- **Snacks:** Whether you're stuck in traffic or your train gets delayed, you need snacks. Wiseman recommends including a protein source – something satiating and fueling. Depending on your child's restrictions, you can consider nuts, cheese or jerky. Keep them accessible and make sure they're something your child enjoys!
- **Two Epinephrine Auto-Injectors:** If your child has allergies, don't forget to pack your epinephrine auto-injectors – plural. It's important to bring a backup pen in case you need to use one. You also can purchase an insulated carrying case to ensure they remain at the proper temperature while traveling. Don't forget to check the expiration date before you leave and to keep the pens in an easily accessible location (i.e., not in your checked bag).
- **Disinfecting Wipes:** In the case of life-threatening allergies, bring disinfecting wipes to clean tray tables and arm rests on airplanes or trains.
- **Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan:** In case of emergency or a need for documentation, bring your child's Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan. The plan, created by Food Allergy Research & Education, outlines recommended treatment in case of an allergic reaction, is signed by a physician and includes emergency contact information. It's also available in Spanish.
- **Equal Eats Card:** If you're traveling out of the country, consider bringing an "Equal Eats" allergy translation card. Equal Eats creates stock and customized translation cards to better communicate allergies, intolerances and celiac disease to food service professionals around the world.

Enjoy the Food!

There are some rules you can't break when your child has a life-threatening allergy or celiac disease. But there are others that I freely break when we travel. One of them is the strict idea of a "balanced meal." If my kids are hungry and the safe options are limited, I might suggest ice cream for dinner. It makes all of us feel like we're really on vacation and my son doesn't feel penalized for having celiac disease.

While Wiseman prioritizes foods that fuel, she tries to stay away from rigid behavior. What's important, she advises, is that no one feels like they are missing out and they're having a fun adventure.

So, once the prep work is finally complete, take a deep breath and enjoy the experience. Who knows, maybe this really will be the trip where nobody argues!

Jennifer Brechbill is a lawyer, writer and mom of three. You can find her on LinkedIn or Instagram (@glutenfree_with_g).

10 Reasons Why the Tooth Fairy Did Not Come Last Night

by Katy M. Clark

It glistened in the soft morning light, the single tear that fell from my 8-year-old daughter's eye as she stood in our bedroom doorway.

"Mommy, she didn't come!" she breathed despondently. Then that single tear turned into a torrent.

Oh, fudge. The Tooth Fairy didn't come last night.

"Uh," I stammered in reply, elbowing my husband awake.

"What happened?" he mumbled.

"The Tooth Fairy didn't come last night," I replied.

"Oh, fudge," he said. Only he didn't say "fudge."

How did we let this happen? Quickly I reviewed the night before. Exhausted by my first Girls' Night Out in three months, I had gone to bed at 10 p.m. (don't judge) and left the money with my husband. He simply fell asleep before remembering his Tooth Fairy duties.

There were more extenuating circumstances, too. Our daughter's tooth had been wiggly for just a day. That was extremely short notice vs. those teeth that hang on by a (nasty!) thread for weeks. Plus, it had been months since she'd lost her last tooth. Our son, 12, had long since finished losing his baby teeth. My husband and I were definitely rusty in our duties as well as in the twilight of our Tooth Fairy career.

Still, the plain, hard truth was that we blew it. The Tooth Fairy did not come.

We sprang out of bed, soothing our daughter (and each other) with hugs and reassuring words. There HAD to be a good reason she didn't come, we told our daughter. In fact, my husband and I, along with friends, family and the internet, came up with 10 Reasons Why the Tooth Fairy Did Not Come Last Night:



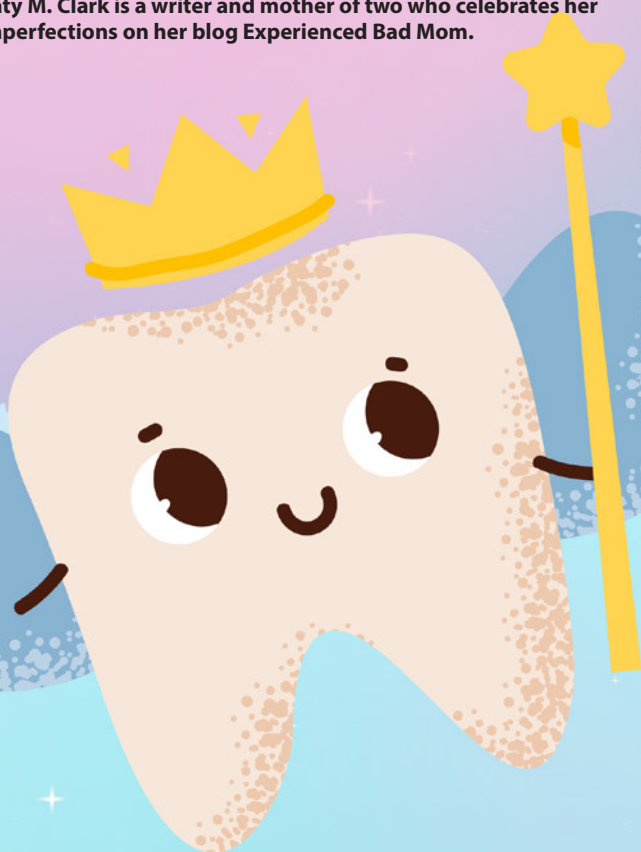


1. The dew was too heavy. Her wings got wet, and she couldn't fly.
2. The Tooth Fairy was on vacation and the substitute Tooth Fairy didn't know what she was doing.
3. She couldn't get to your pillow due to your messy room.
4. Too much traffic. She'll leave earlier tonight!
5. She was sick.
6. Spreadsheet error. Your tooth was projected to come out on Friday, so she wasn't ready when it came out on Monday.
7. Some Tooth Fairies like snacks. Leave one out tonight and she'll probably come.
8. Oh, look, she dropped the money on the floor over there. She must have wanted you to keep your tooth as a souvenir.
9. You probably woke up and scared her away, even if you don't remember doing that.
10. She ran out of money and will be back tonight. She's a tiny fairy so she can only carry so much.

My daughter seemed to calm down after she spent the day listening to our reasons why the Tooth Fairy did not come. All was made right with the world the following morning when, hallelujah, the Tooth Fairy DID come.

Moms and dads, may your Tooth Fairy always remember to come. In case she doesn't, may you find these reasons to be lifesavers!

Katy M. Clark is a writer and mother of two who celebrates her imperfections on her blog Experienced Bad Mom.



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PARENTING INSIGHTS Talking to Your Neurodivergent Child About Their Diagnosis: Part 2 – The What and How

By Jen Dryer

[Editor's Note: In Washington Parent's February digital magazine Parenting Insights with PEP, author Jen Dryer shared the "The Why and The When" of talking to your neurodivergent child about their diagnosis.]

The WHAT

There are some key steps to take before starting the conversation:

- Ensure that *you* are emotionally and mentally prepared.
- Investigate your own feelings about your ND child's or teen's diagnosis; come to accept and understand your child's neurotype (a.k.a. diagnosis) to ensure you don't convey disappointment or pity.

Plan and practice what language you will use to describe the diagnosis and your child's brain. Ensure that your language is factual and accessible to your child. Also explain that a particular diagnosis can look very different in different people, because all brains are different.

The HOW

1. Consider your child's language level and emotional maturity: Use language that is simple, clear and accessible.
2. Keep the explanations simple: Explain only one or two elements of their brain/diagnosis at a time, so the information is digestible and not overwhelming.
3. Connect to a real experience: Use a real-life experience that can help them see what their brain differences look like in the world.
4. Consider your child's attention span: Follow your child's signs of wanting more or being done with the chat.
5. Pay attention to the condition of their nervous system: Find a time when their brain and body are as regulated as possible.
6. Ensure they understand; give them time and space to ask questions: You can ask them to share what they learned about their brain; gently correct any misunderstandings and answer any questions.

These sentence frames can be helpful to help kids understand their brains in a nonjudgmental way.

- "All brains work differently; it's really easy for your brain to _____ and it's harder for your brain to _____."
- "Your brain loves _____ and it has a hard time with _____."
- "Your brain feels good when _____ and feels bad when _____."
- If they have siblings, use their sibling's brain as an example of a different brain, or use your own: "My/your brother's/sister's brain really struggles with _____, but your brain is really good at and really likes _____."

- "When I get upset, what helps my brain feel better is _____. When you feel upset, what do you think makes your brain feel better?"

If they're interested, explain some common behaviors or tendencies of others with their same diagnosis. For example, I told my son, "Lots of people with autistic brains are really good at remembering details that other people's brains don't remember. All autistic brains are different but many of them have that in common."

What to Expect

The goal is to establish open and ongoing communication. There are predictable things to expect, which will vary depending on the way your child's brain processes information. Here is a list of some things that might happen after the initial conversation:

1. The same questions over and over: For many ND brains, this is how they process information, so just calmly repeat the same answers.
2. Misunderstanding: It's helpful to ask them to explain it back to you to see if they understand. Address the misunderstandings factually and calmly.
3. Playfulness: Playing and silliness around the diagnosis is also common. When Max's older brother was 5, I explained Max's diagnosis to help him understand why his brother acted differently from his friends' siblings. A few days later, he showed me what he added to my shopping list: "Toilet Paper, Poop, Autism." I jokingly explained to him that we can't pick up poop or autism at the store, but we laughed together about how that would be silly if we could.
4. Rejection: This is more common among older kids or kids who are highly focused on fitting in. If your child is upset about it, highlight their brain's strengths and superpowers, and help them identify what "charges their battery" so their brain feels good.
5. MANY *short* conversations: Find many opportunities to note how your ND child's/teen's brain works, and how other people's brains work. You can also use characters from books, shows or movies.
6. Frequent, *nonchalant* mentions of brains: Normalize noting what helps our brains and upsets them, modeling how brains can advocate for what they need.

Final Thoughts

Envision these conversations as ways to provide comfort and reassurance that it's okay that some things feel hard for your ND child/teen. Validate their feelings about their brains and their diagnoses, even if they have a negative association with it. You can say, "I know it feels hard when your brain has a hard time with _____. I know you wish it were easier. I get it." Then give them a hug or whatever else will help them feel safe and secure

"I know it feels hard when
your brain has a hard time
with _____.

I know you wish it were
easier. I get it."

RESOURCES ON NEURODIVERSITY

Books about Autism/ADHD/Neurodiversity:

- *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel
- *Benji, the Bad Day and Me* by Sally J. Pla
- *My Brother Charlie* by Holly Robinson Peete
- *How to Build a Hug* by Amy Guglielmo
- *Nathan's Autism Spectrum Super Powers* by Lori Leigh Yarborough
- *Andy and His Yellow Frisbee* by Mary Thompson
- *I See Things Differently: a First Look at Autism* by Pat Thomas
- *My Brain is a Race Car: A Children's Guide to a Neurodivergent Brain* by Nell Harris
- *The Survival Guide for Kids with ADHD* by John F. Taylor
- *My Mouth is a Volcano* by Julia Cook

Videos about Talking to Your Kids About Their Neurodivergence:

- *How to explain a diagnosis to your child*
- *Respectful resources for talking about autism/neurodiversity*

Other Articles:

- *Kids Flourish When They're Taught How Their Brains Work*
- *Do I Tell My Child About their Diagnosis?*
- *Positive Parenting for Your Neurodiverse Child*
- *Navigating Your Own ADHD Diagnosis in Adulthood*

Printable Resources

- *Telling Your Child They're Autistic* created by Emily Hammond (aka NeuroWild)

and appreciated for who they are. Once you start the process it will feel better and your child will be on the road to better self-understanding!

Jen Dryer, M.A., is a professional member of the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP), a parent coach for parents and educators of neurodivergent children, and co-founder of Raising Orchid Kids (raisingorchidkids.com), which offers classes, coaching and resources for parents of neurodifferent kids. For more information about PEP's resources for parents, including online classes and on-demand videos, visit PEPparent.org.



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How to Have the Period Talk with Daughters (and Sons)

By Mia Barnes

Talking about periods with your kids might seem a little awkward at first, but it doesn't have to be. Whether you have a daughter about to experience her first cycle or a son who needs to understand what his sister, classmates or future partner might go through, you'll want to have this conversation.

Start Early and Keep It Simple

You don't have to wait until your child is on the brink of puberty to start talking about periods. In fact, starting early can normalize the conversation. You can introduce the idea when they're young, using simple, age-appropriate language. For younger kids, you can explain that periods happen as girls grow up and are a natural part of life. The average girl will [menstruate once a month](#) until they reach menopause.

For example, you might say, "When girls grow older, their bodies start preparing for the possibility of having a baby one day. A period is when blood comes out of the body to show it's getting ready." This way, it won't feel like a huge, intimidating topic when the time comes for a deeper discussion.

Make Sure They Know You're Not Judging

When discussing periods, creating an open and nonjudgmental environment is essential. Your child should feel comfortable asking questions without embarrassment. Tell them it's normal to feel curious or confused and encourage them to share any thoughts.

Let them know it may be a little weird to talk about, but it's a normal part of growing up and something every young girl will eventually experience. Make sure they know they can always come to you with any questions or concerns.

Use Correct Terminology

While it might be tempting to use nicknames or euphemisms for menstruation, using the correct terminology helps demystify the process. Say “period” instead of “that time of the month,” and use words like “menstruation,” “uterus” and “ovulation” as needed. This helps your child understand their body and removes any stigma or shame associated with these terms.

Prepare for the Practical Side

Once your daughter is closer to the age of experiencing periods, it's important to cover the practical details. Most girls start their periods at about 12 or 13 years old, but some will experience it as young as 9, so it's crucial to have this conversation early.

Talk about how to use pads, tampons or menstrual cups, what to do if they get their period unexpectedly, how to deal with uncomfortable symptoms and how to track their cycle. Remind them to always carry some hygiene products in their school bag, just in case it starts while they're not at home.

Talk to Boys About Periods, Too

Boys need to understand periods just as much as girls do. Teaching boys about menstruation fosters empathy and respect for the people in their lives who experience it. Plus, it helps eliminate the myths and misconceptions that often surround periods. This kind of inclusiveness breaks down the taboo and empowers both boys and girls to feel comfortable talking about periods.

Normalize Their Feelings and Symptoms

Your child might've heard about mood swings or cramps and may be worried about how a period will feel. It's important to let them know that periods affect everyone differently, and while some girls may experience discomfort, others might not.

Approximately half of women experience period cramps, so let them know they're not alone and give them some tips and tricks to deal with it. Heating pads and herbal teas can be great natural remedies for pain. Be open about the physical and emotional changes that come with periods, and let your daughter know there are ways to manage them.

Check In and Keep the Conversation Going

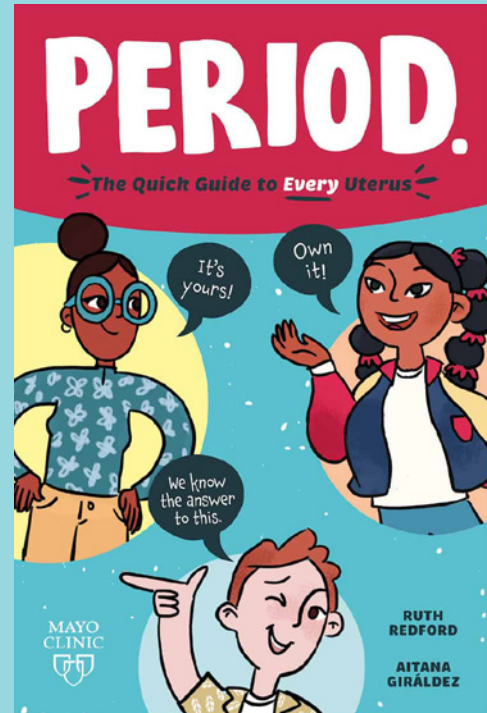
The period talk isn't a one-and-done deal. You'll want to check in with your child over time to see how they're feeling and if they have any new questions. As they get older, they might want more detailed information or need support navigating their cycle. By keeping the conversation open, you're showing them that it's not a taboo subject, and they'll feel more comfortable coming to you when they need help.

Make Period Talks a Normal Part of Growing Up

Talking about periods with your kids doesn't have to be uncomfortable — it's all about creating an open, supportive environment where they feel safe asking questions and learning. By having this talk, you're helping your child feel confident and prepared for this natural part of life.

Mia Barnes is a professional freelance writer who specializes in family and children's wellness. She is also the founder and editor-in-chief of the online health publication, [Body+Mind magazine](#).

BOOKS, VIDEOS & OTHER RESOURCES



Period from Mayo Clinic

Resources for Explaining Periods to Your Child

- [A Kids Book About Periods](#) by Jessica Biel is targeted at ages 7-9 and uses a minimalist style to let anyone imagine themselves in the words on the page. The book is designed to encourage children to have conversations with their adults about questions around the topic.
- [PERIOD: The Quick Guide to Every Uterus](#). This humorous four-color graphic novel from Mayo Clinic Press Kids “embraces all the icky, all the sticky, and all the confusing aspects of the monthly cycle ... in a no-judgment zone.”
- [Why Do Girls Get Periods?](#) is an installment of the Dr. Binocs show on Peekaboo Kidz that provides an animated explanation of periods in a child-friendly animated style.
- [The Autism-Friendly Guide to Periods](#) by Robyn Steward is written by an autistic author, providing information on the effects of periods, how to manage them and special advice for handling the experience with the added layer of being autistic.
- [Kids Talk Periods](#) is a video that depicts some children learning about periods for the first time and provides a humorous look at how there's no need to be embarrassed, as everyone needs to learn somewhere.



MORE

for Moms & Dads

Mental Health Confidentiality During Separation and Divorce



BIGSTOCK/FIZKES

By Lindsay Parvis

When parents break up, a family is faced with major life changes, and individual family members and even entire families may begin to receive services from one or more mental health providers. A significant part of a healthy and beneficial client-therapist relationship is the safe place created where the client may share their innermost thoughts, feelings and challenges. Privacy is key to that safety, and this must be considered when preparing for the legal side of separation. This article will explore common mental health provider services utilized during separation, the legal aspects of a family breakup and an introduction to mental health privilege.

Common Services

Mental health professionals provide a variety of services for families experiencing a breakup. Perhaps the most obvious is therapy, which can be for a parent, a child, the couple or the entire family – including sessions for both individuals and the family unit as a whole. Another option is group therapy, which includes people who are unrelated but are focused on a common issue, and/or reunification therapy to establish or repair a parent-child relationship.

Family members going through separations may also undergo psychological evaluations attorneys and judges use to assess parenting abilities and a child's needs. These evaluations help determine parenting time schedules and legal decision-making that fit a child's best interests.

Legal Aspects of a Family Breakup

When a family separates or a separated family experiences a big change, the legal side focuses primarily on legal custody – legal decision-making about important issues like health, education and religious upbringing – and physical custody, i.e., with which parent a child lives and the schedule for time with each parent. Both are guided by a child's best interests.

Parents who agree about best interests, decision-making and parenting time usually don't contest custody before a judge. As a result, they are most likely to participate in individual, couples and family therapy. Parents who cannot reach common ground more often need evaluations to navigate contested custody litigation. Ultimately, a trial is held, and a judge or magistrate will decide what custody and time arrangements are in the child's best interests.

Mental Health Privilege

"Privilege" is the right to decide to keep certain information confidential, "off limits" and out of court in contested litigation.

Not all of the common services listed above are privileged. For example, psychological and custody evaluations are intended to educate the parents and the judge. However, there still may be rules limiting the sharing of reports and testing data, which help protect privacy.

Privilege can also be waived, allowing disclosure of the privileged information to the other parent (and their attorney, if they have one) and used as evidence at trial.

To paint a picture, privilege is like a gate: Privileged information is protected behind the gate. If waived, the gate opens and out goes the privileged information.

A separating couple should be aware of these factors related to privilege.

Geography matters. Each jurisdiction in the Maryland-D.C.-Virginia area has different laws about privilege, which may depend on where parents live, work and use mental health services. It's important to meet with a lawyer who understands each jurisdiction's privilege and related rules to know what mental health information is protected – and what is not – and your options for where to file in court.

It's a balancing act. When mental health services are not privileged, parents must balance the benefits of accessing mental health services for themselves or their children against the risks that information from those services could be used by the other parent to be granted custody. With guidance from a lawyer, the parent should explore the importance of meeting their children's needs – or their own needs, so they can be the best parents possible – against the potential exposure of sensitive information.

Protect privilege. When mental health services are privileged, be intentional about protecting that privilege. If waiving privilege, do so intentionally after weighing the pros and cons. If you have a lawyer, make sure you are clear on what your legal rights and options are when asked to reveal privileged information. Also, be careful about signing authorizations allowing your therapist to speak to others – especially your ex – and refrain from sharing privileged information with your ex and others. And certainly keep this information off of social media.

Understand boundaries when your child has a privilege.

When your child's mental health services are privileged, it is important to understand the boundaries their therapist may establish about what they will share with you. Whether and how your child's privilege can be waived may involve the court appointing an attorney for your child to represent their best interests regarding the privilege. Parents need to cooperate with their child's attorney in those situations. Also, keep in mind that a child's therapist may share information with a parent that may be "off-limits" in court.

Parents who are separating must consider what's in the best interests of their children from both the legal and the mental health perspectives when they're going through life changes. However, they also must understand how the two intersect, particularly when mental health information is not privileged. Weighing the potential issues when privilege does not exist will help parents truly make the best decisions for their children.

Lindsay Parvis, a principal in Joseph Greenwald & Laake's Rockville, Maryland, office, helps her clients navigate some of life's biggest challenges: divorce, custody, domestic violence and the financial matters that accompany divorce. She may be reached at lparvis@jglaw.com.

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National Cherry Blossom Festival 2025: Fun in Full Bloom March 20-April 13

By Liam McCrickard

The time is almost here when the thousands of cherry blossom trees that call D.C. their home will enter their full bloom, covering the city in a gorgeous layer of soft pink petals. To celebrate this, the National Cherry Blossom Festival returns from March 20th to April 13th, with a full suite of events for the whole family to enjoy.

Opening Ceremony Saturday, March 22nd. A free artistic celebration at the Warner Theatre of the 1912 gift of trees from Tokyo to Washington, D.C. Featured performers include dancer Kazunori Kumagai, singer/songwriter Ka-Na (Kana Uemura), Maui Taiko Drummers and Seiwa Bunraku puppet theater presenting a performance based on hit manga One Piece.

SAAM Cherry Blossom Celebration Saturday, March 22nd. The Smithsonian American Art Museum will be celebrating the Cherry Blossom Festival with a day-long program. Guests can visit the Kogod Courtyard for Japanese pop, boogie and more with Les The DJ. Children (ages 12 and younger) will have the opportunity to make cherry-blossom-themed crafts. Seasonal treats will be available for purchase and a spring-themed scavenger hunt through SAAM's galleries will extend the fun through the whole museum.



Blossom Kite Festival Saturday, March 29th. Families are invited to the Washington Monument Grounds for a day filled with soaring activities, music, competitions and performances. Kite enthusiasts, beginners, families and friends are all welcome. This festival will feature kite demonstrations and competitions, arts and crafts and much more.

Family Day: Family Day: Kimonos, Capes and Other Art to Wear Saturday, March 29th. Celebrate culture and craft with a special family day at the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum dedicated to art you can wear. Featured activities include dance performances by Okinawa Kai, the opportunity to design a cape inspired by artworks on display, kirigami cherry blossom accessory crafts, friendship braceletmaking, trying on traditional Japanese garments and more.

Sakura Sunday 2025 Sunday, March 30th. National Harbor's official participating event of the 2025 National Cherry Blossom Festival will be held from noon to 5 p.m. and feature a wide array of free activities including an artisanal Japanese marketplace, cultural performances, culinary experiences, a Water Lantern Festival and more.



Sakura Taiko Fest Saturday, March 29th. Various taiko drum performance groups come together at the Sylvan Theatre for this all-ages festival to celebrate the artform of taiko. Featured groups include Inochi Taiko, Maikaze Daiko, Maui Taiko, OMNY Taiko, Pittsburg Taiko and Fairfax County local performance group Nen Daiko.

Petalpalooza Saturday, April 5th. A day-long all-ages celebration that brings art, music and play to multiple outdoor stages, featuring interactive art installations, family-friendly hands-on activities, roaming entertainers and more at the Capitol Riverfront by the Navy Yard Metro. The evening is capped off by the Official National Cherry Blossom Festival Fireworks show set to music starting at 8:30 p.m.

Mosaic Art Blooms Festival Saturday, April 5th and Sunday,

April 6th. Fairfax's Mosaic District will transform into a lively outdoor festival featuring over 110+ handmade and vintage vendors and fresh produce and treats from 60+ local vendors. There will also be family-friendly activities, including a kids' game corner, petting zoo, cherry-blossom-inspired arts and crafts, face painting and painting stations. Live music performances will take center stage on Strawberry Lane, featuring local bands and artists.



National Cherry Blossom Festival Parade Saturday, April 12th.

Colorful helium balloons, elaborate floats, marching bands from across the country, celebrity entertainers and performers will parade down Constitution Avenue in this display of music and spectacle celebrating spring in D.C. Tickets required.

Liam McCrickard holds a B.A. in creative and professional writing from Goucher College. He is assistant editor at Washington Parent. He also works as a freelance designer, writer and editor of tabletop role-playing games.

ALONG THE POTOMAC

Things to Do
IN MARCH

Washington Capitals Kids Day

March 1. Don't forget to bring the kids! The Capitals are excited to host Kids Day, a day full of fun dedicated to the next generation. The first 5,000 kids in attendance will receive a special Capitals giveaway – puck drops at 12:30 p.m. Washington, D.C.



Animals at Clearwater

March 2. You don't need to be Dr. Dolittle to speak to the animals! Meet the nature center's live animals including reptiles, amphibians and birds of prey. Interacting with animals can boost your mood and promote mental wellness. Learn more about them and their natural habitats. Clinton, Md.

Legacy on Ice

March 2. A benefit to support those impacted by the recent tragic aviation crash on the Potomac River. The event will include appearances from Ilia Malinin, Amber Glenn, Tara Lipinski, Johnny Weir and more. Washington, D.C.

Washington Wizards Mascot Madness

March 5. The Washington Wizards want you to celebrate G-Wiz and his mascot friends at Mascot Madness. The first 10,000 fans in attendance get a special G-Wiz bobblehead. Don't miss all the mascot fun including appearances from Franklin the Dog, Benny the Bull and the Blue Blob. You won't want to miss any of the action, so grab your tickets today! Washington, D.C.



Saturday Morning Live Presents: Groovy Nate

March 8. Get in the groove with Groovy Nate! Groovy Nate is a Grammy-nominated children's entertainer and teaching artist who creates fun and educational shows using exotic musical instruments, comedy and puppet skits – à la Sesame Street meets Parliament/Funkadelic. Washington, D.C.



Family Day: Purim Party

March 9. Bring the whole family to craft costumes and groggers, dance to live music, explore the JewCE (Jewish Comics Experience) exhibition and enjoy a JewCE-themed Purim spiel from the Washington Revels. Washington, D.C.

Civil War Discoveries: Build A Fort

March 8, 28. Ages 7 to 11 will investigate how and why forts were built in Arlington during the Civil War. Then, they'll work as a team to design forts to defend the city. Registration required. Arlington, Va.

The Peking Acrobats

March 9. These world-class gymnasts, jugglers, cyclists and tumblers provide a gravity-defying spectacle with amazing displays of contortion, flexibility and control. Accompanied by live musicians who skillfully play traditional Chinese instruments, The Peking Acrobats execute daring maneuvers and display their technical prowess at trick cycling, precision tumbling, juggling, somersaulting and gymnastics. Fairfax, Va.

Empowered, Brilliant & Brave: Great Women of Black History

March 11. Celebrate Women's History Month with this special show that highlights some of Black History's most inspiring female figures. Crunch some hidden figures with Dorothy Vaughan, follow along the Underground Railroad with Harriet Tubman and celebrate the Jazz Age with Ella Fitzgerald. You'll also meet incredible groundbreakers like Michelle Obama, Sojourner Truth, Serena Williams and much more amazing women's HERstory! Everyone must have a ticket to enter, regardless of age. Hyattsville, Md.

Turtle Time

March 14. Ages 6 to 10. Want to learn more about turtles? Come and meet all the different turtles at the nature center, learn about their habits and give them a snack! Registration required. Arlington, Va.

Family Day at the Library of Congress: Women's History Month

March 15. Celebrate women in aviation from hot air balloons to the space age. Learn how to fold and test-fly your own paper airplanes. Meet staff experts from the Library of Congress's African and Middle Eastern Division and learn about African women changemakers. The event is free, but passes are required. Washington, D.C.

Nowruz Family Festival

March 16. Honor the new year at the annual Nowruz Family Day at National Museum of Asian Art. Welcome spring with free attractions for all ages, including storytelling, hands-on activities and more. Persian sweets and food will be available for purchase. Register in advance to make sure you get the best experience. Some activities



have a limited capacity, with entry on a first-come, first-served basis. Attractions include haftseen table displays, interactive storytelling by Xanthe Gresham, crafts and activities, a scavenger hunt, docent talks, gallery tours and more. Washington, D.C.

The Sweetest 16: Chocolate Tasting Bracket Extravaganza

March 18. The ultimate sugar showdown returns, featuring a bracket pitting 16 chocolates against each other to crown one true Chocolate Champion! The tasting will begin at 6:30 p.m., with a half hour for people to taste and vote for which chocolates will advance to the Edible Eight, and then there will be shorter following rounds. This is sure to be a memorable night, and admission is limited, so purchase your ticket soon! Arlington, Va.

The Uncle Devin Show

March 25. Are you ready to make some noise? Join Uncle Devin as he takes children on a magical journey through the Land of Percussion. Audiences will experience the rhythm of Uncle Devin's infectious blend of jazz, funk and D.C.'s official music, go-go; and learn why percussion is the easiest, oldest and most diverse form of musical creativity. This performance is part of the Tiny Tots Series at Publick Playhouse and is recommended for pre-K to grade 2. Everyone must have a ticket to enter, regardless of age. Hyattsville, Md.

Bloomaroo

March 29. Bloomaroo is a free festival at The Wharf that celebrates D.C.'s cherry blossoms with live music and activity stations including koi kite decorating, a haiku creation station, balloon artists and more. And at the end of the night, fireworks! Washington, D.C.



Blossom Kite Festival

March 29. Come to the Washington Monument Grounds for a day filled with soaring activities, music, competitions and performances. Kite enthusiasts, beginners, families and friends are all welcome. Get ready to enjoy kite demonstrations and competitions, arts and crafts and so much more.

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Ways to Navigate Childhood Fears

by Joy Rains

Spiders. Darkness. Thunderstorms. Although childhood fears are common, the good news is they offer an opportunity to learn lifelong skills to manage stress. Here are a few ways to help your child navigate their fears.

Mindful Listening: While your child's fear may seem irrational to you, to them it seems quite real. Rather than telling them, "That's silly to feel that way," an empathetic statement such as, "I know that can feel scary to you" will help build understanding. To further understanding, ask questions such as, "What makes a spider seem scary to you?" However, find a balance between discussing their fear and dwelling on it, as focusing on it too much can have a magnifying effect. Statements such as, "Let's find ways to get through this together" will help you move forward, along with showing your support.

Body awareness: When your child is frightened, they're likely focused on anxious thoughts. Directing their attention from their mind to their body will help bring their attention to the present moment. For instance, ask them to notice where their body connects to the surface beneath them, whether they're sitting or lying down. Encourage them to relax into those points of contact, as if their body is very heavy. They can even imagine Earth's gravity holding them securely in place. You can also ask them to focus on their breathing, noticing the coolness of the air as they breathe in and its warmth as they breathe out. If they have a favorite stuffed

animal, they can hold it on their belly and notice its movement with each breath they take.

Reframing: If your child has a tendency for catastrophizing, or imagining worst-case scenarios, try to help them reframe their thoughts. For instance, let's say they're afraid of traveling on high bridges, imagining themselves falling into the water below. Ask them to place all their attention on what they see – and nothing else, noticing the bridge is tall, silver-colored and shiny. They can also focus on the bridge's architecture, noting the shapes of the steel supports and rivets, as if they're traveling through a giant LEGO sculpture. So, rather than thinking "tall" and then "scary," their attention is fully engaged in a visual experience. In the case of a childhood fear of thunderstorms, encourage them to focus on sounds – noticing "loud" during the claps and "quiet" in the spaces between the claps.

The techniques of body awareness and reframing both encourage a focus on what they're experiencing with their senses (feeling, seeing, hearing), rather than on what they're imagining. For more serious childhood fears, consider getting support from a professional who specializes in treating phobias. Above all, have patience as your child learns to navigate their fears. Like learning any new skill, it's a process that takes time.

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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