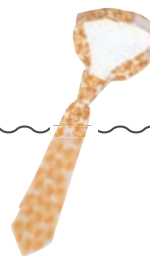


mothering

INSPIRING NATURAL FAMILIES SINCE 1976



1976-2011



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We have so well seeded into the culture the principles of natural family living that every new parent now at least considers these ideas. We have become part of the mainstream.

—Peggy O'Mara
"How We Became a Web Company," page 8





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ON THE COVER

For our final cover, it seemed appropriate to return to a favorite image of ours, shot by a favorite photographer, Cheryl Steinhoff. Find more of her work at www.cherylsteinhoffphotography.com.



If you think this photo looks familiar, you are right: It ran in our July–August 2008 issue.

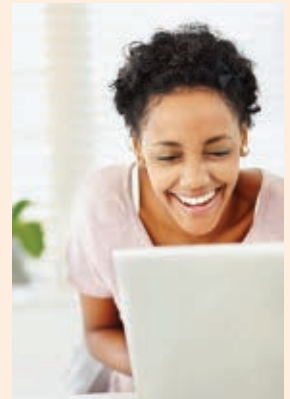
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loved about *Mothering* magazine, you can now find online. *Mothering.com* has articles, tools, media, and community to cover you from pregnancy to the teen years, and beyond.

Here are just a few of the ways we would like to invite you to become part of our family on the Web.



Community: As one of the largest **parenting communities** online, MotheringDotCommunity is the place to find the support network you are looking for. Whether you're searching for much-needed information, fun ideas and giveaways, or just a friend to lean on—MDC is it. We're ready to welcome you.

Media: In search of great **videos and podcasts**? We have the newest media about everything from natural birth and breastfeeding to eco-homes and healthful parenting.

News & Activism: If you like to be in-the-know, you'll enjoy this section. Read up on the latest **news and action alerts**, and join in on exciting conversations.

Food: Healthy, home-cooked meals are just a few clicks away in our **Peggy's Kitchen** department. Every day we serve up fresh recipes, helpful videos, and great conversations about feeding the whole family.

Blogs: Laugh, cry, and discover new possibilities with our **witty and wise** *Mothering* bloggers. There's something for everyone!

Connections: *Mothering.com* wants to make it as easy as possible for you to stay connected to the natural-family content and community you need. Use your computer or phone to join us on our **Facebook** page or to follow us on **Twitter**. And grab our **RSS feeds** for quick updates anywhere.

—Melanie Mayo, Editor

Spring is upon us. Time to celebrate the birth of new life and the joy of connecting with the Earth. Let *Mothering.com* lead the way. Click on each section to find all the great content you see mentioned on this page.



Energize your Earth Day

Being green might be more popular than it was when **Earth Day** began, more than 40 years ago, but the holiday is still an important date for finding the time needed to **incorporate more eco-habits** into our everyday lives. For some energizing inspiration, head over to *Mothering.com* and read "**Earth-Friendly Kids**," by Heather Cori Radar, and "**Eco-Mama**," by Wendy Corre.

Healing rituals

Spending quality time with your family is a wonderful way to let your spirits soar. Create new traditions by relaxing into a family-style "**Saturday Night Spa**," bring personal revelations to the page with "**Family Journals: A Legacy**," or get crafty with the kids in our **Arts & Crafts** forum on MDC.



Eco-Friendly EASTER

With this year's Earth Day and Easter falling just a few days apart, let the creators of **CelebrateGreen.net** guide you toward greener holiday pastures. Give the Easter Bunny something special to fill by following the easy video instructions in "**Fun Upcycled Easter Baskets**," and learn how to splash the day with a rainbow of colors in our video guide to "**Safe and Natural Easter Egg Dye**."

party time!

Last October, many of you joined *Mothering.com* for our first-ever **Twitter party**. We talked, **laughed**, shared some amazing prizes, and, most important, helped further the spread of information about babywearing and babywearing safety. We **loved the experience** so much that we'll be hosting **Twitter parties throughout the year!** Check out the **schedule** on *Mothering.com* for specific times and topics.



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Birth announcements now on MDC!

The MotheringDotCommunity wants to **help you celebrate** your new baby with a birth announcement on the MDC home page! If you've posted your birth story and your baby's picture on the boards, let us know—we'll **share your little bundle of joy** with the community.

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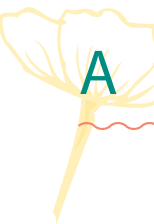
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A QUIET PLACE *How We Became a Web Company*

| by Peggy O'Mara, Editor and Publisher

In the last few weeks, it has become obvious that we must cease publication of the print edition of *Mothering* magazine. The November–December 2010 issue was our last printed issue.

January–February 2011 was a digital-only edition, and the March–April issue is as well. And with this edition, after 35 years, we will cease publishing *Mothering* magazine altogether. We are now a Web-only company.

Our founder, Addie Vorys Eavenson (now Cranson), could never have imagined the Web back in 1976 when, inspired by the birth of her first daughter, she started *Mothering*. Addie recognized that there were few resources for new, natural mothers, and that there was no publication for women in which the art of mothering was celebrated. The first issue of *Mothering* was put together in the summer of 1976 by members of the Montrose Natural Childbirth Class and other volunteers at the old Fort Smith Saloon, in Ridgway, Colorado.

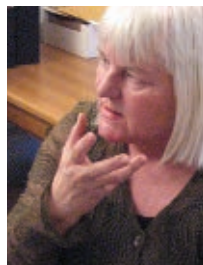
A year later, during a visit to Albuquerque, I was lucky enough to find a copy of the second issue of *Mothering* in a natural foods store, and was astounded that there was a magazine that so well articulated my own beliefs. As soon as I got back home, I sent *Mothering* an article I'd written, "In Defense of Motherhood." Both *New Age Journal* (now *Whole Living: Body+Soul in Balance*) and *Redbook* magazines had rejected the article, but Addie accepted it immediately, as well as my poem "There Will Be Time."

In early 1978, Addie called and asked me to be an editor. I was ecstatic. Fortunately, our family was already planning to move to Albuquerque, where Addie had recently relocated the magazine. I worked on a couple of issues, but soon quit—with three kids under five, I had my hands full.

At my son Bram's first birthday party, in 1979, Addie told me that she wanted to sell the magazine. Of course, I wanted to buy it, but was unable to borrow the \$5,000 for the down payment. Instead, Addie sold *Mothering* to Canadians Rolf and Wendy Priesnitz, founders of *Natural Life* magazine, and announced the sale in *Mothering* no. 14.

As it turned out, the deal with Rolf and Wendy fell through, and my husband, John McMahon, and I were able to buy *Mothering* in 1980 for no down payment, and by making monthly payments for five years. At the time, *Mothering* had a circulation of 3,000.

Our first issue was no. 15. The cover photo of the dad was tender but did not reproduce well, and the purple I had chosen for the cover type was difficult to read. I had no idea these kinds of mistakes could happen; it was a steep learning curve.



Mothering grew rapidly; natural-living pioneers were hungry for the information we provided. Our circulation grew to 60,000 by the end of the 1980s, and in recent years to 100,000. In those early years, our coverage was five to ten years ahead of the mainstream press. We were the first magazine to cover parents' questions about vaccinations and circumcision, the first to publish articles questioning the validity of the then-new diagnoses

of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), the first to publish articles questioning the effectiveness of repeated doses of antibiotics, the first to publish articles on vaginal birth after cesarean, the first to publish possible treatments for children with autism—the list goes on. In fact, we have so well seeded into the culture the principles of natural family living that every new parent now at least considers these ideas. We have become part of the mainstream.

In 1995, an old friend of mine in Sausalito tried to explain to me the World Wide Web, and strongly recommended that I get a domain name. I followed his advice and registered www.mothering.com. Three years later, we launched a website devoted to customer service for subscribers, and in 1999 our discussion forums, *MotheringDotCommunity*, were born.

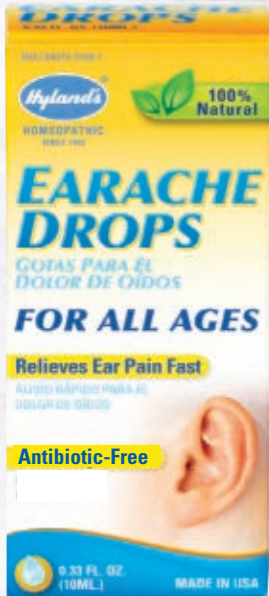
Thanks largely to the efforts of web director Cynthia Mosher and our dedicated volunteer moderators and ambassadors, *MotheringDotCommunity* has grown dramatically—from 1,000 members in 2001 to 160,000 members today. We have been ranked by Big Boards as the most active community for parents on the Web, and have achieved all of this while devoting less than 30 percent of our staff resources to our online content.

All along, the print magazine has been our mother ship. It has required a complex team of customer service representatives, designers, editors, and contributors, and until recently this all worked. But two perfect storms have come together to become the mother of all storms.

First, since 2008, our community has moved increasingly to the Web. Forty-two percent of people now check Facebook before they check their e-mail. When we asked our subscribers why they did not



Above, from top: *Mothering's* last printed issue (November–December 2010), the first issue of *Mothering* (1976), and Peggy's first issue as editor (issue no. 15, Spring 1980)



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Top row: Peggy O'Mara McMahon, John McMahon, Ryan and Stacey Mudd, Barbara Jellow, Donna MacFarlane, Kim and Josh Fischer, Linda Seelau, Angie and Amanda Pallow. **Bottom row:** Bram McMahon, Jason Mudd, Brian MacFarlane, Danny MacFarlane, Molly MacFarlane, Lally McMahon, Finnie McMahon.

“Am I in the
 magazine
 business or the
 information
 business?”
 If I am in the
 business of providing
 information and
 inspiration to
 parents, then does
 it ultimately really
 matter what forms
 that information and
 inspiration take?
 If I am serious
 about providing
 this information and
 inspiration, then
 is it not my
 responsibility
 to go where my
 community
 goes?”



Above:
 The *Mothering*
 staff in 1982
 (with Peggy and
 John at far left)

renew, 35 percent said they are too busy to read.

The second perfect storm is the decline of the industrial model of production. Printing is a complex and costly process that requires expensive equipment and specialized knowledge. The cost of printing one issue of *Mothering* is approximately \$100,000. Even to produce a digital edition, the cost is approximately \$60,000. In 2009, magazine subscriptions saw their steepest decline in 40 years.

After three years of decline in advertising sales, subscription orders, and newsstand sales, with the March–April 2011 issue we saw our ad sales drop to their lowest point in 10 years. In a single year, from March 2010 to March 2011, we lost one-third of our print advertisers.

Many of our advertisers have been hard hit by the economy. Toy manufacturers have been burdened by the cost of complying with the new regulations of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA). Many of our sling and baby-carrier advertisers experienced declining sales or went out of business altogether as a result of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recalls of infant carriers in 2010.

Like all of us, our subscribers, too, have been tightening their belts. Nearly 50 percent of our readers are stay-at-home or work-at-home moms. According to a 2010 Gallup poll, “The recession and financial crisis have resulted in a significant change in the way many Americans feel about spending and saving. Six in 10 Americans (62%) now say they more enjoy saving than spending—while 35% say the reverse.”

In addition, nearly six in 10 Americans (57 percent) say they are spending less money in recent

months than they used to. Thirty-eight percent of all Americans say this reduced spending will be their new, normal spending pattern, while 19 percent say their cutbacks are temporary.

But even cutting our page count to 68 would not allow us to keep up with these declines in our subscriptions and advertising sales. If we continued to print the magazine, we would lose money on every issue.

When a magazine ceases publication, it is customary that its subscriptions be fulfilled by another magazine. When I thought about which magazine is most compatible with *Mothering*, I remembered Rolf and Wendy, who have published *Natural Life Magazine* since 1976, the year *Mothering* was founded. *Natural Life* covers green living, natural parenting, and lifelong learning, and describes itself as “The original natural family living magazine, founded in 1976. Reader supported and trusted by thinking people around the world who want positive alternatives . . .”

Natural Life will fulfill *Mothering* subscriptions beginning with their May–June 2011 issue. If, for example, two issues remain on your subscription to *Mothering*, you will receive the next two issues of *Natural Life*. I hope that you enjoy Rolf and Wendy’s magazine.

While this change is a crisis for those of us who love the print edition of *Mothering*, it is also an opportunity. It forces me to ask myself, “Am I in the magazine business or the information business?” If I am in the business of providing information and inspiration to parents, then does it ultimately really matter what forms that information and inspiration take? If I am serious about providing this information and inspiration,



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then is it not my responsibility to go where my community goes?

Our online community is more than 15 times larger than our print or digital community. *Mothering* magazine currently has a bimonthly circulation of 100,000—but *Mothering.com* receives 1.5 million unique visitors a month, and is ranked by Quantcast as one of the top 2,100 sites online. This means that while we are a niche print publication, we are a major Web presence. We also have an unusually strong social-media community, with 35,000 Facebook fans and 75,000 followers on Twitter.

It was inevitable that our young, hip community should move to the Web. New families breathe social media and online community, and they are pressed for time. While everyone loves the comfort of reading a magazine or book, most of us now spend the majority of our reading time online.

Recently, when my son and daughter-in-law wanted to know about when to start feeding their baby solid foods, they didn't want to wait; they wanted to know immediately. The efficiency of the Web is essential to sleep-deprived new parents who need information fast.

If you haven't already, please join us at www.mothering.com and become part of MotheringDotCommunity (MDC), where you can have conversations that you can't have anywhere else. We offer nearly 50 different forums and hundreds of subforums on such topics as Gentle Discipline, The Family Bed and Nighttime Parenting, Postpartum Depression, Unschooling, Mindful Home, News and Current Events, and dozens more. And our popular Finding Your Tribe forum facilitates the meeting of members in real time for picnics, potlucks, and all sorts of get-togethers.

If you're new to MDC, we offer a concierge service: One of our forum leaders will be your buddy on MDC and show you how it works. If you'd like this service, please e-mail our web director, Cynthia Mosher, cynthiam@mothering.com.

If you want to help smooth our transition to a Web-only company, please donate. We are turning many of our most important articles into digital reprints, so check out our plentiful resources at The Mothering Shop.

Thank you for all of your good will and support over the last 35 years. We have always been a company that has been led by our community. Go to MDC and tell us how you feel. I look forward to the next 35 years, when your generation will see the values of natural family living become the norm in our society.





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YOUR LETTERS



Babywearing for us is a family affair. In this picture, my husband, Phil, is wearing our youngest daughter, Olive, who is wearing her prized bee costume long after Halloween is over. Big sister Annika is wearing her baby.

SHARON TROM
E-mail

SOCRATIC DIALOGUE

Wow! How is it that *Mothering* sometimes reads my mind? It's funny how little coincidences mean so much! I just resubscribed, and I also just switched to a double major of philosophy and history. Changing my major was a huge leap of faith; I followed my heart and passion instead of my head. I'm working on a project about Socrates, and I love his statement "The unexamined life is not worth living." (I'm actually thinking of getting that quote tattooed on me.) It was such a wonderful and funny coincidence that the first article I started to read in the September–October 2010 issue, my first issue since resubscribing, was Peggy O'Mara's "The Examined Life," which included the Socrates quote, along with an explanation of it. This is the reason I subscribe to *Mothering*.

NICOLE
E-mail

It never fails that you publish the exact words that I need to hear. As much as I consider myself an activist, there are many times that I feel hopeless in the face of very common societal norms like

formula feeding or circumcision.

So I was feeling a little down and blue when the September–October 2010 issue came in. I knew that it would lift my spirits. Peggy O'Mara's "The Examined Life" was exactly what I needed. I felt completely validated by the article's end. Thank you, Peggy, for hitting it right on the head of the nail!

I did want to point out that O'Mara cited an old statistic in stating that 56 percent of boys were circumcised in 2008. The new numbers are out, and in 2009, 32.5 percent of baby boys were circumcised. We are making progress in the right direction, as this is a huge drop from previous numbers. What excellent news!

MICHELLE BUCKMAN
E-mail

Editor's note: According to an August 16, 2010, New York Times article, "Steep Drop Seen in Circumcisions in U.S.," by Roni Caryn Rabin, the 32.5 percent statistic was presented at the International AIDS Conference, held last summer in Vienna, but has not been published. The statistic came from data collected by SDI Health, a health-care analytics organization, for the purpose of measuring com-

plications arising from circumcision, not the rate of circumcision. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has not validated the statistic. For more information, find the article at www.nytimes.com/2010/08/17/health/research/17circ.html.



LOST IN REVERIE

Both of our older kids were involved in the homebirth my wife just had in our living room. In this picture, our three-year-old, Zinnia, is trying out her nursing abilities on the cat while her six-year-old brother, Sterling, cuddles up with her.

ERON
E-mail

Statement of purpose

Mothering celebrates the experience of parenthood as worthy of one's best efforts, and fosters awareness of the immense importance and value of parenthood and family life in the development of the full human potential of parents and children. As a readers' magazine, we recognize parents as the experts and wish to provide truly helpful information on which parents can base informed

choices. *Mothering* is both a fierce advocate of the needs and rights of the child and a gentle supporter of the parents, and we encourage decision making that considers the needs of all members of the family. We explore the realities of human relationships in the family setting, recognizing that raising the heirs of our civilization well is the prerequisite of a healthy society.



SEXY PAPA

I wanted to share this picture of my husband with our two boys, three-year-old Andre and two-week-old Lucien, on Thanksgiving morning. To me there is nothing sexier than an attachment-parenting, cosleeping dad!

BETH
Los Angeles, California

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION— DRUGS OR NO?

In the May–June 2007 issue, *Mothering* published “Losing It,” an article by Sarah R. Fields, who nursed while taking antipsychotic drugs but eventually found recovery through alternative means. Fields also wrote a sidebar for that article, “Alternative Treatments for Postpartum Mood Disorders,” which quotes Kathleen A. Kendall-Tackett as stating that antipsychotic drugs could be used by nursing moms experiencing psychosis without interrupting breastfeeding. The article refers readers to Thomas W. Hale’s book *Medications and Mothers’ Milk*, which indicates that Zyprexa is suitable for breastfeeding.

Kendall-Tackett’s “Breastfeeding Beats the Blues,” in the September–October 2010 *Mothering*, references Fields’s 2007 *Mothering* article promoting antipsychotics to breastfeeding mothers.

That breastfeeding helps alleviate depression, and cosleeping helps prevent depression, are wonderful topics for an article. We are very deeply concerned, however, about the misinformation regarding breastfeeding on psychotropic drugs! With all due respect to the admirable premise of the article, it is a tragic mistake to encourage the notion that mothers can safely breastfeed while taking antidepressants or antipsychotic drugs such as Zyprexa—a drug that has been well documented to cause excessive sedation, diabetes, permanent neurological damage, and death. Zyprexa is an extremely toxic and dangerous drug that is decidedly unsafe for babies.

Mothering has taken seriously the risks of medicated births, vaccines, circumcision, and even chemicals in toys. In almost every respect, *Mothering* is satisfied with nothing less than perfection in the information conveyed. But we see a blind spot when it comes to the so-called experts that you endorse on the topics of postpartum depression and psychosis.

We encourage the magazine to spend some time investigating the deaths of babies linked to psychiatric drugs and breastfeeding. Failure to do so will cause not only the loss of the trust of your readers, but also loss of credibility in the much larger community of advocates of informed consent.

JOHN BREEDING, PHD
AMY PHILO

Kathleen A. Kendall-Tackett responds:

I am happy to respond to your concern about the safety of medication use during breastfeeding. Yes, of the antipsychotic medications available, olanzapine (Zyprexa) is one of the choices that is considered compatible with breastfeeding. Please allow me to explain what “compatible with breastfeeding” means. The overwhelming majority of medications do not have large trials that test for the effects of extended use, yet clinicians have patients on these medications and need to make decisions about whether they can continue taking them while pregnant and while breastfeeding. With breastfeeding, knowing the properties of the medications allows practitioners to make some reasoned decisions about their safety. One property that we consider is whether

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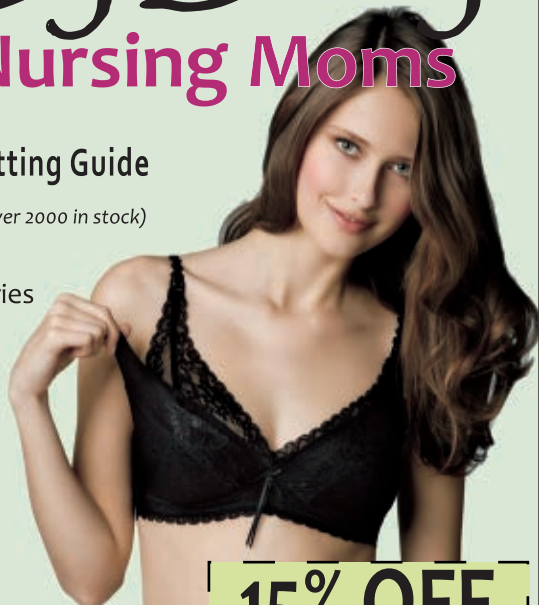
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BREASTFEEDING

breastfeeding
beats the blues

How research proves that nursing can actually help women combat their postpartum depression

By [unreadable] | [unreadable]



the medication has inert or active metabolites. If a medication has an active metabolite, the breastfeeding infant is exposed to a much higher percentage of the maternal dosage than if the metabolite is inert. This is why we would prefer, for example, Lexapro to Celexa. Lexapro is the metabolite [or component] of Celexa. The relative infant dose for Lexapro is less than it is for Celexa.

Returning to the issue of safety, the reason olanzapine is listed as L2 (probably safe) in Medications and Mothers' Milk (2010, 14th edition) is because the amount of the drug the infant is exposed to is quite low: about 1.2 percent of the maternal dose.

I'm quite conservative about antidepressant use, and often recommend alternative strategies. That being said, antidepressants have their place, and most are compatible with breastfeeding. When considering the risks of using medication during breastfeeding, I would also urge you to consider the risks of not breastfeeding, which are well documented and considerable, including the increased risk of infant death. The risks of artificial feeding often far outweigh the risks of medication use while breastfeeding and/or the risks of ongoing untreated depression.

If you are interested in more detailed information on this topic, you might want to look at the article on the use of psychotropic medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding that Tom Hale and I published in the May 2010 issue of the Journal of Human Lactation. You might also want to visit my website, www.uppitysciencechick.com, or Tom Hale's new site: www.infantrisk.org. I hope this answers your questions. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

KATHLEEN KENDALL-TACKETT,
PHD, IBCLC

Despite the controversy surrounding "Breastfeeding Beats the Blues" (September–October 2010), I so much appreciated the article, especially how Kathleen A. Kendall-Tackett shone a spotlight on alternative treatments, and on the fact that drugs are not the only or even the best treatment for postpartum depression. In "Your Letters" in the November–December 2010 issue, you published a letter from Christina A., who took issue with that stance, citing that in her experience, natural methods "won't do the job." She was concerned that readers would be misled into thinking that alternatives to drugs offered hope, and she wanted to set the record straight. I likewise want to set the record



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straight: Naturopathic alternatives worked extremely well for me and other friends and family members.

I do, however, recognize a particular problem when seeking natural options: Not all alternative practitioners are the same. A friend of mine sought natural treatment for her PPD with one local practitioner whose approach was to gradually replace antidepressants with supplements. My friend floundered, and after desperate weeks went to the naturopath who'd treated me so successfully. Her experiences with two different alternative practitioners were night and day: the first was ineffective, but the second she credits with the transformation of her life.

RENEE LANNAN
York, Pennsylvania

Any time a **mother** is told to **wean** to take a medication (not just an antidepressant), she should **ask more questions.**

Christina A. says that part of her recovery was "taking medication on which I could not breastfeed." Unfortunately, this is an important issue that Kathleen A. Kendall-Tackett failed to address in her otherwise wonderful article. It is quite possible that the medication Christina took truly wasn't compatible with breastfeeding; however, many antidepressants are compatible with breastfeeding. Any time a mother is told to wean to take a medication (not just an antidepressant), she should ask more questions. Most important, ask the doctor or nurse to look up the medication in Dr. Thomas W. Hale's *Medications and Mothers' Milk*.

Also, see La Leche League International's *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, eighth edition (Ballantine, 2010, page 402): "If your choices are exposing your baby to a medication in your milk or exposing your baby to formula, you are generally choosing between a small or theoretical risk and a known risk with wide-ranging consequences. Formula *always* has side effects; the only unknown is how great they will be for you and your baby." There are absolutely times when the risk of a medication to the baby does outweigh the benefit of breastfeeding. But this happens far, far less often than mothers are led to believe.

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E-mail

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BEARS LOVE BABYWEARING

I snapped this photo of my 18-month-old daughter, Elise, babywearing her bears and thought I'd send it your way. Clearly, we love babywearing!

JENNIFER STACY
E-mail



THE THREE MILKATEERS

I just had to share this picture (taken by Heather Drennan) of me and two close friends nursing our toddlers at a recent park playdate. I met these women through the MotheringDotCommunity forums. I am incredibly grateful to *Mothering* for educating and supporting me, and for introducing me to an amazing group of local moms.

CHARLOTTE SHONEMAN
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

KEEPING YOUR COOL

Thank you so much for publishing "Managing Mama Rage," by Tera Freese, in the November-December 2010 issue. This article does two great things for moms. First, it opens up dialogue about what we consider to be a shameful topic: our own anger. Second, it gives tips to help us control our anger. I will be repeating "I can control only myself" and "I control my own reactions" often. Thank you, Tera, for sharing your experience with such honesty.

MAUREN
E-mail

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+
comfort



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I was moved to tears by "Build an Emotionally Safe Home," by Natalie Christensen—tears of frustration. If "feelings are everything," as the article's opening sentence states, then why should we parents whitewash our feelings and reactions toward our children? For me, cradling my sobbing baby and making comforting noises (something readers are advised against) is only natural. Telling her, "You seem so sad about X" (which the article recommends instead) falls flat. Praising her for getting through a potentially scary situation, like a trip to the dentist, feels right (though the article says I should resist doing this). Asking her instead, "How was it for you?" (the recommended response) seems more like a caption for a *New Yorker* cartoon than a way to engage my child. I can't help it—I parent with exclamation points!

The only bit of advice I agree with—express yourself—is last on the list, and flies in the face of all the tamping down the article recommends up to that point. "By expressing your own true emotions you can model what you'd like to see from her," Christensen writes. Excellent point! Well said!

I agree! Oh, wait. Sorry. Ms. Christensen, how was it for you?

AMY LOVETT
Troy, New York

The September–October 2010 issue of *Mothering* arrived the day I got home from the hospital, having undergone surgery for a very scary, painful ectopic pregnancy. In my sadness, I decided that I wasn't going to renew my subscription.

When the fog of loss began to lift, I halfheartedly began flipping through the pages, only to find myself, as usual, completely engrossed. Tera Freese's "Managing Mama Rage" and Natalie Christensen's "Build an Emotionally Safe Home" each provided timely insights about understanding not only my own recent fluctuating emotions, but those of my wonderfully independent and opinionated toddlers.

I am seeing your magazine with fresh eyes, and appreciating the smart, interesting, and relevant articles it provides to mothers at all stages in the journey of parenthood. My renewal check is in the mail.

ALISON HALE
Sebastopol, California



BUZZED ON BREASTMILK

Here is a picture of my three-year-old daughter tenderly nursing her Buzz Lightyear doll.

ALICIA WILBUR
E-mail

If Ina May Gaskin, Ricki Lake, and Peggy O'Mara told you how to fix our birth culture, would you listen?

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VOICES FROM OUR FACEBOOK COMMUNITY

Things are hopping on the *Mothering* Facebook fan page. Here's a peek at what people are saying.

MATT PHOENIX PHOTOGRAPHY

Mothering readers like to share their perspectives on all things parenting, from the practical to the poignant. Recently, on our [Facebook page](#), we posted questions about a variety of topics: using or not using paper towels, volunteer work, the touching of a pregnant belly. Take a look at what our fans had to say—and come join the discussion!

Is it possible to get rid of paper towels? What do you use instead?

The easiest way to do without paper towels and napkins? **Don't buy them.**

Cotton or linen **rags** for everything. Even cat barf! Even bacon grease!

I wash kitchen towels/rags in hot water with **eucalyptus oil**. Kills all the germs!

I use **washcloths**, though I use micro-fiber cloths for mirrors/windows.

Flat cloth diapers make a wonderful non-paper towel.

What type of volunteer work is it possible to do with young children? What do you do?

I worked my hours at a **food co-op** with my little one. I also did La Leche League work and visited nursing homes.

I've been going to **beach and trail cleanup days** since I could walk.

How do/did you feel about people touching your belly when you were pregnant?

When my husband and I were unexpectedly blessed with our first daughter after a long struggle with infertility, I understood the longing some women have to take part in the creation of a life—even for just a brief moment.

I welcomed and encouraged touching by women and kids. What a wonderful way for my unborn babe to absorb extra love, and for me to be able to share a gift of life with someone else.



Laura Slomkowski posted this photo on *Mothering's* Facebook page, saying, "My daughter is 2½ and is at her happiest at the breast, which she affectionately calls 'boo-boo.'"

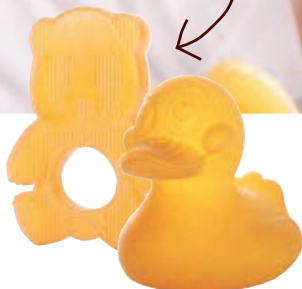
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Surgeon General issues call to action to support breastfeeding

The **breastfeeding movement** has received some key backing: a **Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding** from the US Surgeon General, Regina M. Benjamin. Released in January, the statement addresses the benefits of and barriers to breastfeeding in the US, and proposes wide-ranging government and private policies **aimed at increasing breastfeeding rates** in the US.

Clearly delineating 20 "recommended actions and their associated implementation strategies," the Surgeon General proposes **new institutional support** for breastfeeding. Notably, the document specifically lists access to and insurance reimbursement for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs), as well as **paid maternity leave for all mothers**. The Call to Action also calls for **programs in the workplace to support lactation**, and **on-site child care** that increases direct access to babies while moms are at work. In addition, the document calls for campaigns to **educate the primary support networks** of women, such as partners and grandmothers, about the importance of breastfeeding. However, while public harassment of breastfeeding women is specifically discussed as a barrier to successful breastfeeding, none of the 20 steps addresses protection for public breastfeeding.

While the Surgeon General cannot implement programs in such a document, its clear statement of priorities can be cited in support of legislation and other policy changes. The Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding is **the most comprehensive**



document on breastfeeding issued by a Surgeon General since 1984, when C. Everett Koop convened the first Workshop on Breastfeeding and Human Lactation. According to Surgeon General Benjamin, "I believe that we as a nation are beginning to see a shift in how we think and talk about breastfeeding. With this Call to Action, I am urging everyone to help make breastfeeding easier."

Read the full document at www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/breastfeeding/calltoactiontosupportbreastfeeding.pdf.

—Jake Aryeh Marcus

More **meatless** school meals

If a student is able to choose a **vegetarian meal** even once a week, he or she could reap important **benefits**.

It's gotten easier for kids to **eat well at school**—but maybe not easy enough. In December, President Obama signed into law the **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010**, a sweeping reform measure that aims to improve kids' nutrition and to fight obesity.

However, at least one health-lobby group, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), had hoped the law would go further.

While the act provides funding for schools to buy

healthier foods, it omits provisions that specifically promote meatless meals, and

doesn't go far enough in supporting alternatives to dairy products.

"One in three kids is now overweight, but many schools are still struggling to serve healthy lunches," says Neal Barnard, MD, president of PCRM. "**Schools should offer low-fat vegetarian options every day**, and Congress and the president should take additional steps to give schools the resources to make that feasible."

If a student is able to choose a **vegetarian meal** even once a week, he or she could reap important benefits. A veggie burger, for example, is similar in protein content to a hamburger. But while the hamburger has 15 grams of fat, the veggie burger has only 5 grams, and contains no cholesterol, fewer calories, and more fiber.

—Laura André



Lower cesarean rates = big savings

The nation's **rising rate of cesarean sections** has sounded numerous alarms in recent years. We know the procedure can threaten the health of mother and baby, but what about the financial costs associated with all those C-sections?

According to the Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality—Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (AHRQ-HCUP), the "national bill" for C-sections in 2008 totaled \$22.9 billion. When added to other procedures to assist delivery, the costs rose to more than \$37.7 billion.

What these overwhelmingly large numbers mean is that just a **slight reduction in the C-section rate would produce billions of dollars in savings**. That's the message of a recent report from **Intermountain Healthcare**, a Utah-based nonprofit health-care system consisting of hospitals, physicians, clinics, and health plans serving Utah and southeastern Idaho.

Compared with the national rate of 32.9 percent, **Intermountain boasts a C-section rate of only 21 percent**.

By keeping its C-section rate below the national average, Intermountain estimates it has lowered charges to patients by more than \$270 million over ten years.

About ten years ago, Intermountain noticed a phenomenon that was part of a larger national trend. Women and their doctors were choosing to induce labor more frequently, and these inductions were occurring at 37 or 38 weeks. "When



we analyzed the data from births at Intermountain's hospitals, we found that **women who deliver before babies reach 39 weeks gestational age tend to have longer and more complicated deliveries**, an increased proportion of which lead to more C-sections," said D. Ware Branch, MD, medical director of Intermountain's Women and Newborns Clinical Program, in an Intermountain press release. "We also found an increase in the number of newborns with medical complications in the group delivered before 39 weeks."

Intermountain implemented guidelines to reduce elective inductions before the ideal gestational period of 39 weeks. In 1999, some 28 percent of all induced labors at Intermountain's hospitals occurred before 39 weeks. Today, that percentage is less than 2 percent. With that change, Intermountain has also seen **reductions in the average length of labor, the number of C-sections, and certain complications** with newborns whose labors were electively induced.

—Laura André

Pacifier use may hinder speech skills

Recent research suggests that **lengthy use of pacifiers** by children may negatively affect their acquisition of speech skills. If used for longer than the typical two years or so, **a pacifier may interfere** with the development of tongue-tip movement, needed for the production of certain sounds used in speech. The findings were presented in November 2010 at the annual convention of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), by Danielle LaPrairie and her co-presenters, all from Eastern Illinois University.

In Western countries, **75 to 85 percent of children** are given pacifiers, in hopes that such nonnutritive sucking (NNS) will calm them. For the study, the researchers recruited children two to four years old and divided them into two groups, based on their history of NNS. The groups were then administered a standardized test and articulation tasks, both designed to measure their articulation skills. Though both groups' scores were within the average range, the group that had not been given pacifiers consistently scored higher on the test and tasks.



—Laura André

New CPSC database keeps parents informed

With *SaferProducts.gov*, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) aims to keep product-safety information at your fingertips. A result of the 2008 Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA), the online database of information about product safety, launched in March 2011, will improve on the CPSC's ability to identify and act on product-safety problems. Consumers, child service providers, health-care professionals, and others may submit reports of harmful products. Completed reports and comments from the products' manufacturers will be placed on *SaferProducts.gov*, where anyone can search them.

—Laura André

Health organizations counter “breast not best” study

Though it's accepted in the international medical community that “breast is best,” this assertion was recently challenged by an article in the *British Medical Journal*. The authors of “Analysis: Six Months of Exclusive Breast Feeding: How Good Is the Evidence?” argue that six months of exclusive breastfeeding (the recommendation of the World Health Organization) creates a higher risk of iron deficiency, food allergies, and celiac disease in the UK. **The analysis was based on a review of existing studies, not new research.** In addition, three of the four authors acknowledged that, within the past three years, **they did consultancy work for and/or received research funding from companies that make formula and baby food.**

While readers of newspapers were confused by such headlines as “BREASTFEEDING 'NOT ALWAYS BEST,’” the WHO issued a statement defending its position, and the UNICEF UK **Baby Friendly Initiative directly challenged the accuracy of each assertion** in the *BMJ* article. According to the Initiative's statement, “Ensuring that the mother is not anaemic and that cord cutting is delayed will in turn ensure that the baby's own body stores and breastmilk will provide sufficient iron for over 6 months. The majority of the food commonly introduced to babies in the early months such as cereal, fruit and vegetables are low in iron and will therefore not help prevent IDA [iron deficiency anemia]. However, if they are introduced before a baby needs them, they will displace breastmilk from the baby's diet and may thereby reduce the amount of iron consumed.”

According to UNICEF, evidence suggests that breastfeeding when gluten is first introduced to a baby's diet may **reduce the likelihood of later developing celiac disease**, and that the possible genetic nature of food allergies argues in favor of addressing on a case-by-case basis the introduction of certain foods into the diets of babies born into allergic families.

A growing body of expert and lay criticism of the original *BMJ* article can be found on the *BMJ* website, www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.c5955/reply. The responders include **Dr. Miriam Labbok**, professor of maternal and child health at the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health, and director of the Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute. She wrote: “Rather than calling for truncation of exclusive breastfeeding, limiting its myriad of positive immediate health, child spacing and long-term health effects, let us instead call for 1) delayed cord clamping for iron stores, with iron supplements as needed in later infancy, 2) research on the impact of exclusive breastfeeding vs. expressed milk feeding on the health of both mothers and their children, and, most of all, 3) **unbiased, informed, and mother-centered support**—clinical, social and economic—so that women may make an **unbiased, informed infant feeding choice**, and succeed in six months of exclusive breastfeeding.”

—Jake Aryeh Marcus



From welfare to well-being in four months

Impoverished Middle Eastern women are experiencing the empowerment of **new job opportunities** thanks to Welfare to Wellbeing. The program, run by the Jaffa Institute, helps long-unemployed women living in the greater Tel Aviv–Jaffa area find and maintain meaningful employment, thereby releasing them and their families from the cycle of poverty. Unemployment and poverty are endemic in the areas in which the Institute operates, where more than 30 percent of the population depends on welfare services and **almost one in five are single mothers.**

While the Jaffa Institute's main focus is child poverty, it established Welfare to Wellbeing to attack the problem at its root: long-term unemployment and underemployment of parents. By providing tools, skills, and support, **the program helps women achieve economic self-sufficiency** for themselves and their families.

Since 2007, 70 women have graduated from the program, and 80 percent of those have secured long-term employment. For many women, this represents **their first permanent job** in more than ten years; for some, it's the first job they've ever had.

The four-month program cycles three times annually, with the first three months of each cycle devoted to theory, vocational training, and tutorials. Participants spend the final month working in real jobs in the field of their choice. Often, these work placements lead to offers of permanent employment.

For more information, go to www.jaffainstitute.org.

—Elie Klein



Prenatal knowledge of cleft palates doesn't alter mothers' responses

Many parents look forward to an ultrasound as their first opportunity to see an image of their baby. But an ultrasound can **reveal that the fetus has unexpected medical conditions**, such as a cleft lip and/or palate. Despite the emotional distress such a diagnosis can bring, it can also offer the chance to prepare for the child's future needs. However, a study has found **little difference** between the reactions of the mothers who were given a prenatal diagnosis of cleft lip and/or palate and those who discovered the problem at birth.

Researchers conducted interviews with 235 mothers of children aged two to seven years who were born with orofacial clefts. Of these children, 19.6 percent had been identified prenatally with a cleft lip, or a cleft lip and palate. Overall, prenatal diagnosis is made in 20 to 30 percent of pregnancies affected by an orofacial cleft.

Contrary to expectations, a prenatal diagnosis was found to offer few advantages. Those with early knowledge of the condition didn't report greater satisfaction with information, support from medical staff, or treatment outcomes. Nor did the two groups differ in number of surgeries, expectations for those surgeries, complications of surgeries, or the quality of care (as rated by the mothers). However, mothers who learned of their child's cleft before delivery were more satisfied with the help they received in feeding the baby than mothers who learned of a cleft at the child's birth.

The study concluded, "Further research should determine whether prenatal diagnoses alter maternal anxiety or influence postnatal morbidity."

The source for this news brief is "Prenatal Diagnosis of Orofacial Clefts: Association with Maternal Satisfaction, Team Care, and Treatment Outcomes," by James M. Robbins, PhD, et al., *Cleft Palate—Craniofacial Journal* 47, no. 5 (September 2010): 476–481; www.cpcjournal.org/doi/pdf/10.1597/08-177.

—Laura André

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| by Nicole Faires

bus mama

How an old Blue Bird serves as the sustainable, happy home for a family of five

I wanted to give them the **gift of adventure** while they were still in the **best time** of their lives—when, like thirsty sponges, they absorb **every little detail**.

I remember riding, as a child, along the desert back roads of Arizona on the way to school, being jostled around on a green vinyl seat that smelled of pencils and heat. Buses were fun, special vehicles that took you on adventures, and you didn't have to wear a seat belt. As I grew, I dreamed, like many teenagers, of one day buying a bus and living a lifestyle of hippie freedom. I imagined a colorful home on wheels, painted with flowers and swirls and parked on some rural land. I would live off the land and make money with my art! I would boldly fight the conventions of modern society! To me,

buses represented a life with no rules and no responsibilities.

Of course I held a series of jobs, got married, worked hard, began the so-called normal life that most people subscribe to, and forgot all about my demented bus dreams. I became a writer and tried to be a “green mom.” I had a midwife, breastfed and wore my babies, and made my own baby food. I was fortunate that, when I began mothering, such things were trendy. It made me seem a little more average; I could pretend to fit in.

As time went on, however, I became dissat-



ified. I've never been happy with the mediocre, and as someone who writes about sustainability and self-reliance, I knew exactly what it takes to live a truly sustainable life—but hadn't yet taken the big step into actually doing it. Compact fluorescent light bulbs and compost just didn't satisfy me anymore.

But beyond all of that, I now had three girls, all under the age of eight, who were rapidly growing into smart, independent, rambunctious young ladies. If I didn't do something drastic right now, while they were young, they'd end up leaving home learning that having kids makes it too difficult to have grand adventures. I wanted to give them the gift of adventure while they were still in the best time of their lives—when, like



thirsty sponges, they absorb every little detail. I wanted to open their minds to the idea that kids aren't something you wait to have when you're *done* with adventuring. I wanted my girls to have families, but not to feel trapped at home, as so many women do, and I wanted to

Opposite: Nicole peers out from her bus home.

Above (clockwise from top left): Nicole's brother Branson sitting in the living room/kitchen (under construction); the outdoor kitchen; Autumn (4), Nicole, and Ana (7) getting ready to do an art project; John and Rainn (14 months) in the mostly finished kitchen; John holding an emergency exit sign needed to make the bus legal; Nicole learning the ukulele outside when things got too crowded

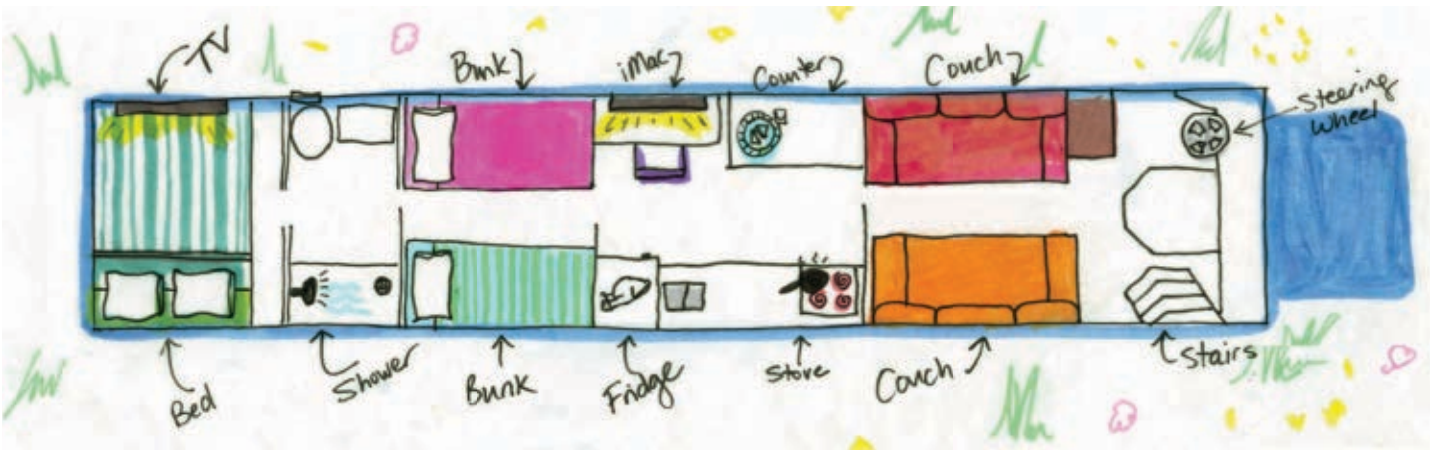
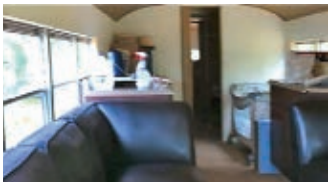
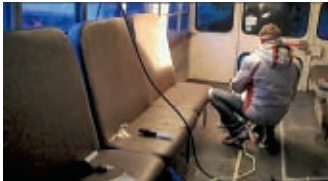


ILLUSTRATION BY MELLYSSA HOLIK



Evolution of a Blue Bird (from top): Taking out the bus seats; preparing to lay flooring; walls are up; living room and kitchen; office space; the girls get the giggles as their dad cranks up the bus and moves the house.

teach them by example. I also wanted them to be happy with little, and to be able to get along in a small space. Most important, I wanted them to grow up outside.

So my husband, knowing my eccentric dreams, bought a bus—a 40-foot-long Blue Bird formerly used by a Lake Tahoe ski resort—and drove it by himself the 1,700 miles back to Canada. We ripped out its guts and put in an insulated subfloor of plywood—and then, instead of waiting to finish the project, moved into the empty shell. We'd decided that if we waited to move in, maybe we never would. Maybe we'd chicken out, or have a hard time putting aside money to complete the project. By living in the bus as we rebuilt it, we forced our own hand: This project would get finished.

We named the bus *The Albatross*, parked it on a relative's farm, and started to live cheap. We got completely out of debt. Our girls were outside all day. We could see the entire Milky Way from our bed through the bus's windows.

Of course, there were drawbacks. We had no plumbing, and we had to use the toilet in the house, 100 yards away. It got chilly, and the space heater sometimes didn't seem to put out any heat at all. When my canopy blew away in a windstorm, I had to wash dishes in the rain.

As time has passed and *The Albatross* has slowly become more like a home and less like a tin can on wheels, I've begun to enjoy little things that at first were simply inconvenient. The less I rely on the billion-dollar infant-product industry, the more I enjoy this life. I can't depend on electrical gadgets, and I don't have the space for swings, jumpers, and other paraphernalia.

Our first and most difficult challenge was the lack of plumbing. After a day of running

around in fields and forest and messing with farm animals, the girls come home covered in a thick layer of grime. Their tub is a large plastic storage bin, in which they sit as I bathe them in a potful of warm water I've hauled from house to bus. We set the tub right in front of the space heater; I pour the water over their heads with a cup and soap them up, then pour more water over them to rinse. Each girl needs only a few cups of water to get clean. While the process is similar to a regular bath, it feels very different from the ones we took in a house.

There I would fill the tub halfway, throw them in with a bunch of toys, scrub their hair, then leave them to play until they'd turned into shivering raisins. When I have to haul the water myself, then conserve each precious drop while lovingly bathing each child individually, everything slows down. We talk, we laugh, we're careful with the water. We feel the cold air just outside the perimeter of the space heater, and cuddle up in big, fuzzy towels.

The same thing happens with cooking. Until my kitchen is completed, I use a portable buffet stove perched on a wheel-well box. I have a toaster and a slow cooker, but each meal must be prepared in only one pot—and I don't have an oven. There is tremendous temptation to eat out all the time, simply for the convenience, but I try to remain dedicated to whole foods. As we finish the kitchen, I'll again be able to make more and more things from scratch. For now, our one-pot meals

We got completely **out of debt**.

Our **girls** were **outside** all day.

We could see the entire **Milky Way** from our bed through the bus's **windows**.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

When I have to haul the water myself, then conserve each precious drop while lovingly bathing each child individually, everything slows down. We talk, we laugh, we're careful with the water. We feel the cold air just outside the perimeter of the space heater, and cuddle up in big, fuzzy towels.

revolve around bread, soups, quinoa, eggs, beans, and rice. We eat many, many raw fruits and vegetables—not only for their health benefits, but because they require no preparation and leave no dirty dishes. This overload of whole foods has made us very sensitive to junk; the girls are now very aware that treats and fast food make them feel bad, while healthy foods make them feel good. The preparation of our food seems almost tribal as we sit on the floor around the pot, eating finger foods with our hands. All is small, everything is close.

The Albatross's 350 square feet isn't a lot of space, and a seven-, a four-, and a one-year-old make it even smaller. And when everyone begins to bicker, it feels more like 10 square feet. It has tested my patience and my persistence, and forced me to take a long, deep look at myself to discover who I am as a parent. Here in this bus, I can't turn on a movie when things get tough, and I can't send the girls off to play in separate rooms. I'm forced to engage with them, to sit down and probe the complex emotions of a four-year-old who wants the very same pencil her sister is using. Rather than just blocking our one-year-old off from all things dangerous, I have to teach her why she can't play with the space heater.

All of these situations become learning opportunities in our version of homeschooling, a process I've been forced to modify with the downsizing of our previously large library of books. Everyday experiences become a curriculum, and we carefully prioritize which books we do use and keep. The result? We read from *The Iliad*, and science

experiments in the natural world are a few feet away, directed by the passing interests of rambunctious girls.

Living in a bus is not for everyone, parenting three young girls in a bus is certainly not for everyone, and homeschooling three girls in a bus is truly for only a few crazy souls. I'm sure that, one day, I'll look back at this time and laugh maniacally at myself.

But at the end of the day, when I clean their sticky faces, throw them into bed, and watch them fall asleep so quickly, their energy completely used up by a day spent outside, exercising their imaginations, and so relaxed in their close proximity to me—I am content. All their needs have been filled to the brim. As I fall asleep with sweet baby breath on my face, I feel the peaceful certainty of having no regrets.

♦♦ For more on parenting with an eye toward sustainability, go to www.mothering.com/links and see the past

article "Earth-Friendly Kids," by Heather Rader. In addition, you'll also find Zélie Pollon's Web exclusive, "My Playa Boy," which offers another perspective on being a mother and an adventurer.



Nicole Faires is the author of *The Ultimate Guide to Homesteading: An Encyclopedia for Independent Living* (Skyhorse Publishing, March 2011).

She lives in Canada with her husband, John, and Anastasia (7), Autumn (4), and Rainn (1). For more of her writing, see <http://NicoleFaires.com>.

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an apple for teacher?

Button magnets, pretty pens, and a classroom cookbook make great gifts for your child's instructor.

One of the best things in the world is to craft something with your own hands and then share it with others. Even better is making gifts with your children and encouraging their imaginations to soar. It will improve their hand-eye coordination and ability to focus, all while making treasures they can keep themselves or give to others in appreciation. Teachers, whether in public or private schools, Montessori, homeschool, or co-op, directly influence our children and deserve our esteem and respect. By working side by side with our children to create handcrafted gifts for the teachers in their lives, we send a positive message to our kids and show their teachers how much we appreciate them.

Gifts to make for the teachers in your child's life

Plant a flower patch for your teacher. During the school year (this will depend on where you live), take to school the flowers you've grown. Good choices for such cuttings are zinnias, strawflowers, and cosmos.

Pick flowers from your yard and **press them** in books or a flower press. Glue the flowers onto note cards to make **stationery** or a **bookmark**.

Make a **mosaic flower pot** using broken pottery, tiles, beads, marbles, stained glass, shells, charms, etc. Spread ceramic-tile grout on the outer sides of the pot and attach to it the decorative items.

If your teacher keeps a garden, **decorate a watering can** in different colors of craft paint. (The paints can be in pen form, which kids can handle more easily.) Write on the can the teacher's name and school year, as in 2010–2011, or the grade

the instructor teaches.

Share **produce from your garden**.

Make a **headband out of fabric**.

Make a class photo book. This will depend on the type of class your child is in, but it's a good project for preschool children. In such a book—use a blank scrapbook—an entire page is devoted to each child, so that various photographs from throughout the year can be included.

Hand-embroider or cross-stitch linen dish towels.

Make **homemade play-dough** for the classroom: a great project for a preschool or kindergarten classroom.

Create magnets using glass gems. Affix an image printed on a piece of paper to the back of the glass magnet/gem so that it can be seen through the glass.

Decorate file folders with rubber stamps.

Decorate a cube of blank notes with rubber-stamped patterns on the sides of the cube.

Stamp the corner of each page of a blank notepad or block of Post-it notes. (Be sure the imprint is small enough that there will still be enough room to write a note!)

Have your child learn a new craft, such as **knitting, crocheting, cross-stitch, candlewicking, rug hooking**, etc. For a final project, create a gift for the teacher.

Bake **fresh muffins**, fill a mug with **coffee beans or ground coffee**—or various flavors of tea—and wrap in a bag.

Draw or paint a picture.

Have each child sign his or her name on a mug or plate.

Make a "hand"-printed tote bag or apron by having the children cover their hands in paint and then press them against





decorative pen and notepad

- writing pen with transparent barrel and removable screw-off top
- blank notepad
- ink pad
- rubber stamp
- scissors
- ribbon

Select a rubber stamp with a pattern that you would like to print onto a piece of paper to insert into the pen. (Smaller patterns work best.)

Select an ink color and **stamp** your chosen image on a sheet of paper.

Measure the transparent section of the pen barrel, then **cut** the paper to that length and 3/4 inch wide.

Roll the stamped paper tightly enough that it can be slid into the pen barrel. Open the barrel, insert the paper, and close.

Select a rubber stamp with a larger, complementary pattern and **stamp** the pages of the notepad in the lower corners.



Bind the pen to the notepad with a colorful ribbon.



fabric-covered button fridge magnets

- 1 package button covers
- fabric with small printed pattern (you can use a tight, intricate pattern, or focus on a print pattern with a small, cute design)
- craft magnets
- scissors
- pliers (needle-nose pliers work well)
- glue (craft or hot glue)

On the back of the button-cover package you'll find a pattern. **Cut** it out. **Fold** piece of fabric, then **place** pattern on fabric with straight edge of pattern on fold. **Pin** the pattern on your fabric so that the pattern doesn't move as you cut. **Trace** around the pattern with a pen and cut it out, or skip the tracing and cut directly around the pattern. After cutting, **unfold**; you'll have a circle.

Remove wires from backs of metal buttons. If you can't do this with your fingers, use pliers to pinch the wire together and remove.

In the button package you'll find a white plastic mold. **Lay** this on the table with the empty center facing up. **Place** your fabric circle, pattern side down, on top of the mold. **Place** the button cover on top of the fabric, then **push down** so that the button cover goes into the white plastic mold along with your fabric.

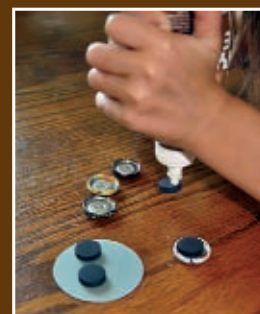
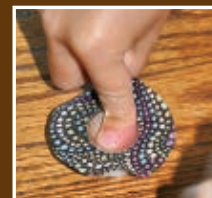
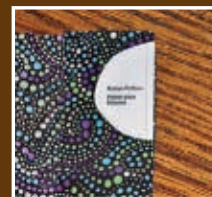
Next, **fold** in extra fabric that's sticking up toward the concave metal button cover.

Place the back piece (flat with curved sides) of the button within the cover. Using the cylindrical tool included in the package (this one is blue), firmly **press** the back into the back of the button cover. Make sure that the flat back of the cover goes in smoothly and straight.

When done, **push** the covered button out of the mold.

Squeeze some glue onto the back of a craft magnet, then **stick** it to the back of a covered button. **Repeat** with remaining buttons and let dry.

Voilà! Fabric-covered button magnets!



the material. Decorate the handprints to make them look like flowers in a garden.

Create a classroom cookbook. In this cookbook, each student has a page on which to share a favorite family recipe and a photograph of himself or herself. Cookbooks can be spiral-bound or three-ring binders.

Paint a flowerpot with children's fingerprints. Get a large greenware (unfired clay) flowerpot from a self-painting ceramics store, then bring it to class or to an outside function. Have each child place a finger in a different color of paint and then press his or her fingerprint on the pot—the pot will be covered with different-colored fingerprints. You can then turn these prints into flowers, bees, bugs, animals, etc. Write each child's name on the pot, along with the school year and the teacher's name. Return the pot to the self-painting store for glazing and finishing. When you give the pot to the teacher, you can fill it with a plant or seeds, gardening gloves, and/or tools.

Share a favorite book that relates to the level of your child's class—for example, Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*. Include with the book **a small tree for the teacher to plant** at home or in her or his room. If it's planted in the room, teacher and students together can watch it grow throughout the school year.

Decorate a coffee mug with paint pens. Fill the mug with homemade dry mix—for **cocoa, cookies, muffins, or soup with dried beans and spices**—in a special cloth bag.

Have your child take a photograph of something that you know the teacher likes or enjoys—for example, a giraffe. Enlarge the photograph and put it in a frame. On the back of the frame or on a card, write something about the photo that was taken.

.....
Got the crafting bug? For even more project ideas, go to www.mothering.com/links and see the Web exclusive "It's a Gift," by Laura Schmitt, tutorials from crafters, and the Arts & Crafts forum on MotheringDotCommunity.

Michelle Vackar is a mother of two daughters and a contributor to the online publication Modern Handmade Child (www.modernhandmadechild.com), where you will find more patterns and tutorials on craft ideas for teachers.

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| by Karen Brody

my body rocks




A group of yoga nidra practitioners at the Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School in Sweden

SCANDINAVIAN YOGA AND MEDITATION SCHOOL © 2011

As I lay down on the four folded blankets and tucked myself in with another blanket on top, a sigh emerged from my mouth that was more like a roar. *This mama was tired.*

I needed a nap. It was spring 2004, and my body felt a deep-in-the-bones exhaustion. My boys were three and four years old, I had been rising at 5 a.m. with my older son for over four years, and I had just spent a year interviewing over 100 women about their childbirth experiences, for a possible book about why so many healthy, educated mothers in America were having an unusually high number of medical interventions and complications when giving birth. I deserved a nap, right?

I told myself that, to unwind, I should take a “bendy-stretchy” yoga class. But when I read the description of the yoga nidra taught by Robin Carnes at Willow Street Yoga, in Takoma Park, Maryland—that all you do is lie down and rest for an hour—I thought, *Forget about bending my body into the boat pose—yoga nidra is exactly the kind of yoga I need.* Little did I know that a yoga nidra nap would change my life. “That’s not serious yoga,” commented my mommy friends.



How an ancient yogic practice led to the birth of a play—and a movement

Part of me agreed. Paying for a yoga class was an investment, and paying to nap at a yoga studio seemed a little nuts. So when I stepped into Robin's class for the first time, even though I desperately needed rest, I was somewhat skeptical that this expensive nap in the middle of the day was a good idea.

"How many blankets do I need?" I asked Robin, a striking, middle-aged redhead who appeared less earthy-crunchy than the average yogini.

"At least four underneath you, one

for your head, and two to put on top of you," she said. "Oh, and you may want a bolster and an eye bag."

As I made my bed, I watched the room fill with women of all ages, some of whom had brought their own eye bags. By noon, the room was packed. I guess I wasn't the only one who needed a nap.

"Is there anyone here who has never done yoga nidra?" Robin asked. Up went my hand. "Great. Your mind may not know why you are here, but your body does."

I didn't know it yet, but my yoga nidra journey began right then.

DISCOVERING MY SANKALPA

As I lay down on the four folded blankets and tucked myself in with another blanket on top, a sigh emerged from my mouth that was more like a roar. This mama was *tired*.

"We're going to focus on your sankalpa today," Robin said. "*Sankalpa* in Sanskrit means *will* or *purpose*. Every yoga nidra



THE GREAT NAP

Outside of yoga circles, most people have never heard of *yoga nidra*, a meditative form of yogic sleep. If you've ever taken a yoga class and, for the final few minutes, the teacher has had you lie down on the floor in *shavasana*, a corpse-like position for deep relaxation, you've had a taste of yoga nidra. This state of deep, conscious sleep is similar to meditation, with this difference: In meditation, you remain in the waking state of consciousness and gently focus the mind while allowing thought patterns, emotions, sensations, and images to arise and dissipate. In yoga nidra, you leave the waking state, go past the dreaming state, and enter deep sleep—yet remain awake.

Got it? Don't worry. The beauty of yoga nidra is that you don't have to understand it with your mind. Just experience it, and your body will get it. You can even fall asleep and still benefit from it, although the intention is to stay awake.

As with most ancient yoga practices, present-day teachers of yoga nidra put their own spins on the essence of the teachings and on how the yoga is practiced. There are many yoga nidra teachers with followers: Rod Stryker, Yogi Amrit Desai, and Richard Miller, to name a few. My teacher, Robin Carnes, uses Miller's powerful approach to yoga nidra, which he calls Integrative Restoration (iRest). For more information about iRest, go to www.irest.us.

On Mother's Day 2010, I kicked off a one-year commitment to nap. Read about my journey, and join my 40-day nap challenge for moms, at www.mothering.com/pregnancy-birth/karen-brody-course.

—Karen Brody

Above: Robin Carnes leads a yoga nidra class in her studio.

“Every **yoga nidra** session begins with focusing on what your **intention**, or **purpose**, is for the practice. It could be to simply **relax**, or it could be more focused on something you want **to manifest** in your life.”

—Robin Carnes

session begins with focusing on what your intention, or purpose, is for the practice. It could be to simply relax, or it could be more focused on something you want to manifest in your life.”

I want rest, my mind told me in an instant.

“Don't let your mind answer this question,” Robin urged a second later, ruling out the immediate answer my brain had come up with. “Let your intention come from your body.”

My *body*? I was ashamed to admit that, after two powerful homebirth experiences, I no longer felt intimately connected to my physical self. Pregnancy and giving birth were all about every little feeling in my body; mothering felt like a marathon of meeting everyone else's needs and rarely my own. My life was too busy to focus on my body. I was consumed with interviewing mothers about their birth experiences and caring for two small toddlers born 18 months apart, the elder a constant screamer. Most days, the question I asked was, “How are *their* bodies?” My body was in the backseat, unattended, without a seat belt.

“If you don't know your intention now, don't worry,” Robin assured us. “See if it comes to you during the practice, once you're sensing your body.”

And off we went. Robin's sweet, melodic voice, with a hint of high school history teacher, took me through my body: mouth, tongue, ears, eyes, forehead, scalp. She even led me into “the hollows of the brain cavity,” a place I had not ever imagined.

“Sensation flowing in the back of the neck . . . in the throat . . . in the shoulders and arms . . .” her voice continued, as tingling electricity pulsed through these parts of my body. “Radiant sensation flowing down the left shoulder . . . into the left upper arm . . . left elbow . . . left forearm . . . wrist . . . left hand.”

After 45 minutes of guiding me in the exploration of my every body part, right down to the phlegm, while breathing deeply and sinking down into awareness of my feelings and thoughts, Robin invited us to feel our bodies as spacious, open, without boundaries. Ten minutes later she returned us to our *sankalpa*. At that point my body felt deliciously empty, as if an



abandoned lot in my brain were now displaying a big “VACANCY” sign. From this space emerged my sankalpa: *I will turn the 118 birth-story interviews I did into an important piece that will help make childbirth more mother-friendly.*

Four classes later, I began to hear the voices of birthing mothers.

FROM SANKALPA TO PLAY

The first time the symphony of mothers’ voices emerged, I was driving my boys to a park. Raffi was playing in the car’s CD player, and an argument about a blue ball was brewing between them. Suddenly, I applied the brakes and screeched to a halt. Both boys went silent, waiting for my scolding. Instead, I pulled a napkin from the glove compartment and started writing down dialogue. For the next five minutes, I wrote on every napkin in the car.

“Are we going to go to the park, Mommy?” Jacob finally asked.

Feeling guilty, I quickly wrote one word on my hand: *play*. Then I drove them to the park.

Play? I had never written a play, never thought about writing a play. I could not imagine, with two small children and a husband who traveled overseas all the time, how I could ever write a play. Sure, I was a writer—I could see writing a *book* about childbirth—but plays were definitely not my genre.

Back in yoga nidra class, I continued to focus on my sankalpa. By the end of the practice one day, again feeling open, my body lying there like a limitless blue ocean, serene as a morning mountain mist, this sense—not in my mind but in my body—came to me: *Nobody’s going to buy your book, Karen. Write a play about childbirth and change the world.*

The next morning, as I walked my kids to a nearby park, I asked a neighbor, who wrote grants for a local prominent theater company, where to go if I wanted to write a play.

“The Playwright’s Forum,” Gary responded.

I went to www.theplaywrightsforum.org and signed up immediately.

The voices of the mothers I’d interviewed now

flooded my head every day, and especially just after I’d practiced yoga nidra. I remember a session with Robin in which she’d had us dive into awareness of our thoughts and images, and I had explored my belief that I could not write a play because I was not qualified. She invited us to “locate a belief about yourself that you are working with in your life. Where and how do you feel it in your body when you take this belief to be true about yourself?”

I felt the belief that I could not write a play deep in my throat.

“Now bring to mind the opposite of this belief,” she suggested. “Where and how do you feel *it* in the body?”

I felt *I can write a play* in my heart.

“Alternate several times between these two opposites of belief.”

I cannot write a play. I can write a play. I cannot write a play. I can write a play.

Like magic, I entered that scrumptious feeling of emptiness again. I was totally open, a boundless ocean, my beliefs morphing into a completely unexpected place where my thoughts were unchained and neither belief was true.

That evening, mental handcuffs now off, I went to my computer and began to write a play about childbirth.

BIRTH OF A PLAY

Over the next six months I wrote *Birth*, a play about how healthy, educated mothers were giving birth in America. I wanted to present a portrait of real birth stories from the mother’s perspective because there are so many statistics about childbirth—for example, showing a rapid increase in the rate of cesarean sections—but few stories from mothers themselves. My intention in writing *Birth* was to make sure this period in history did not go by without clear documentation of how mothers are giving birth, and to raise consciousness of the current birthing climate so that mothers are aware of their birth options. It seemed unbelievable to me that so many serious, important plays—such as Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues*—have been written about women’s history and the politics of women’s bodies, but none about childbirth, an

At that point my body felt *deliciously empty*, as if an abandoned lot in my brain were now displaying a big “VACANCY” sign. From this space emerged *my sankalpa: I will turn the 118 birth-story interviews I did into an important piece that will help make childbirth more mother-friendly.*

Birth is being used to revolutionize the way communities view childbirth and respect women's pregnant bodies.

act that, each year, is performed by some 4 million US mothers.

I chose eight birth stories from my interviews with mothers. I fictionalized some of them to make the piece work as a play, but mostly I retold each woman's actual birth story. The stories range from a planned cesarean, to a mother who wants natural childbirth, to several mothers who want epidurals. Jillian, a character who, in the course of the play, tells the stories of all four of her births, begins with a birth she does not want and ends with exactly the birth she has always wanted. What I love about Jillian's story is the overarching tale of how she got there, and that one bad birth experience need not define a woman's entire birth history—a message I want every pregnant mother to take home.

Another of *Birth*'s important messages is that of women knowing what their birth options are,

and their right to them. This is why, since 2006, so many communities around the world have used the play to raise awareness and money to make maternity care better for mothers. *Birth* is being used to revolutionize the way communities view childbirth and respect women's pregnant bodies.

Every week during the time I was writing *Birth*, I attended Robin's noon yoga nidra class, moving from a mommy busyness in which, some days, I felt completely out of my body, to a yummy state of bodily presence I had never before been able to sustain. I wrote while the boys napped, and in the evenings I workshopped the play in a church basement with a group of playwrights from the Playwright's Forum. Though dumbfounded by the topic of childbirth, and often refusing to believe the mothers' firsthand accounts of being coerced into having cesarean sections, these writers

began to profoundly hear the voices of the women I was writing about, and to cheer them—and me—on to completion.

On tougher parenting days—for example, when the entire family came down with flu and high fevers while my husband was away on business—my sankalpa anchored me.

Write a play and change the world of childbirth,
Karen.

The play had its first reading on a frigid evening in December 2004, in a small rehearsal hall on the campus of George Washington University, in Washington, DC. The purpose of a play's "first read-

Opposite page
(clockwise, from top left):

Birth performances in San Francisco, California; Fort Collins, Colorado; Maui, Hawaii; Paris, France; Fernie, British Columbia, Canada; and Bermuda

Below:

Jeana Naluai nurses her son Kala while rehearsing for *Birth* in Maui, Hawaii.





Birth

around the world





Above (clockwise):
BOLD Red Tent circles in
Northampton, Massachusetts;
Paris, France;
Atlanta, Georgia;
and Austin, Texas



Be **BOLD!**

In 2006 I founded BOLD, originally called **Birth On Labor Day**, as a way of inspiring communities worldwide to use my play, *Birth*, and **Bold Red Tent storytelling circles** to raise money and awareness to improve maternity care. Since the project began, various communities have raised a total of more than \$250,000 for local mother-friendly initiatives to improve maternity care—by providing **doulas for women in prison**, supporting the growth of **local birth networks**, and raising seed money for important **childbirth conferences**, such as the Second International Breech Birth Conference, held in Ottawa, Canada, in 2009.

Birth has now been performed as part of BOLD events in **hundreds of locations**, from cafés to professional theaters to college campuses around the world, including in **France, Malta, India**, and **throughout the US**.

If you would like more information about BOLD, visit www.boldaction.org.

—K. B.



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TELLING SOUL STORIES



In my play, *Birth*, “**My body rocks!**” is a mantra used by the character Amanda, who passionately chants the phrase as she gives birth. Amanda, who is clear that she wants to give birth in a hospital but without medical interventions, uses this mantra to anchor her as she pushes her son, Dexter, out into the world. It is a **pregnant mother’s call to the wild, intuitive side** of her that trusts birth completely.

In 2010, I decided to use the “My body rocks!” spirit to teach not just pregnant and childbearing women how to feel more **comfortable in their bodies**, but others as well—such as women who are mothering aging parents or a spouse. Thus I launched the **My Body Rocks Project**, which helps mothers and other women connect with their bodies and find their authentic voices to make better decisions, such as where to give birth, or how to parent a child with learning challenges. Into each workshop and class I weave my love of **yoga nidra, movement, and storytelling.**

In fall 2010, when I taught a My Body Rocks workshop in British Columbia, mothers of all ages gathered in an intimate yoga studio, where together we **danced our story**, then told each other those stories. Each person had a unique tale, from one woman’s letting go of sorrow at a cousin’s death to another’s determination to find her birth mother.

The essence of the My Body Rocks Project is my belief that by **telling the stories of our souls**, each person can inch **closer to his or her true nature**, make better choices, and live a more vibrant life—and I recently began offering this experience online. In March 2011, I and *Mothering.com* are offering a seven-week My Body Rocks Pregnancy class online so that pregnant mothers around the world can experience the power of a “My body rocks!” birth. This takes me full circle, back to the roots of why I wrote *Birth*: **to help mothers explore their birth options** and have happy birth experiences.

—K. B.

ing” is to get feedback about it from an invited audience. I printed 50 invitations and posted them around Washington, at mother-related organizations and yoga studios. I hoped to see 20 people in the audience. To my surprise, the place was filled with more than 70 mothers, many with babies in slings. A mystery was unfolding, and I soon realized that not even I was in control of its power.

Eighteen months later I started Birth On Labor Day (BOLD), a global movement to inspire communities to use *Birth* and Bold Red Tent birth storytelling circles to raise awareness and money to improve maternity care. Our slogan was “Be BOLD”—a shout out to mothers everywhere about the importance of knowing all their birth options, not just the traditional choice of a hospital maternity ward (see sidebar, “Be BOLD!”). In addition, I started the My Body Rocks Project, which helps mothers connect with their bodies and authentic voices using yoga nidra, movement, and storytelling exercises (see sidebar, “Telling Soul Stories”).

My yoga nidra practice led me into my body to my true self, and out popped a play, a movement, and a mission. Not bad for an expensive nap.

♦♦ **Want more from Karen Brody?** Go to www.mothering.com/links and see Brody’s teleseminar on what to expect during pregnancy and birth, as well as her virtual pregnancy and birth course, and *Being Bold*, a short documentary about the play *Birth*.

Karen Brody is a writer, activist, and mother of two boys. Her critically acclaimed play about childbirth in America, Birth, and her BOLD Red Tent storytelling circles are experienced by thousands of people worldwide every year as part of BOLD, of which Karen is the founder and

artistic director (www.boldaction.org). In 2010, Karen received training in *iRest yoga nidra*. She currently teaches *My Body Rocks Pregnancy and Mothering classes online*, offers workshops, and works privately with mothers through her new venture, the *My Body Rocks Project*.



Left: Author Karen Brody (center) with *Birth* San Francisco producers Earth Lande (left) and Aimee Miles (right)

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

CATE STOKES

a GREEN clean

Who needs toxic chemicals when baking soda, vinegar, and water spruce up the house just fine?

No smart and caring mother

would spend a small fortune to harm her child. But that's just what we do every time we enter a supermarket and come out with an armful of products for spiffing up our homes. We buy air fresheners, toilet cleaners, drain uncloggers, laundry fluffers, bug chasers, countertop degreasers, bacteria-slaying soaps, silver polishers, and more. When you learn what ingredients lurk in these products, you understand why manufacturers hide them behind the veil of "trade secrets."

We grab these cleaning products off the store shelves, convinced they work because years of advertising have told us so. But it's even easier to make a few basic products that will work just as well, if not better, are not dangerous, and will save you money. It's fun to concoct these

BASIC INGREDIENTS TO HAVE ON HAND

- washing soda
- borax
- vegetable-based/liquid Castile soap (usually found in the laundry aisle)
- hydrogen peroxide
- distilled white vinegar
- lemons
- olive oil (buy a cheap variety)
- baking soda
- spray bottles (purchase at the hardware or drugstore, or wash and reuse the ones your commercial cleaners came in)

alternative cleaners, and rewarding to see the results. And if a toddler comes across one of them, there's so much less to worry about.

To shoot the photos here, Art Director Laura Egley Taylor and Staff Photographer Melyssa Holik visited **Four Kachinas Inn**, a bed-and-breakfast in Santa Fe, New Mexico, chosen, says Laura, for its casually elegant setting and gorgeous light.



Let the sunshine in
with a springtime-fresh
window cleaner made
of vinegar, warm water,
and a dash of lemon.



For instructions on how to make your own **wool dryer balls** like the ones shown here, made by *Mothering* staff photographer Melyssa Holik, visit www.mothering.com/lauraegleytaylor/wool-dryer-balls.

a few of our LEAST FAVORITE THINGS

By using the family-friendly cleaning supplies mentioned in this article, you can avoid these baddies commonly found in household cleaners.

acetaldehyde	lye
alkyl- and nonyl-phenol ethoxylates	monoethanolamine
alpha-terpineol	morpholine
aluminum hydroxide	naphthalene
ammonia	nitrobenzene
benzene	para-dichlorobenzene
benzyl- and ethyl-acetate	pentane
BHT 1	phthalates
butyl cellosolve	propane
chloroform	propylene glycol
d-limonene	sodium lauryl sulfates
formaldehyde	sulfuric acid
glycol ethers	triclosan
hydrochloric acid	— A. S.

BATHROOM

Air freshener: Set out a bowl of flower petals.

Hand sanitizer: Fill a container two-thirds full of water. Add 1 tablespoon aloe and a few drops of these essential oils: lemon, cinnamon, eucalyptus, clove bud.

Shower scrubbing bubbles: Borax and water, applied with a scrubbing pad.

Tile and grout cleaner: Mix equal parts borax, baking soda, and vinegar to make a paste.

Toilet-bowl cleaner: Borax, or baking soda and vinegar, or flat cola; let sit one hour.

KITCHEN

Air freshener: Simmer cloves or cinnamon stick or vanilla in water for 5 minutes.

All-purpose cleaning powder: Make a paste of equal parts baking soda or borax and warm water or white vinegar.

Specific tips

Clean oven racks: Put in your bathtub, cover with water and ½ cup dishwasher detergent, soak a few hours or overnight.



It's amazing how well this works.

Keep sponges clean: Microwave your kitchen sponge for 20 seconds to get rid of bacteria.

Remove cutting-board smells: Sprinkle board with baking soda and scrub.

LIVING ROOM

Furniture polish: ¼ cup olive oil, ¼ cup white vinegar, 2 teaspoons lemon juice.

Glass/window cleaner: ¼ cup white vinegar in 1 quart warm water; add squirt of lemon for scent.

It's easy to make a few basic products that will work well, are not dangerous, and will save you money.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Dryer sheets: Use reusable dryer ball instead of dryer sheets. Earth-friendly wool dryer balls help to cut down on the time your clothes have to spend in the dryer; they also help to separate items of clothing and eliminate static in the dryer. (For info on how to make your own, see www.mothering.com/lauraegleytaylor/creativity/how-to-make-wool-dryer-balls.)

Detergent: Add ½ cup borax or ½ cup baking soda to phosphate-free liquid detergent; soak clothes in hydrogen peroxide for half an hour to whiten.

CLOSETS/STORAGE ROOM

Mothballs: Instead of dry-cleaning clothes, demand wet-cleaning, which doesn't require the use of toxic perchloroethylene; then store.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Women's Voices for the Earth: Buy their green-cleaning party kit and hold a house party with your friends. This is lots more fun than a Tupperware party, and much better for your family and the environment. www.womenandenvironment.org/greenclean

Sources for additional homemade recipes:

Care2, www.care2.com (search under "household cleaning")

The Green Guide, www.thegreenguide.com (search under "household cleaning")

Women's Voices for the Earth, www.womensvoices.org/our-work/safe-cleaning-products/learn-more/green-cleaning-recipes

Information about ingredients in other products in your home:

Healthy Stuff: A searchable database of thousands of consumer goods, from cars and children's car seats to toys, pet products, school items, and women's handbags. www.healthystuff.org

The Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Cosmetic Safety Database: An eye-opening database of ingredients in cosmetics and other personal-care products. www.cosmeticsdatabase.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy's Food and Health Program, *Smart Plastics Guide: Healthier Food Uses of Plastics*: a guide to avoiding the worst types of plastic. www.healthobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=102202

❖ To learn more about environmentally friendly cleaning, go to www.mothering.com/links and see "Good Housecleaning," by Annie Berthold-Bond. The same link will lead you to the Web exclusive "The Toxic Truth," by Erika Schreder and Sharyle Patton, which is about avoiding toxins during pregnancy.



Alice Shabecoff, former executive director of the National Consumers League, the nation's oldest consumer group, and an internationally published journalist, recently coauthored, with her husband, Philip, Poisoned for Profit: How Toxins Are Making Our Children Chronically Ill (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2010).



A paste of **borax**, **baking soda**, and **white vinegar** makes a powerful yet eco-friendly yet grout cleaner.

the



Brown-Bag Brownies make a rich and decadent treat.

sensitive palette

| by Ginger Park | photos and food styling by Melyssa Holik

Gourmet dairy, nut, and egg-free goodies to tantalize even the most refined taste buds.

During my pregnancy,

I gave up my fair share of vices.

Lattes and Brie? No sweat. Appletinis? No problem. Chocolate? Well . . . *that* was challenging. After all, I

was born a chocoholic. No wonder my sister and I own a chocolate shop.

That's right. There's nothing dainty about chocolate withdrawal when you spend all day in a shop filled with gourmet truffles, pralines, and candy bars. The daily temptation to dig into a bittersweet truffle had me on my knees, salivating. If I wasn't making them, I was swooning over them. For nine . . . long . . . months.

Unfortunately, my discipline during pregnancy and two years of breastfeeding had no effect on my son: He was a severely allergic baby. The long list of foods that threatened his life—dairy, nuts, eggs, sesame, etc.—was staggering.

For Justin—like his mom, a born chocoholic—our shop was a hazard zone; a mere whiff could make him break out in hives. So much for the proverbial kid in a candy store.

My dream of sharing chocolate truffles with my son was just that: a dream. Justin's allergist was hopeful that he would outgrow his egg and dairy allergies by the time he was five years old.

Another dream.

Justin is now 12, and still a severely allergic kid, but I'm happy to report that he's far from deprived. After all, he *can* eat chocolate—plain dark chocolate, that is. But my favorite truffle, laced with heavy cream and butter, is pure poison to him. So my sister, acting as sous chef, and I experimented in my kitchen until we'd succeeded in creating the perfect cocoa-dusted truffle just for Justin.

Mmmm . . . Now those sinfully delicious

nuggets of pleasure with a hint of cinnamon rival any in our shop.

When our young food critic tasted his first truffle, he raised his cocoa-covered hand and exclaimed, "Five stars!" *Sigh.*

Here are a few vegan recipes from my Five-Star Collection. Soy-, tofu-, and dairy-free products are easily found at most natural-food stores. On their shelves you can also find ingredients for preparing gluten-free versions. So—vegan or not, allergic or not—enjoy!

Note: For soy-free versions of the recipes below, substitute Earth Balance's non-dairy Soy Free Natural Buttery Spread for soy butter, and Silk Almond Creamer for Silk Soy Creamer. The only exception is that there are no substitutions for the glaze for my Applesauce Cake. However, the cake stands on its own, moist and yummy.



RECIPES

justin's five-star truffles

I wanted to create a chocolate truffle as velvety as the real thing so that I could watch my child do what our customers do: close his eyes and go "Mmmm..."

- 16 ounces dairy-free semisweet chocolate or chips
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup Silk Creamer (soy)
- 6 tablespoons soy butter (butter substitute), room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Optional Chocolate Shell

- 16 ounces dairy-free semisweet chocolate or chips

In large glass microwavable bowl, combine chocolate and Silk Creamer. Microwave 2 minutes, then whisk until smooth. Add soy butter and vanilla, and continue to whisk until velvety. Pour mixture into 13-by-9-by-2-inch glass baking pan. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least four hours.

Above: For an extra-fancy look, we sprinkled some truffles with nonpareils and drizzled others with melted, dairy-free white chocolate.

In small bowl, combine cocoa powder and cinnamon. With either a 1-inch cookie drop and mini ice-cream scoop or a 1-inch melon baller greased with soy butter, form 1-inch balls. (After you scoop up the mixture, roll it into a ball in your palm.) Roll each ball in cocoa-cinnamon mixture (omit this step if adding chocolate shell). They're ready to eat—or store in airtight container in freezer or refrigerator.

Chocolate Shell: Melt chocolate chips in double boiler, stirring occasionally, until velvety smooth. Remove top pot of warmed chocolate. One at a time, using fork or fingers, dip chilled truffle balls into chocolate, shake off excess, then set on cookie sheet lined with wax paper. Chill in refrigerator 15 minutes.

Put $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cocoa powder and 1 teaspoon cinnamon into large ziplock bag. Place truffles in bag, then gently shake until covered with cocoa powder. Ready to eat, or store as directed above.

Makes 45 truffles.

mother earth's cream sauce

This is my allergy-free variation on rose or rosa sauce, and it wows my son. He can't eat heavy cream, so the low-fat soy creamer—and herbs from our own pots—make the whole experience richer for him. Serve over rice, pasta, or grilled chicken.

- 6 tablespoons soy butter (butter substitute)
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, diced
- 10 Roma tomatoes, diced
- basil (big bunch or large fistful), coarsely chopped
- parsley (half-bunch or small fistful), coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup Silk Creamer
- salt and pepper to taste

In skillet, melt butter. Add onion and garlic; sauté until soft (10–15 minutes). Add chopped tomatoes, basil, parsley, and sugar. Simmer 25–30 minutes, or until mixture has sauce-like consistency. Add creamer and simmer another 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Note: Peeling the tomatoes is optional, depending on whether or not you enjoy the texture and rustic look of tomato skins, as we do.

Makes sauce for 4 servings.



What our taste buds told us

The *Mothering* staff cooked up these recipes and then laid out a spread of treats on our office-kitchen table. We nibbled and noshed and wrote down what we liked about these goodies. To find out what we thought, see “Staff Taste Test” at www.mothering.com/links.

“rock star!” onion rings

*My sister, Frances, is a cooking-show junkie. One evening, while watching the Food Network's *Diners, Drive-ins and Dives*, she called me to ask if I could figure out a way to toss onto Justin's plate a few onion rings made without the usual eggs and buttermilk. While I'm not a big fan of deep-fried foods, these thinly sliced rings fry to perfection in a flash.*

- 1 quart canola oil
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour (plus 1 cup flour to coat onion rings)
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups soy or rice milk
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 large Vidalia or Spanish onion, sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick and separated
- 1 cup Ian's Panko Bread Crumbs

In medium-size pot, heat oil to 370 degrees.

In large bowl, combine $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour, soy or rice milk, garlic powder, salt, pepper, cornstarch, and water. Place onion slices and 1 cup flour in large ziplock bag. Shake to coat rings. Dip a few rings at a time into mixture, then dip wet rings into bread crumbs and deep-fry 2 minutes, or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels.

Note: These are great with catsup, honey mustard, or barbecue sauce. To add an Asian twist, combine equal parts vinegar, soy sauce, and water, then stir in a touch of sugar and plenty of cracked pepper, to taste.

Makes 4 servings.





applesauce cake with “dream” cheese glaze/icing

Justin's not a big apple lover, but—sneaky me—I thought I'd give this cake a try. With nondairy “cream cheese” now available, I couldn't resist finishing it off with a sweet glaze. After his first tentative bite, my son's eyes lit up. Success!

Cake

- 2/3 cup soy butter (butter substitute)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 cup raisins

Glaze (optional, not soy-free)

- 8-ounce container Tofutti's Better Than Cream Cheese
- 1/3 cup soy butter (butter substitute)
- 1 cup sifted confectioner's sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Cake: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream together butter and sugar, then add applesauce. Beat until smooth. Stir in flour, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, cornstarch, and water. Mix in raisins. Pour into greased and floured 8-by-8-by-2-inch baking pan. Bake 40–45 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool.

Glaze: Cream together Tofutti and soy butter. Sift in confectioner's sugar. Add vanilla and whip until creamy.

Editor's note: *We made cupcakes, cooked for 25 minutes (at high elevation) and topped with papaya pieces.*



brown-bag brownies

(pictured on page 48)

One day, Justin came home from school a bit glum—it turned out a classmate had brought birthday

brownies to share with everyone and, naturally, Justin couldn't have one. The next day, I surprised him with a brownie in his lunch box that made him the envy of all his classmates.

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons water
- 1 cup canola oil or 1 cup soy butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅔ cup nondairy semisweet chocolate chips
- powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In bowl, combine flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking powder, salt, and cornstarch. Add water, oil or soy butter, and vanilla, stirring well. Add chocolate chips. Pour mixture into greased 13-by-9-by-2-inch glass baking pan. Bake 25–30 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool. Refrigerate 2 hours before cutting into squares of desired size. Dust with powdered sugar.

Note: 2 tablespoons cornstarch and 2 tablespoons water is the equivalent of one whole egg. Also, chocolate chips make these brownies gooey-good, but if you prefer more cake-like brownies, omit the chips.

To view detailed nutritional information for this recipe, go to <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/vegan-brownies/Nutrition.aspx>.

Makes 15 large brownies.

GO GLUTEN-FREE

For those **allergic to gluten**, gluten-free flour can be substituted in any of my recipes that call for all-purpose flour. When the recipe calls for **baking powder**, make sure you choose a brand that is gluten-free (not all are). Keep in mind that gluten-free flour **alters the texture** of baked goods. My son isn't allergic to gluten, so my baking experience with gluten-free flour is limited. However, Justin's response to my gluten-free Brown-Bag Brownies was "A little grainy, but still delicious!"

—G. P.

choco-banana bread

Banana bread is often studded with walnuts, but since nuts aren't on Justin's menu, I added chocolate chips for an irresistible after-school treat.

- 3 medium or 2 large bananas, ripe
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup soy butter (butter substitute), softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ½ cup nondairy semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a loaf pan.

In bowl, hand-mash bananas. Add all other ingredients except chocolate chips and mix together. Add chocolate chips. Pour into loaf pan and bake 45–55 minutes.

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♦ **For more on food intolerances,** particularly on how they can affect children's behavior, see www.mothering.com/links and find the Web exclusive "Mood from Food," by Christine L. Pollock. The same link will also lead you to Cathie Olson's recipe for Peanut Butter–Cornmeal Cookies, which contain no wheat, eggs, or refined sugar, as well as other recipes in our online Peggy's Kitchen section, MotheringDotCommunity's Nutrition & Good Eating forum, and a link to sign up for the Peggy's Kitchen newsletter.



Ginger Park is the co-author of five award-winning children's books and an adult novel. With her sister, Frances, she co-owns

Chocolate Chocolate, a chocolate boutique in Washington, DC. Their memoir, Chocolate Chocolate: The True Story of Two Sisters, Tons of Treats, and the Little Chocolate Shop that Could, is forthcoming from St. Martin's Press/Thomas Dunne Books (April 2011). See www.parksisters.com for more information.

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| by Melissa Chianta

MAGIC

is in the air

Embrace the wonder of parenting and stay informed with these new releases.



How do you feel about being a mother? The dominant myth of mothering dictates that women embody nothing less than the epitome of love and patience with their children—all the time. You might be relieved to discover that psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Barbara Almond, author of *The Monster Within*, says that *no one* feels or behaves that way. Meanwhile, Clarissa Pinkola Estés's *The Dangerous Old Woman* helps us to dive into the deeper needs of our souls. A tip: Striving for perfection—even in parenting—is *not* one of those needs. The rest of these media selections speak to the multidimensional aspects of raising a family, from the spiritual (raising intuitive children) to the practical (breastfeeding older kids). I hope you find something here to nurture your blossoming brood.

In *The Highly Intuitive Child: A Guide to Understanding and Parenting Unusually Sensitive and Empathic Children*, psychotherapist Catherine Crawford outlines 20 trademarks of intuitive children, discussing specific methods for teaching such kids to manage their acute receptivity to others' feelings and needs. Crawford's concrete language and practical suggestions make for a grounded presentation. I particularly recommend this book to those who want an introduction to spiritual awareness without the usual New Age jargon. However, if talk about clairvoyance and clairaudience *doesn't* offend your sensibilities, take a look at the well-written, lively *Your Psychic Child: How to Raise Intuitive & Spiritually Gifted Kids of All Ages*, by Sara Wiseman (Llewellyn Publications, 2010).



Above: An illustration from *Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You*, by Nancy Tillman

The Monster Within: The Hidden Side of Motherhood is psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Barbara Almond's nery investigation of a taboo topic: maternal ambivalence. She defines this concept as "that mixture of loving and hating feelings that *all mothers* experience toward their children, and the anxiety, shame, and guilt that these negative feelings engender in them."

In a refreshingly nonjudgmental tone, Almond illustrates her ideas via clinical case studies and analyses of characters from classic novels and films. While at times the book feels detached and heady, in general it makes accessible—and acceptable—a very complex and much-maligned subject. Indeed, Almond's willingness to fearlessly explore such forbidden territory makes it a crucial addition to parenting literature. Mothers need to know that experiencing hateful, aggressive feelings toward their children is normal. It's how those feelings are handled that is most important to their children's development. (University of California Press, 2010)

Kathi J. Kemper, physician and author of *Mental Health, Naturally: The Family Guide to Holistic Care for a Healthy Mind and Body*, is nationally recognized for her expertise in integrative psychological care, and this comprehensive, reader-friendly manual offers ample evidence of why. Kemper covers the gamut, from nutrition and herbs to nonviolent communication and stress management. Clearly written in a positive and sympathetic tone, this book is indispensable for anyone searching for drug-free avenues to emotional and mental healing. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2010)

A Compromised Generation: The Epidemic of Chronic Illness in America's Children, by Beth Lambert, with Victoria Kobliner, MS, RD, makes a lucid, convincing, well-documented argument for how poor nutrition, environmen-



tal toxins, pharmaceuticals (including vaccines), and sedentary lifestyles are producing children with compromised immune systems who are susceptible to chronic disease. Lambert and, in her own chapter, Kobliner suggest that preventing immune disturbances begins with breastfeeding and proper nutrition, as well as using, instead of drugs, alternative healing therapies such as homeopathy and acupuncture. (Sentient Publications, 2010)

Breastfeeding Older Children, by Ann Sinnott, is the book for those seek-

ing evidence-based support for extended breastfeeding. Sinnott uses the results of an international survey of 2,040 families, as well as a wealth of published studies, to tackle big questions such as: Is long-term breastfeeding a form of sexual abuse? Does it affect the spousal relationship? Does premature weaning emotionally wound a child? Sinnott is at times extreme—for instance, when she asserts that men who run from relationships must not have been breastfed. But since her zealotry is for the most part restrained, ultimately it doesn't detract from her credibility. Bottom line: This very well-researched book is a unique and much-needed addition to any lactator's library. (Free Association Books, 2010)

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Nancy Tillman's *Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You* uses simple, lyrical language in concert with the gentle lines and muted tones

of mixed-media art to effectively evoke the tender, abiding bond between parent and child. This lovely, heartwarming book is sure to become a classic. (Feiwel and Friends, 2010)

The Red Shoes reinvigorates Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale with an eye

toward the fulfillment of one's creative aspirations in the face of adversity. Sun Young Yoo's exquisitely precise pen-and-ink illustrations—



treasures themselves—and Gloria Fowler's elegant prose convey the heartening story of a young heroine. After enduring the untimely death of her cobbler mother and persecution by the ruling queen, undefeatable Karen opens her own shoe shop. This unique, finely crafted book is worthy of being passed down through generations. (AMMO Books, 2010)

SPOKEN WORD

In her sumptuous new audio release, *The Dangerous Old Woman: Myths & Stories of the Wise Woman Archetype*, grand storyteller and senior Jungian analyst Clarissa Pinkola

Estés, author of *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, teaches us how to cultivate sagacity and stand in our "danger"—that is, in our power—to protect what is sacred to us. Thirty years in the making, this collection of nearly eight hours of inspiring multicultural fairy tales and myths, accompa-

nied by Estés's brilliant commentary, is simply outstanding. (Sounds True, 2010)

MUSIC

Putumayo Kids' *Acoustic Dreamland* is a sublime collection of beautifully executed, guitar-driven classic and new songs that will deliver to slumber young and old alike, their souls satisfied. Of particular note are William Fitzsimmons's delicate cover of James Taylor's "You Can Close Your Eyes" and Kesang Marstrand's ethereal "In the Land of Dreams." (Putumayo World Music, 2011)

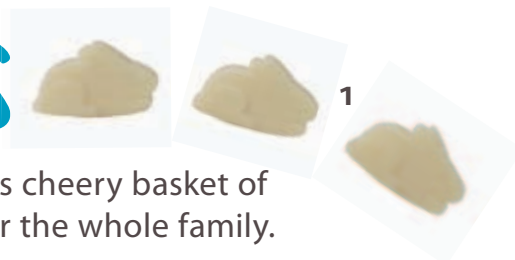
I fell in love with *Take It Outside*, the Parents' Choice Award-winning new album from the Okee Dokee Brothers, when I heard "Lucy and Tightly," their song about a romance between an unlikely pair: Lefty Lucy and Righty Tightly. Joe Mailander and Justin Lansing combine clever lyrics with skillful musicianship on this exceptional album of polished, instrumentally layered bluegrass tunes. (Okee Dokee Music, 2010; www.okeedokey.org)

Melissa Chianta is Mothering's managing editor.



strokes of Genius

Spring forward with this cheery basket of eco-friendly goodies for the whole family.



With spring come revived farmers' markets, hand-dyeing eggs with natural colorings, and cute baby-animal stuff—for which I have a serious weakness. I adore this dear, fragrance-free

① **Baby Bunny Soap Set** (www.babobotanicals.com). I'm also enchanted by this ② **Baa Baa Black Sheep Organic Hand-knit Cap** (www.thebabygardner.com), the BPA- and phthalate-free ③ **Lollacup straw cup** for toddlers (www.lollacup.com), and the butter-soft Bobux ④ **Milk Butterfly booties** (www.bobuxusa.com).

Meanwhile, I'm staying moisturized with Derma E's ⑤ **Tropical Solutions Anti-Aging Night Crème** with Tamanu oil (www.dermae.com), as well as Therapy Systems' ⑥ **Better Than Lips balm**, which contains helichrysum, a plant known for its relaxing, regenerative, and anti-inflammatory properties (www.therapysystems.com). Their portable ⑦ **Better Than Cover concealer stick** goes on sheer and silky. Head Organics' ⑧ **Leave-in Conditioning Spray** sorts out

mama coifs and children's mop tops (www.headorganics.com). And for those dreaded spring allergies, I rely on the ⑨ **Clear My Head Herbal Inhalation set** from Exit 15 (www.exit15.com).

Here are two new ways to wear your baby: with the sporty, dad-friendly ⑩ **Baby K'tan Breeze Wrap** (www.babyktan.com), a combination sling and carrier that's half mesh, half cotton; and the unabashedly girly Beco ⑪ **Gemini carrier** in organic cotton with floral Natalie print (www.becobabycarrier.com). And should you feel you need a bit more Mary Poppins in your life, consider the ⑫ **Scottie Chim Chim Cheree bag** by Offhand Designs (www.hipmountainmama.com).

It's roomy, luxe, and irreverent all at once—and has lots of inner pockets so that you can use it as a handbag or a knitting or diaper bag. If, on the other hand, you feel you want a little more va-va-voom in your life, check out HOTmilk's line of maternity and nursing lingerie. Shown here are their ⑬ **Radiant in Her Rescue nursing bra and bikini** (www.hotmilklingerie.com).

Are you not a fan of the pink overload that starts when you have a baby girl? Then you'll love ⑭ **Little Inkers' offerings**, including this outfit (www.alternativenaturals.ca). Green Gamboni's ⑮ **organic-cotton jeans** are adorable, and specially cut to fit cloth-diapered bottoms (www.greengamboni.com). Use ⑯ **Rockin' Green Cloth Diaper & Laundry Detergent** to clean those dipes—it also does a great job on the rest of your family's laundry (<http://rockinggreensoap.com>). Soft Clothing for All Children is designed to be comfortable for those kids (I have two) who are driven to distraction by itchy, bumpy seams and tags—these ⑰ **"jeans"** are actually made of French terry, with flat inner seams (www.softclothing.net). Shabby Apple makes ⑱ **no-fuss ties** for preppy little kids—or kids who have to dress up every now and then (www.shabbyapple.com). Cute Beltz's easy-fastening **belts** with Velcro clasps are for kids who need their pants to stay up but don't need to worry about struggling with a belt buckle when every second counts; here's their ⑲ **Tomato Soup Stripe** style (www.cutebeltz.com).

Love to cook and bake with your kids? Modern Playhouse offers hip, sturdy, reversible organic-cotton ⑳ **Project Aprons** in Bloom (shown) and Spacecraft

(not pictured) prints (www.modernplayhouse.com).

And now to another of my favorite topics: food. Serve Metropolitan Bakery's decadently delicious ㉑ **Stout with Smoked Almonds Popcorn** (www.metropolitanbakery.com) in ㉒ **Bambu's captivating bowls** made from reclaimed coconut shells (www.oliveandmyrtle.com). Or fill those bowls with Rhythm Superfoods' ㉓ **Crispy Kale Chips** (www.rhythmsuperfoods.com), or Funky Monkey's ㉔ **organic freeze-dried fruit snacks** (www.funkymonkeysnacks.com)—I love their Pink Pineapple, with guava. Make short work of preparing baby food with the very unplugged ㉕ **Smood food masher** (www.dreamfarm.com.au). If you lose your keys as often as I do, secure These Creatures' ㉖ **A Bunny and a Cupcake wall hook** (www.shopolive.com) to your kitchen wall for some practical whimsy (it also comes in a ㉗ **Warbler** design).

Concerned about radiation from your laptop computer? Pregnant or not, shield your lap with a chic ㉘ **BellyArmor blanket** from RadiaShield, which includes a thin layer of silver-fiber textile that blocks radiation (www.bellyarmor.com). Want the coverage of a tank top without the bulk? Try a ㉙ **Second Base Demi Cami**, which layers under sweaters and tops to show up where it counts, without riding up where it doesn't (www.shopsecondbase.com).



Candace Walsh, mom to Honorée and Nathaniel, is Mothering's features editor and product reviewer.

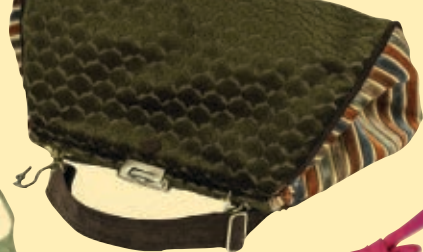




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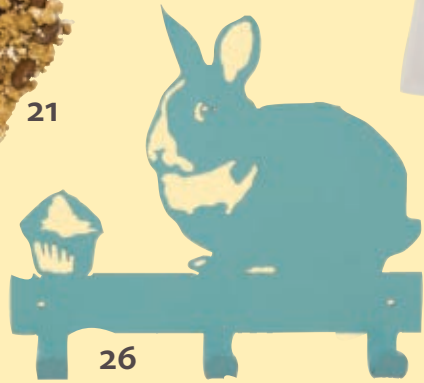
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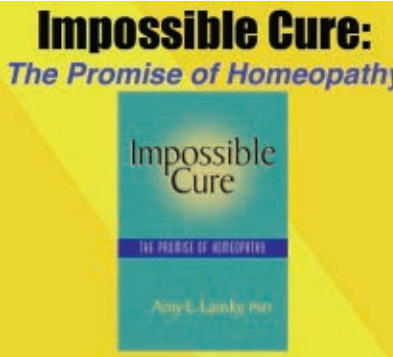


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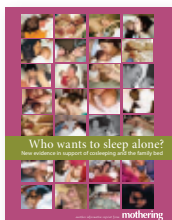
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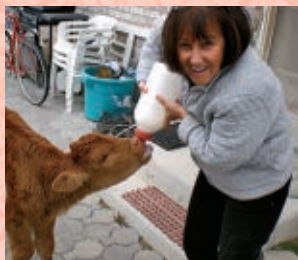
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Nancy Wainer



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MOLLY GEIGER

Nancy Wainer is a passionate and enthusiastic champion of a woman's right to choose where, how, and with whom she births her babies. An energetic dynamo, she was instrumental in the formation of the movement to prevent cesarean sections. In 1974, Wainer cofounded the first cesarean-awareness organization in the world, Cesareans/Support, Education and Concern (C/SEC), and is well known for having coined the term *vaginal birth after cesarean* (VBAC). In 1983 she wrote, with Lois J. Estner, *Silent Knife: Cesarean Prevention & Vaginal Birth After Cesarean*, which won the 1983 American Library Award for the Best Book in the Field of Health and Medicine, and was described as "the bible of cesarean prevention" by the *Wall Street Journal*. She is now working on her third book, *Birthquake: A Childbirth Book for Strong Women and Women Who WANT to Be Strong*.

Wainer, who has been present at more than 1,500 births, is an internationally known speaker and a preceptor for student midwives. She leads workshops in preventing cesarean sections, teaching effective childbirth classes, healing after traumatic birth, and other topics. She

has personally answered a million letters, phone calls, and e-mails from women who want a positive birth experience. With gentleness, compassion, and humor, she has shared with these women her wisdom and practical information, to help them develop the courage necessary to trust their bodies and to trust birth.

Before she was a guide to so many women, Wainer was a student of her own midwife mentor, Valerie El Halta, to whom she remains "eternally grateful." "Her skill, patience, and love have been, and continue to be, beacons of light in my life," says Wainer. "I continue to learn from her—and from many other sister midwives who are so near and dear to me."

Nancy Wainer's work continues: In *Nancy Wainer Live!*, a forthcoming film from Sage Femme, a nonprofit birth-film production company, she talks about how unnecessary and dangerous interventions such as inductions, epidurals, and ultrasounds are contributing to the skyrocketing rate of cesarean section in the US. She believes that the most important components of a good birth are fairly simple: good judgment, trust, patience, proper information, and *love*.



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