

April 2018

teach | play | love

# NANNY MAGAZINE



## Exceptionalities

SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF KIDS WITH AUTISM  
CARING FOR HIGHLY ENGAGED ATHLETES  
MEALS THAT MEET YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS  
STEM GALORE!



EDITOR IN CHIEF

Amanda Duniak

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Michelle Galetta

MARKETING/SOCIAL MEDIA EDITORS

Stephanie Magrisso and Nicola Manton

NEWSLETTER & INSTAGRAM EDITOR

Jill Ciganek

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Adam Anton, Beka Disney, Amanda Duniak, Stephanie Felzenberg, Melissa Franckowiak, Brianna Hindmarsh, Kathlena: The Allergy Chef, Kristy Jorgensen, Matthew Lister, Heather Marena-Miller, Amber O'Neil, Lynn Poulos, Jennifer Romanoff, Laura Schroeder, Carol Slager, Dr. Michael Warmoth, Amy Wilhelm

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Phillip Clark, Brianna Hindmarsh, Kathlena: The Allergy Chef, Kristy Jorgensen, Jennifer Romanoff, Kim Votruba-Matook.

Cover photo by Lori Koblanski

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PUBLISHER

Jennifer Kuhn, MPS

ADVISORY BOARD

Daniel Butcher, Stephanie Bauchum, Lisa DesBoine, Sheila Fortson, Stephanie Felzenberg, Jennifer Gay, Michelle LaRowe

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Start by doing what's necessary;  
then do what's possible; and suddenly  
you are doing the impossible.

Francis of Assisi





I sit here, writing this issue's Editor's Note, with a full heart today. Full of many emotions, but also fitting for an issue about children with exceptionalities (an "exceptionality" is defined as "unusual/extraordinary; unusually excellent/superior; being intellectually gifted or being physically or mentally disabled to an extent that special schooling is required.") Today, the world lost one of the greatest minds, Stephen Hawking, at the age of 76. For that, my heart is so sad, but so happy that the world gave us such a brilliant man in my lifetime, and I can't wait to share his legacy with my charges.

Despite being a genius, Stephen Hawking didn't have the best academic record as a child; in fact, he didn't even learn to read properly until the age of 8! Despite his grades and reading ability, he WAS able to build a computer from the ground up. He then went on to earn a scholarship to study physics at the age of 17. At the age of 21, Hawking was diagnosed with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) and given only a few years to live. In spite of being confined to a wheelchair and only able to communicate through a computerized voice system after contracting pneumonia in 1985, Stephen Hawking outlived that diagnosis (and most ALS diagnosis) by over 50 years, and luckily his disability didn't affect his amazing mind or spirit. Hawking's work mainly focused on the laws that govern space and time, namely, black holes. He wrote many books, earned 13 honorary degrees, appeared on many television shows, among many other things, and did it all with a buoyant sense of humor!

## Editor's Note

I could sit here and rattle off a complete biography of Stephen Hawking, but it could take weeks, and certainly more room than I am afforded for this little note! Stephen Hawking was an EXCEPTIONAL human being in every sense of the word. His exceptionalities went from both ends of the spectrum, with his physical disability all the way to his genius mind. He is a testament that a disability doesn't have to hold you back. Children with exceptionalities, whether it be an inclination for music or sports, autism or Down syndrome, can flourish with the right support system guiding them along. In this issue, Laura Schroeder, a nanny and mom of two boys with autism tells you how you, as a nanny, can support a family affected by autism. We have an interview with Phillip Clark of ENABLE Special Needs Planning. Kathlena, The Allergy Chef, offers us recipes for meals that can meet everyone's needs, even if there are special allergies or dietary restrictions. We tried to include a little bit of everything in this issue when it came to exceptionalities, as well as some other, everyday nanny-related topics.

"However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up."- Stephen Hawking.

Happy spring, and here's to all those exceptional little humans out there that we have the pleasure of nannying!

Amanda Dunyak  
Editor-In-Chief



# Kids' Health

Dr. Michael Warmoth, Pediatrician at Heal



With spring in the air, what are some easy ways for me and my charge's parents to determine whether my charge is experiencing allergies or some other illness?

There is a lot of overlap between colds and allergies. Runny nose, cough, and sneezing are common for both. However, there are certain clues that can help with this. Fever is perhaps the easiest sign that it is likely an infectious cold virus. Another would be the abrupt onset of symptoms without any new environmental or pet exposures. Close contacts with symptoms can also be helpful as it is more likely that everyone in the family has a cold as opposed to everyone having simultaneous allergies. Clues suggesting allergies might include itchy nose and eyes, or a history of these symptoms occurring at the same time last year. If you are still not sure, a week-long trial of non-sedating antihistamines such as loratidine or cetirizine over-the-counter may help. A response to these medications would suggest that allergies are the guilty culprit. Cetirizine is approved down to age six months and loratidine is approved down to two years of age.

This column should not be considered medical advice. Neither *Nanny Magazine* nor Dr. Michael Warmoth assume liability for this content. Please consult your charge's pediatrician or other qualified healthcare provider, with permission from the child's parents or guardians, for professional medical advice.



Photo via Pexels.

I have reason to believe my charge may be learning disabled when it comes to math. I've tried tutoring him in pre-algebra, showing him YouTube videos that help to simplify the content, and even asking the teacher to help, but nothing seems to work. He consistently has trouble understanding the concepts that are being taught. I think part of it goes back to his earlier years as a student when he could not seem to memorize the multiplication tables. How do I know if this is a learning disability for which help should be sought or if it's just a matter of time before the numbers start making sense for him?

It is frustrating when a parent or teacher is having trouble relaying concepts in mathematics and certainly much more frustrating for the student themselves. We aren't all working with identical brains. When considering math, there are differences in the way each of us process information. We need to decode the concepts being asked, find the process that is needed to solve the problem, execute the process in a timely manner, and then express the answer in the right format and order. Each of these steps can be compromised for reasons that we don't fully understand. But, just because we can't explain how they came about doesn't mean that they can't be helped. If we are driving and cannot get across town in the usual way, we break from routine and look for a detour. The same is true when considering a possible learning difference in mathematics. We look for alternate ways to get the information in and processed. A good resource for help in this regard is Chris Woodin. He is an expert in mathematics and learning disabilities and has developed tools to help kids detour around these roadblocks. More information can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/a/woodinmath.com/main/home>. Alternatively, locating a learning disability professional can also be accomplished through these websites: [www.ld.org](http://www.ld.org) or [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

# MR. MANNY



## GETTING HIRED: What Am I Doing Wrong?

By Matthew Lister

In recent months, there has been a lot of discussion among nannies about how to find a good job. Some have gone months without any potential job leads, while others have gone on numerous interviews and haven't gotten the job. It leads one to ask, "what am I doing wrong?" It is not what one is doing wrong, but rather what one may not be taking into consideration when seeking a job.

Finding a rewarding nanny job can be very difficult, time consuming, and frustrating. A nanny has to set themselves apart from all other nannies in order to even get noticed. On websites like Care, a family may receive anywhere from a dozen to 100 or more applications for every job listing they post. Jobs do not usually just fall into our laps; we must seek them out, engage in self-marketing, and put much effort into finding the right job. Some things you should consider when job hunting:

### SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Find the minimum and maximum pay rates for the area in which you are trying to find a job. Set your rates accordingly and don't seek higher pay than the local economy can support. Experience, degrees,

and certifications don't always set the pay rate in most cases, the local economy does but one can charge a little above the local rate due to experience, degrees, and certifications, but that will not guarantee a quick hire.

Is there a job market in your area for nanny work (i.e., local economy, competitive childcare market for the area, etc.)? If your town has 15 families, and 25 nannies and sitters, along with a daycare center, then your town does not have a great job market to support a nanny career, so you may need to look outside of your local area.

### KNOW THE MARKET

What resources are available in your local area to use (nanny agencies, websites with job listings, local parenting groups, etc.)?

What requirements or training/certifications is the local market expecting? (i.e., you may find that a city with high net worth professionals will require more certifications than an economically depressed city where families don't have a lot of money to expect nannies to have extensive training.)

Understand your area's demo-

graphics. For example, a "college town" would have a lower amount of childcare jobs and a higher number of young adults seeking nanny or sitting jobs; understanding the demographics of your area will help you know if there is a market for nannies, and also how to market yourself.

### SET YOURSELF APART FROM THE REST

Get CPR/First Aid/AED certified, go to nanny trainings and conferences that you can list on your resume, or get a degree or further your education.

Specialize in a specific form of childcare (newborn specialist, special needs nanny, household management, etc.).

Engage with the community. Get your name out there by volunteering, going to religious events, charity events, and the like. Word of mouth about who you are and what you do goes far in getting jobs.

Engage in the local nanny community. Go to trainings, organize play dates, plan park meet-ups, and join Nanny's Night Out events. What better way to market yourself as a professional nanny than to be engaged in the nanny community?

## MORE SUGGESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Step into the shoes of the parents seeking to hire. If you look at yourself through the eyes of a parent, you will be able to make the very best impression during communication and interviews with those parents. Would you hire someone who wears the clothing you have on to an interview? Would you hire someone who has that level of experience? What experience would stand out the most to a parent? Highlight that experience when speaking to them. And lastly, feel comfortable around them; they seek confidence in a candidate as well as someone who is sure of their abilities.

Don't be afraid to adjust your pay rate to accommodate the local economy or adjust your schedule to the needs of the family. It is not selling yourself short, but rather showing that you are passionate about your work and put the needs of the family right up there with your own needs. That goes a long way with having great references and being referred to other families. Further, it helps with securing employment.

Remember that high pay does not always mean a great job. Sometimes the best jobs are a little lower in pay, but with room for raises. Further, a \$10/hour paycheck is better than no paycheck when one is awaiting the right, higher paying job to come along.

Set your social media accounts to private. Parents do check social media to try to get a feel for who you are and what you are like. Always remember that no matter what you post on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other sites, someday those posts may be read by someone you work for. Take that into consideration when you are posting on social media.

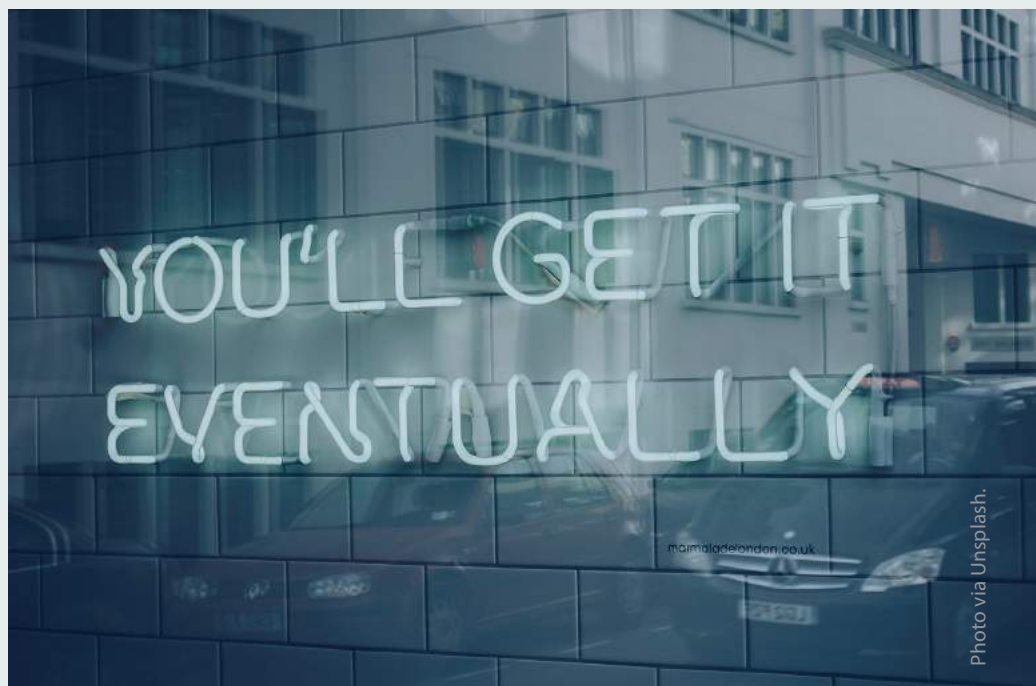


Photo via Unsplash.

If you interview with the parents and the child is there, engage with the child during the interview; parents take into account candidates who are all business and those who show a real connection with the children from the start. Don't be afraid to roll around on the floor during an interview.

Be prepared with:

- copies of your resume for the interview (one for each parent to look over during the interview, and one for you to reference along with them).
- references already printed up to hand them if they are requested.
- a copy of your background check and certifications to show during the interview.
- questions printed out to ask the parents (What are the expectations on housework? Are there parks in the area? Are there any food allergies? What is the child's favorite toy/book/food?) Don't ask too much about items that can be hammered out during contract negotiations but show a real

and genuine interest in what the child's interests are, the care and needs of the child, and the personality of the child (after all, if hired, you will be spending a lot of time with that child).

And finally, don't be afraid to spend a little money to help set yourself apart from the competition. Get business cards to hand out. Pay for the premium account and background checks yourself on sites like Care or pay a little extra to be "spotlighted" on that site. It does make a huge difference; be willing to invest a little bit of money to make it happen. Remember, you are marketing yourself as a professional nanny.

It is not about what one is doing wrong, but rather what one can do to have higher probabilities of being hired for a great job. Know your demographics, your job market, and specialize in a specific type of childcare. Get the interviews right. And do not be afraid to invest in your career to heighten your chances of being hired. You are worth it!



Photo via CreateHerStock.

Beka Disney  
*Georgia's Dream Nannies*  
Atlanta, Georgia

# Ask an Agency

*How do you advocate for nannies when it comes to having to use their own car to drive children around? Gas, as well as wear and tear, especially for children with packed schedules, plus my commute to and from work, can take a toll on a vehicle.*

When I speak with families about this issue, I recommend two options. One option is that they provide a car for the nanny to use during work hours. It allows them the benefit of knowing that the car seats are always installed properly, the insurance is always up to date, and the car has been properly maintained and serviced. If they choose not to do that then they can reimburse mileage at the current IRS rate per mile. It is important for the nanny to keep good records if they choose to follow the mileage reimbursement rates. There is a great app called Everlance that several of our nannies use. It tracks mileage and automatically feeds that information to the family. If your NannyFamily does not follow either of these options, then keep track of your mileage. You might be eligible to deduct your work mileage on your taxes; I recommend that you discuss this with your accountant and follow all IRS requirements.





*Are you able to work with a nanny who has a child she will need to bring with her on the job? If not, what can someone in that position do to help in her search?*

As an agency, we do not allow our nannies to bring their child(ren) to work. There have been individual families that have chosen to let their nanny do that, but the majority of families are reluctant to have you bring your own children for a variety of reasons. For the nannies that have young children at home, they either rely on friends and family or enroll their children in daycare or preschool. Some of our nannies choose to take part time positions and coordinate with their spouse's schedule. I highly recommend that you have back up plans for your back up plans. You are a vital person in the life of your NannyFamily. If you miss a day of work, there is no coworker that can pick up the slack. If you don't show up to work, that family comes to a screeching halt.

*How do you recruit nannies for your agency?*

The best recruiting comes from our current nannies. When our current nannies refer their friends and colleagues to us, that is the highest compliment we could receive. We network and mine for potential new candidates through various outlets. As an agency, we try to provide as much ongoing support and training to our nannies as they continue to build their careers, and they have thanked us by sending their people to us. We have been in business for 15 years in Atlanta and truly value the reputation we have built because of the fabulous nannies we work with.

*family wedding lifestyle*



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# Overscheduled Children:

## How can we, as nannies, take notice and help?

BY BEKA DISNEY

There is a murmur in the United States. It's getting louder. Can you hear it? It's the murmur of a growing frustration regarding children who have over-packed schedules. There's a fine line between adding depth and new opportunities for our children, versus overwhelming them with too much activity. On one side, they are challenged and allowed to spread their wings. On the other, they become stressed little humans with little time to think, create, or sleep.

Between music lessons, sports activities, language development, social activities, homework, school activities, and not to mention time with their friends and family, children can become overwhelmed. Too much activity can stress a child's system to the point of causing harm to their physical, mental, and emotional health. Allowing children the opportunity to discover their natural interests, abilities, and talents is important for their physical, mental, emotional, and character development.

However, there is a tremendous benefit with downtime, as well. Children need sleep in order for their bodies and brains to develop properly. They need the opportunity to experience a little bit of boredom and to find some of their own creativity. Children need room to develop self-management skills that only comes from time spent managing self.

Nannies, the foundation we need to start from is the understanding that each parent is trying to do the very best for their children. They want their children to have advantages, benefits, opportunities, and experiences that will broaden their world and prepare them to take their place in society as thriving, interesting adults. You, as the nanny, play a vital role in helping not only the children you care for, but the parents as well. You become the third part of the parenting team. Your parents rely on you to help keep them dialed-in on their children's physical, emotional, and mental temperature. How can you help when you find that you are working with an overscheduled family?



## Observe

Take note of your NannyFamily culture. Are the parents super hyper-driven? Competitive? Highly ambitious? Are they tuned-in to their children? Perhaps they are busy and haven't realized how out of balance life has gotten for everyone. It is never your job to change that culture, but you can help maintain balance. The second thing to observe and document is your charge's behavior. Watch for signs of peace and contentment; notice what is going on when they are in their emotional happy place. Are they on the soccer field? Playing the piano? Painting a canvas? Reading a book or helping to cook dinner? When do they display bad behavior? Are they overtired? Are they hungry? Are they feeling stretched too thin? What kind of statements do the children make? What secrets do they wish they could share with their parents?

## Share

Request time to sit down and share your observations and thoughts with your NannyFamily. Choose a neutral time, not in the morning before work, and not at the end of the day when everyone is frazzled. A Saturday morning over coffee would be recommended. Make sure that your motive is to share information. Check judgment or personal opinions at the door; there is no room for that. Share your observations regarding the children's schedule. Make sure that you have some recommendations prepared as well; employers are more open to hearing a complaint or problem if it is accompanied by possible solutions. Be prepared to communicate your recommendations, within the framework of your NannyFamily's culture.

## Step Up

How can you help the parents achieve their goals for their children while still maintaining some physical and emotional space for the children? Implement the plans that you and the parents come up with. Do the children need more time to study and practice instruments or hook shots? Help parents dial-in to what is most important for them and their children and create a plan to carry that out. If the biggest concern is making sure that the children are not bored and beginning to misbehave, then be prepared to keep the children on track with play time and structured down time that does not involve screens. Be sure to truly listen to what is important to your NannyFamily.

We have to respect the decisions of our NannyFamily. Ultimately, the choice is theirs on how they fill their children's time, and sometimes it falls to us to simply carry out their wishes. Remember though, that you have the opportunity to help a family manage their life and their schedules, and you have the ability to advocate for the children you care for. When handled with a kind and respectful manner, with nothing more than a motivation to help your NannyFamily run well, you can affect change.



# Nanny Magazine Interviews

# Phillip Clark

## of ENABLE Special Needs Planning

BY AMBER O'NEIL

Every child has their own unique abilities, learning styles, and personalities. As nannies, we are often tasked with helping families by finding resources, help, and guidance when the family needs it. Phillip Clark grew up with a special person in his life that helped him to help others.

### **NANNY MAGAZINE: PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND.**

**PHILLIP CLARK:** I grew up on a family farm in rural Indiana where I learned the importance of sound values and strong work ethic. My parents still farm and manage the farm of over 4,000 acres of corn and soy beans. I am the oldest child and have two sisters, Sarah and Grace. When I was four years old, Sarah was born, and my parents learned that she had Down syndrome. At a young age, I attended most of her doctors' appointments and therapy sessions. When Sarah was old enough to participate in Special Olympics, I eagerly volunteered to be a coach. In high school and throughout my time at Purdue University, I was involved in many organizations that worked with individuals with special needs, including Best Buddies.


Because of Sarah and my experiences of working with individuals and families with special needs, I knew I wanted to be in a profession that provided support, inspiration, hope, and direction for these individuals and their families.

### **NM: WHO INSPIRED YOU THE MOST IN STARTING YOUR ORGANIZATION?**

**PC:** My sister, Sarah, is the inspiration for my desire to serve families and children with special needs. When Sarah was born, doctors began sharing the diagnosis with my parents saying, "I'm sorry, but..." This introduction to special needs has been told to countless families across the country. Doctors also shared their expectations of the abilities that my sister would not have. "Sarah might not ever be able to ride a bike, be in a mainstream classroom, or live independently." Those were just a few of the limitations that doctors gave my parents. They also said, "Children with Down syndrome often don't learn to read. You should expect that."

However, despite these limited expectations, my parents were determined to give Sarah the best life possible.





Today, 28 years later, Sarah works in a second-grade classroom where one of her many duties in that classroom is tutoring the kids in READING. The exact ability that doctors said she might never develop herself, she is now teaching to others.

This example of the importance of having an abundant mindset regarding the potential that every individual possesses is why I started ENABLE Special Needs Planning. We believe that everyone has the ability to be impactful. This ability is what gives each of us a sense of purpose in life. We strive to help families plan in a way that allows their child with special needs to live an impactful and purposeful life; the life they've always dreamed about for their child.

### **NM: WHEN DID YOU START ENABLE?**

**PC:** I began helping families with children with special needs plan for their children's futures in 2008 when I graduated from college and joined a financial planning firm. However, I quickly realized that my industry's version of "Special Needs Planning" was much different from how I remembered my family planning. The model being shown to me was a cookie cutter approach to planning that was the same for every family. My industry was only helping families plan for the end of life transition process and "What If..." scenarios.

I understood that Sarah's success was the result of planning for much more than just support at the time of a potential future transition. While planning for future transitions is absolutely essential within a special needs plan, I believe that the most important aspect of Special Needs Planning should be focused on planning for a great life for the child today and every day in the future.

Helping families plan so that their children can live purposeful, impactful lives requires planning in more areas than the traditional special needs planning process allows for.

Due to strict compliance guidelines in the industry, I was told by multiple firms that I was not allowed to help families plan beyond financial planning. At that time, eight years into my career, I left my financial planning firm and founded ENABLE Special Needs Planning, LLC. Since then, I have been blessed to connect with and help families across the country plan for abundant and impactful futures for their children with special needs.

### **NM: WHAT IS THE PRICE RANGE FOR YOUR SERVICES?**

**PC:** ENABLE offers families the ability to work with our team to create a custom, comprehensive plan for their child's future. This includes planning in five unique areas: Vision Planning, Life Planning, Resource Planning, Financial Planning, and Legal Planning. For families who feel overwhelmed with the planning process and wish for us to take these tasks off their plate, families invest \$1,997 into their child's future to complete our entire planning process. Included in this investment is an a secure online client portal that families use to keep their child's plan and other important information organized. Their planning portal allows them to easily review and edit their child's special needs plan whenever

necessary.

However, we never want cost to be a reason why a family does not plan for their child's future. For that reason, we also offer a FREE version of the portal where we provide resources, videos, checklists, and questions to consider for each of the five areas of planning. With these resources, and an investment of their time and energy, families can create a simplified, custom plan for their child.

**NM: YOU MENTIONED ON YOUR WEBSITE THAT NO TWO PLANS ARE THE SAME. CAN YOU WALK US THROUGH WHAT A PLAN COULD LOOK LIKE?**

**PC:** The interactive, online ENABLE Special Needs Planning System™ guides families through five areas of planning. Every family needs to plan in these five areas. However, because their child's abilities, hopes, dreams, and challenges are unique, no two special needs plans created through our system will be exactly the same. Each plan is specifically tailored to the child, the family, and their unique details. Because each area of planning builds upon the previous area, we guide families through the process in a specific order.

The Vision Plan is the first, and MOST IMPORTANT, step in our system. From my experience, I know that most families have not created a Vision Plan for their child with special needs. However, it is an essential element of the planning process, as it describes what a GREAT LIFE looks like for the child we are planning for. This includes the family's hopes and dreams for their child's future, as well as the child's hopes and dreams for their own future. The Vision Plan guides the remainder of the entire planning process.

The second step in our system is creating a Life Plan that documents unique and important details about the family and their child with special needs. It describes their child's daily routines, serves as a bench-marking tool to show annual progress, and functions as a transition guide for the future. We have found that there is so much important information that families have not organized or written down. The Life Plan makes it easy to share these unique and important details in the event of an unforeseen transition.

The third step in our system is creating a Resource Plan which will determine the services, organizations, and individuals who can assist with fulfilling the hopes and dreams of the child's Vision Plan, and meet the current needs assessed by their Life Plan. At ENABLE, we maintain a network of organizations and providers across the country who can help families. Our team personally introduces families to the resources that are necessary and appropriate to help their child develop

the abilities necessary to continually move closer to the great life described in their Vision Plan.

Creating a Financial Plan is the fourth step in our system. A Financial Plan provides strategies to pay for the services the Resource Plan determined are necessary to achieve the goals of the child's Vision and Life Plans. It also addresses the challenge of how to provide financially for the child when the parents are no longer able to do so.

The fifth and final step in our system is creating a Legal Plan that controls, protects, and transfers the family's assets according to the parents' wishes (during their lifetimes and after their deaths) so that the child being planned for has access to the resources necessary to live a great life. A Legal Plan also ensures that the comprehensive special needs plan that has been created continues to be fulfilled, even when the parents are no longer able to make decisions.

**NM: HOW OFTEN ARE PLANS UPDATED?**

**PC:** As a child's abilities, hopes and dreams, and other important life details change, his or her special needs plan should also be updated. We encourage our families to update all areas of their child's plan at least once per year. Because this might seem like a daunting task for families, we created the secure, interactive, online client portal to allow them to easily make changes to their child's special needs plan. Our key goal at ENABLE is to make it as easy, efficient, and affordable as possible to plan for a child's GREAT LIFE and to keep their plan updated so it's most effective.

**NM: HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE A PART OF MAKING THESE PLANS?**

**PC:** Each family determines how many individuals are involved in creating their comprehensive special needs plan. Some families prefer to keep the number of people involved in the planning process limited to immediate family members, planners, resource providers, and attorneys. Other families have chosen to build a team of close family members, friends, nannies, and other care providers who are involved in the planning process. Our team at ENABLE helps guide each family as they create their comprehensive special needs plan. You might think of our role as the "quarterback" who keeps all the individual members of the "team" organized and moving toward its objective of creating a plan that helps the individual with special needs live a GREAT LIFE.

**NM: HAVE YOU COME ACROSS FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WHO HAVE NANNIES?**



**PC:** A number of my clients employ either a part-time or a full-time nanny who helps them with various tasks that are difficult for working parents to have the time or energy to accomplish without assistance. These families have found that having an extra pair of helping hands allows them to focus on spending more quality time with their family.

**NM: HOW CAN NANNIES IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN?**

**PC:** A nanny can have a profound impact on the success of children with special needs due to the nanny's involvement in the child's day-to-day life and activities. Daily routines and activities should be thoughtfully coordinated to assist with the continual development of the child's abilities. Intentional communication between the parents and the nanny about goals, accomplishments, and set-backs are crucial. A nanny can greatly assist the parents by providing regularly scheduled updates on both development advancements and concerns regarding the child's behaviors and skills.

If a family has completed the ENABLE Special Needs Planning System™, they should make their nanny aware of any elements of their plan that the nanny would be connected to and able to influence. Nannies will benefit by having an understanding of the child's Vision Plan, including the short and long-term hopes, dreams, and goals that the family has for their child. Because there is so much crucial information about the child recorded in his or her Life Plan, a nanny should also have access to this document. The Resource Plan should also be made available to a child's nanny, as this plan will be the catalyst that allows the child to continually develop his or her skills and abilities.

A nanny can play a major role in a child with special needs' life. The nannies I have talked with during different planning processes have expressed their desire to do everything possible to help carry out the special needs plan that the parents created so that the child with special needs has every ability to live a GREAT LIFE.

**NM: WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE A NANNY WHO WORKS WITH THESE CHILDREN?**

**PC:** If the nanny understands and believes our motto that "Everyone has the ability to be impactful," his or her interactions and time spent with a child with special needs will be positive and meaningful. Nannies should be aware of certain aspects of the child's special needs plan so that they can help the child continually make progress towards his or her goals.

**NM: I IMAGINE WORKING WITH THESE KIDS CAN LEAD TO BURN-OUT VERY EASILY; HOW MUCH IS SELF-CARE STRESSED FOR THE PARENTS AS WELL AS THE NANNIES?**

**PC:** Frustrated. Overwhelmed. Confused. These are three emotions that almost every family tells me that they are feeling as we begin working together. While the planning process helps ease many of their concerns and they feel relieved to have a plan, the parents and the nannies must also take care of themselves.




**ENABLE**  
SPECIAL NEEDS PLANNING

Self-care for the parents, nannies, and other caregivers is an essential element of the planning process. We are connected with a network of resources across the country that provide preventative strategies for self-care that can help before these individuals get to a place of being "burnt out." To be an impactful provider and supporter of their child, parents, nannies, and caregivers must make it a priority to also spend time caring for themselves.

Everyone has the ability to be impactful if we have support. As nannies, we can be part of a team to help kids reach their potential. Thank you, Phillip, for providing a service that helps children with special needs reach their ability to be impactful.

PHOTO VIA PHILLIP CLARK. © All rights reserved.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white football helmet. The person is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and yellow shorts. The helmet is white with a green mouthguard and has some scuffing on it. The background is a bright green grassy field.

*A child should  
not just stick to  
one sport while  
they are young*

# Caring for a Highly Engaged Athlete

By Adam Anton





I have dealt with youth sports over the years, from being a former athlete myself, to choosing a Sport Management major in college, and currently working as a golf instructor. I have a broad range of junior students; some who I am teaching the basics to, and other, more competitive junior golfers playing in tournaments, as well as students playing on their high school golf team. When it comes to youth sports, there are many pressures that I have observed. Whether you are a nanny, a parent, an athlete, or a coach, there is a big difference in pushing a child to be great and take their skills to the next level or pushing too hard to make a student a star athlete, causing them to become disenchanted with the sport and give up on playing. We have to understand that the mindset of today's youth and society in general has changed, therefore we have to be able to mold these children on as well as off the field. Not every child was made to be a star athlete, though. But, if your charge prefers to be sedentary, there are things that parents and caregivers can do to motivate them to try something new and to get them moving, to help them live a more active, healthier lifestyle. An article posted the CDC says that helping children come up with a game plan is a great first step. This can be done by first talking to the child to find out what their activity interests are, helping them choose something that fits their personality and skill level. Not every child is built to be part of team; there are certain sports that can be learned and played in solo instruction or with a friend. Help children make a list of what interests them and do some research. This will help you to obtain a clear view of what each activity entails that will help you and the child narrow down what activity they would like to participate in. From there, you can then find community organizations and classes that will help get the child started on the path of a more active lifestyle, doing something that is of interest to them.

## Choosing a Sport

There have been many debates in the sports world regarding if a child who shows an acceleration in a particular sport should stick to just that one sport. My personal perspective on this is no, a child should not just stick to one sport while they are young. Sports and athletics in general teach a child a multitude of things. It teaches a child to become a part of a team, and that not everyone wins; there must be a winner and a loser. The coaches can successfully teach a child that when you win, you win with modesty, and when you lose, you lose with dignity. Also, when a child partakes in many different sports, they can truly understand what they love and want to do. To add to that, a study from 2017 in *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, adds to the evidence that specialization in one particular sport may increase the risk of a range of injuries for high school athletes. In a clinical report published in 2016, the *American Academy of Pediatrics* concluded that current evidence 'suggests that delaying sport specialization for the majority of sports until after puberty (around 15 or 16 years of age) will minimize the risks and lead to a higher likelihood of success.'

## The Negatives vs. the Positives

There are many negatives to the sports scene, as well. First, let us talk about the effect parents have on the game. I'm sure you have been to a recreational sporting event where the parents tend to get a little intense. I have seen first hand in recreational baseball, parents who would fight with one another, belittle the referees and umpires, and really "ride" their children from the stands. Parents should be a support, not a detriment to the child. Remember one thing: yes, parents and caregivers should be there to make sure that the child is put in a situation to succeed, however when they become a major distraction it does two things. One, it may make the child become a bad athlete in the sense of not listening to the coaching staff, not respecting their fellow teammates, and not respecting the referees and umpires. Two, it can deter the child from wanting the adults in their life to be a part of their sports life because they are embarrassed at the behavior on the sidelines.





## Conditioning and Nutrition

If you are involving children in recreational sports, they may not be receiving the best instruction; getting the proper coaching is very key. All of the coaches for recreational sports are volunteers, and some may have more experience than others. If you come to find that your child or charge has a poor coach, there are options; don't let the child's progress be hindered due to poor instruction. If you want proper instruction, you will need to find an expert coach in their field. There will be a bigger financial cost to seeing a professional coach, but it will help the child to grow athletically and keep them on a proper regimen.

In terms of a young athlete's nutritional needs, there are many important things they need to keep them performing at their best. Minerals like calcium and iron are vital to building strong bones (to reduce injury) and carrying oxygen to the parts of the body that need it most.

Protein helps to build and repair muscles but be aware that too much protein can cause dehydration and loss of calcium. While carbohydrates may be something for adults to steer clear of, for younger athletes, carbs are an essential source of fuel for their bodies. Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables are a great source of healthy carbs for children. Keeping hydrated is also incredibly important for children who are highly athletic. Water is always the best source, compared to sugary, carbonated sports drinks. Children should be drinking water before and after engaging in sports, as well as every 15-20 minutes during the activity.

## Pressure to Succeed

There is a point in which too much pressure is not good for a child. We, as adults, tend to live vicariously through our youth athletes. Quite possibly, with regret for never truly "making it" in sports ourselves, we tend to push children like we wish we were pushed, to be the "best." NEVER push a child when it comes to sports. If they don't want to participate in the sport, don't push them to play. It's also not advisable to let a child quit once they start; urge them to push through the season, letting them decide after that if they would like to continue. Teaching a child that it is okay to quit mid-season will be another detriment to that child. It will teach the child that it is okay to quit on their team, and ultimately on themselves. It's our job as adults to teach children to persevere and see things through to the end. Any adult or child that wants to improve and take their talents to the next level, whether in sports or academia, or really any facet of life, needs to put in the time to practice and get better. Practice is important; children should be pushed to practice, but not if you are pushing them to the point of getting burnt out from that sport. If a child's goal is to take their athletics to the next level, they need to put the time in to do so. Also, academics should never take a back seat to sports; there needs to be a balance. As working adults know, balancing a personal budget, having time to cook, clean, work, care for others in our life, and have fun becomes a tough balance. But if you can teach a child to balance work and pleasure, it will help them out in the future as adults.

At the end of the day, regardless of what your charge wants to do, you must be supportive of their endeavors. Set realistic and attainable goals. Teach the child that it is okay to fail and that hardships are going to cross their path. Losing is a big part of sports and the more they persevere, the stronger they will become in life. If your charge is serious about sports, take them to receive good, professional guidance. Most importantly, push them to be the best they can be, but don't push them too hard that they may end up not loving the sport any longer. It is never an easy road to make it as a professional athlete; there is a much time and dedication involved. Life isn't all about the sport. Be sure to make them well-rounded individuals, teach them that school matters, attitude matters, and most importantly, respect matters. Let them learn to respect their teammates, the people who oversee their organizations, and above all, let them respect themselves and the game that they love. That is when you know you are helping to raise a truly well-rounded youth athlete.





PRODUCT REVIEW BY AMANDA DUNYAK

# The Artful Alphabet

The Artful Educator is a company formed and run by a mother and entrepreneur, Kim Votruba-Matook. As someone who believes there is an educational opportunity everywhere and that the limited time we have with children should be meaningful, Kim created The Artful Alphabet. Using her background in graphic design and her passion for education, the colorful, eye-catching images of letters created from things that start with that letter inspire conversations about many different things relating to animals, science, art, literature, and even geography! Check out [theartfuleducator.com](http://theartfuleducator.com) for more about Kim and her philosophy, and while you're there, check out the blog for inspiration!

The past few months have given me an opportunity to use and enjoy some of The Artful Alphabet products, both in my personal life and with my charges. They offer simple art prints for décor, which I found helpful to frame or encase in contact paper or self-adhesive laminate, to hang at eye level in the children's playroom. So many times, children are told not to touch the home décor on the walls or shelves, but this is something just for them that they CAN touch! Maria Montessori believed in hanging famous works of art at children's eye level because displaying things too high gives children feelings of detachment and superiority. During playtime, children can gaze at these letters, and through pointing and speech, learn new words and sounds. You can even spell out the child's name with these, which makes for lovely room décor! These prints come in two different sizes: 8"x10" and 11"x14" (\$15 and \$20, respectively). All paper is 100% recycled and the prints are made with vegetable-based ink.

Another hit was The Artful Alphabet flash cards (\$30). All 26 letters come on individually printed 6"x9" cardstock. Each card features 675 objects total in the make-up of the letters. Each card contains an

answer key on the back (trust me, I didn't know that country shape was Zimbabwe, either!) and can be used for many educational games. My littles loved playing "I Spy" with them and I just loved hearing their little voices saying words that they might not normally know at 4 years old (ampersand, kumquat, ibex, and ellipsis, to name a few!).

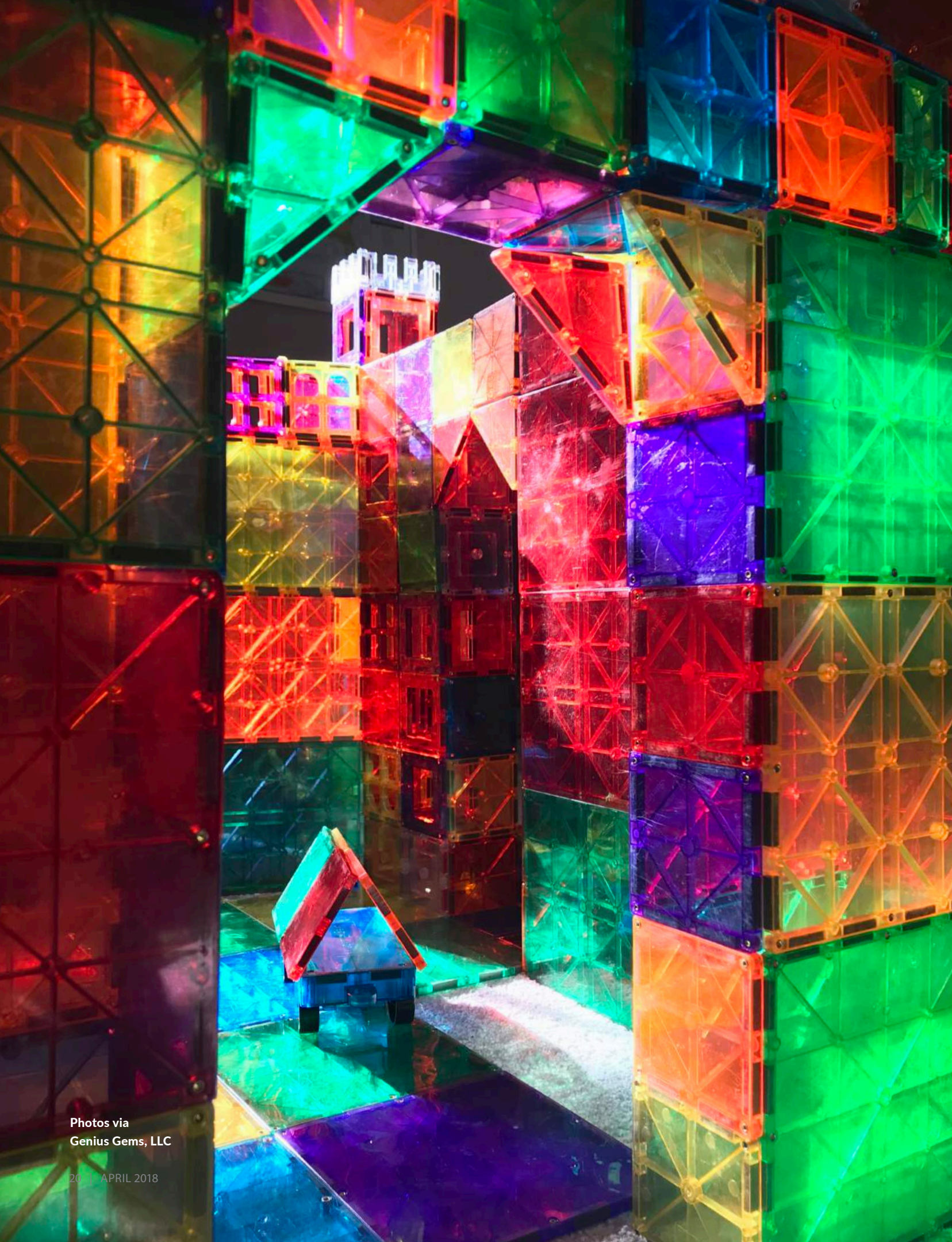
The "Enjoy/Savor" placemat (\$20) also offered a great, time-passing educational opportunity. The only drawback is that it is not durable enough to withstand a mess (food, paint, liquids, etc.), but I really liked using it with my charges at the dinner table, so I purchased some self-adhesive laminate to protect it. By doing that, we were able to use dry-erase markers to play a game with the letters and their corresponding words. It was a great way to keep children occupied at the table, during mealtime while waiting for others to finish, and to keep the table-time conversation educational and enriching.

Finally, I was also able to obtain some Artful Alphabet quote note cards. These cards are printed on 5"x7" cardstock (\$7), are blank inside, and feature the same artwork for each letter as featured on other items, but which also includes a quote on the front, which starts with whatever that letter is. For instance, "Everyone shines given the right lighting" by Susan Cain, for the letter "E." I thought these were adorable and used them as gift cards for people in my life.

Overall, The Artful Educator is a great company that I can stand behind for something a bit different when it comes to décor and educational activities. The fact that you can use most of these products for multiple purposes makes purchasing these products even more worth it. There are other products available on the website, including the ability to order custom-made items. Check out The Artful Educator today and help to support a mompreneur's vision!

Photos via Kim Votruba-Matook.





Photos via  
Genius Gems, LLC

2017 APRIL 2018





# STEM GALORE!

BY JENNIFER ROMANOFF  
Ed.M., founder, Genius Gems, LLC.

*Have you ever wondered what the STEM craze is all about, and what it means to you as a nanny? STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. According to proponents of STEM, these four subjects are becoming so vital in the modern world that they need a special focus in education. And not just in high school; the earlier, the better! STEM advocates say that the sooner a child's imagination is sparked by STEM, the sooner it can become a child's passion, and eventually lead to a rewarding (and high-paying) career. STEM education is a great thing...when it works. But how do you make it work? How do you get a charge to actually want to learn more STEM on his or her own?*





## THE RIGHT STUFF

In the past few years, the business world has stepped up to the challenge of STEM education, with a growing number of products to help make STEM fun and exciting. Amazon's website is now packed with STEM kits, STEM robots, and even STEM grow-it-yourself products. Your charge probably has quite a few of these STEM toys already (you may have accidentally stepped on some!).

If you feel like your charge would benefit from having some additional STEM products around, there are some great resources out there to help you navigate the terrain. For the most comprehensive guide to all the STEM stuff that's out there, we love Philadelphia blogger Mom Edit's list of the top STEAM toys. There are some excellent choices that she has personally tested with her boys. She gives great insights into what holds the attention of different ages, and what flops. (Follow this link to check out Mom Edit's list: <http://bit.ly/2BSyUFw>)

While the latest STEM gadgets and toys can be pricey, STEM itself doesn't have to be. The truth is you don't need a lot of expensive materials to do STEM right. Everyday objects like popsicle sticks, empty plastic bottles, straws, and tin foil can all be used creatively to teach STEM concepts to even the youngest charges. There are many websites that provide detailed instructions on how to do science experiments using household materials. Check out Genius Gem's blog for some simple ideas to get you started (<http://bit.ly/2oApKFn>).

## THE RIGHT WAY

Of course, if you want to do STEM right, it's not just about having the tools you need. Equally important is creating the right environment for charges to engage in essential STEM skills like collaboration, teamwork, and critical thinking.

You may be tempted by science kits where you just follow a set of instructions to build a cool project. Even if the project is really cool, like a solar-powered car, be careful with these. Ask yourself: is your charge developing critical thinking skills if he or she is just abiding by printed instructions? Remember, the goal of STEM education is not to acquire information, it's to develop a passion for learning. If STEM education teaches anything, it is that there can be more than one "right way" to achieve a goal.

What are the ingredients for a great STEM learning environment? MIT Media Lab Professor, Mitchell Resnick, the visionary thinker behind the coding program Scratch and the Lego robotics program called Lego Mindstorms, suggests thinking about the 4 P's: projects, passion, peers, and play.





**PROJECTS:** *this is where the focus is on creating something, without a pre-set agenda on how to do it*

- Guide charges toward an engineering challenge, whether it's building a specific structure or type of building, like a skyscraper or a pyramid. Gather their suggestions as to what they want to build and guide them toward one collaborative project.
- Ask open-ended questions as part of the design phase such as What are you building? Who would need a structure like that? What else can we add? How do you think you could make that structure stronger? Why do you think it collapsed? Where does the structure need extra support?

**PLAY:** *this is where we take a joyous and fun approach to what we do*

- When a charge is finished building a project, encourage him or her to make the project come to life!
- All-time favorites include adding action figures or dolls, play food, cars and trains, stuffed animals, and superheroes to act out scenes using the building structures.
- Remember, children of all ages learn important executive function and social emotional skills from imaginative play—even big kids too!

**PEERS:** *this is the idea that children learn best when they learn from those who are close in age*

- Encourage your charges to work together with their peers or siblings. Help each person find a special role in the project.
- Consider assigning roles to different children in the group. One child might be the “builder” and another might be the “emergency repairman” to fix problems in the structure, while a third can be responsible for “special delivery” of materials.
- If there's a disagreement, try to let children resolve it first. If they need some guidance, try “coaching” them to find a solution by asking them questions, rather than offering your own solution first. Remember, when children are coached on how to problem-solve, their brains are developing important problem-solving skills for the future.

**PASSION:** *this is the all-important notion that we learn best when we love what we're doing*

- Encourage passion by connecting projects or experiments to children's interests. Some questions you may wish to ask yourself or your charge: Should we add some characters to explain what

we're doing or why we're doing it? Who might use a structure like this? What is the problem they're trying to solve?

- Try to involve multiple materials and open-ended projects, but let the kids take the lead and follow their interests, whether their passion lies in knights in shining armor, princesses, cops and robbers, or superheroes.

Above all, don't be afraid to try new things. Not everything will work on the first try. Keep going, keep tinkering, and never give up. When you show your charge that you have that attitude and demonstrate that resiliency, your charge will learn perhaps the most important life skill of all.

STEM education isn't always easy, but the good news is that the contours of how to do it right are finally coming into focus. When we help develop STEM skills in our charges, we are setting them up for success in the future, whether they become the next brilliant software engineer, professor, or inventor of a life-changing technology or idea.

Jennifer Romanoff is the founder and CEO of Genius Gems, a new STEM-based play and learn space opening this year in NJ. For more information, visit [www.genius-gems.com](http://www.genius-gems.com) or follow Genius Gems on social media @geniusgemsllc.





# Supporting Families of Kids with Autism

BY LAURA R. SCHROEDER

I love my life as a nanny; it's hard for me to imagine doing anything else, but my career life actually started out quite differently. I was enjoying my work as a clinical social worker in 1993 when I realized that my two sons were not hitting their developmental milestones properly, especially with language development. Despite our pediatrician's claims that they were just "late bloomers," my husband and I sought out the help of specialists. In 1994, at ages 18 months and 3 years respectively, our two sons were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). It was heartbreaking and life-changing to receive such a diagnosis, and our family has been affected significantly every year since then. One positive change is that I discovered my passion of in-home childcare, first as a licensed family daycare provider and then, as my children grew, as a nanny. Because of my unique situation as both a nanny and a mom, I have a unique insight into what it takes to be an effective nanny for families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders.

## What is Autism anyway?

In 1994 when my children were diagnosed, it was being reported in just 1 out of every 2000 births. Now, it is being diagnosed in 1 out of every 68 births. Some of that rise can be explained by more accurate diagnosis, but experts generally agree that the incidence is increasing, and the cause is not fully known. Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning that the symptoms can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations, from mild to severe. Merriam-Webster defines autism as "a variable developmental disorder that appears by age three and is characterized by impairment of the ability to form normal social relationships, by impairment of the ability to communicate with others, and by repetitive behavior patterns." There are more than four million people today in the United States with some form of autism. ASD affects boys four times more often than girls.

Photo via Pexels.



## What are the characteristics of ASD?

Every child is different, but they may, or may not, have any combination of these symptoms:

- Prefers to play alone
- Aloof mannerisms
- Has tantrums for no apparent reason
- Delayed or unusual language
- Unusual attachment to toys or objects
- Repetitive movements or posturing of body, arms, or hands
- No real fear of dangers
- Apparent insensitivity to pain
- Echolalia (repeated words or phrases)
- Difficulty expressing needs
- Noticeable physical overactivity or extreme underactivity
- Unresponsive to normal teaching methods
- Uneven fine and gross motor skills
- Sensitivity to light, sound, clothing or food texture, etc.
- Extremely picky eater
- Resists change in daily routine
- Little or no eye contact
- Difficulty reading social cues

Children with ASD will rarely show all, or even most, of the characteristics listed. There are many benefits to working with an ASD child and their family. Children with ASD are typically intelligent, extremely honest, and are able to easily entertain themselves. They are very loyal and are often affectionate. My sons are both very musically talented. The oldest was a National Merit Scholar, attended the College of Charleston on a full scholarship, and is a classically trained professional tenor choir singer and soloist. My second born has an amazing memory for almost everything and won the Music Memory Competition in Elementary School and the Black History Bee in Middle School. He never met a fact he didn't enjoy! Parents of these wonderful children are typically very appreciative and are willing to pay a higher salary for nannies with special needs knowledge and experience. Because my husband and I didn't have a nanny, and friends and family were uncomfortable with our boys, my husband and I never got a night out. That is hard on a marriage, especially one that is already strained with special needs. Thankfully, we remain happily married after 32 years. Although the exact number is disputed, it is generally accepted that the divorce rate is higher in ASD families. You can make a real difference in their lives.

## Do you have what it takes to be a special needs nanny?

As you can see, the need for nannies with special needs experience is great. The following are a few of the skills and characteristics that a nanny working with these kinds of families should possess. Of course, you should have all of the same attributes of any great nanny: education, experience, a love of children, energy, and creativity. But ASD nannies should also have patience (more so than usual), because gains may come more slowly (in our family we call this “two-steps forward, one step back”). They should have a willingness to learn and take direction from several different sources, not just parents and teachers, but also therapists and doctors. They should also possess super organizational skills and a tough-skinned personality, one where they won't easily get their feelings hurt. This is because ASD individuals are often blunt to the point of rudeness. You will come to appreciate this brutal honesty most of the time, though.

## What can you do specifically to help an ASD family?

After you've been hired to work with an ASD family, there are many things that you can do specifically for their family to help them out.

- Be there to give the family a much-needed break!
- Learn all you can from the child, the family, the therapists, books, conferences, etc.
- Share all the good ideas you learn. Good ideas don't just come from therapists and doctors.
- Be consistent with schedules, discipline, routines, etc. This is especially important for the ASD child.
- Give visual cues whenever possible. Written signs and pictures are invaluable.
- Pick your battles.
- Be aware of safety issues specific to the ASD community, like wandering and destructive behavior. Water can be especially dangerous to ASD children. Teaching them to swim as early as possible is recommended. I had to save my middle child from drowning on more than one occasion. Be sure you can swim too!
- Be sensitive to the emotions in the house, including those of the parents, siblings, and the ASD children. Parents may be worried about finances, loss of friends and family, grieving dreams they had for “neurotypical” children, and pure exhaustion (sleep problems are also common for ASD children). Siblings may be concerned with embarrassment, how to talk with friends, and a lack of attention and resources from parents, and even you.
- Give extra attention to siblings whenever possible. They often feel as though the ASD child gets the majority of the attention in the home.
- Stay and observe therapy sessions so that you can generalize concepts in the home environment. It will also be important for you to teach these concepts to the parents, so that they can do the same when you are not there.
- Keep therapy notebooks and all school notes and papers organized. Believe me, there will be a lot!
- Finally, be loving and enjoy them - remember they are children, and just want to have fun.

My hope is that this article will serve as inspiration to some to obtain more information about working with children and families with ASD. We could really use your help, and there are lots of us out there. Remember that each child on the autism spectrum is different, so it's important not to generalize. A great idea is to try babysitting for different families to gain experience. Just like the regular nanny world, each family will handle things a little differently, but there will be lots of similarities. There are lots of great ASD nannies out there and I hope you will feel confident to become one too. Every specialty skill you can add to your resume makes you more valuable and more confident that you can handle anything!



*Cap'n Crunch's full name is Horatio Magellan Crunch.*

THOUGHT CATALOG



*A ball of glass will bounce higher than a ball of rubber. A ball of solid steel will bounce higher than one made entirely of glass.*

SO TRUE FACTS



*Peanut butter can be converted into a diamond.*

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS



*Yoda, from Star Wars, was partly modeled after a photo of Albert Einstein.*

MENTAL FLOSS



*Pirates probably didn't wear eye patches because of a missing eye; it's much more likely that they were keeping one eye ready to see in darkness, so that they could adjust quickly when going below deck.*

FACT SLIDES



*Opossums don't "play dead." When frightened, they become overexcited and pass out.*

METAL FLOSS



# DATA BLITZ

BY AMANDA DUNYAK



# Nannies on Call Offering Scholarships



PROGRAM IS  
THE FIRST OF  
ITS KIND FOR  
CANADIAN  
NANNIES

A study of employment patterns by Statistics Canada shows that the number of families where both parents work has increased significantly in the past 40 years. 53% of homes currently have two working parents. This has led to the need for better childcare options and that includes nannies. Nannies may live in the home, be part-time or full-time employees, and perform a variety of tasks above and beyond watching the children, such as running errands, cooking dinner, and even making the family's beds.

Nannies on Call wants to help nannies with an opportunity to continue their education through a scholarship program. The agency is offering a cumulative \$5,000 in 2018 for nannies who want to take courses to further their education.

Michelle Kelsey founded Nannies on Call in 2001 when her only option for childcare was her not-so-experienced 14-year-old neighbor. She channeled her frustration into a business that would alleviate that same frustration for all parents.

Her commitment to childcare excellence and ease has led to some pretty big milestones. In 2007, Business in Vancouver named Michelle one of Vancouver's 40-under-40 Brightest Stars. In 2008 and 2009, respectively, Nannies on Call was ranked #14 of Biggest Women-Owned Businesses in British Columbia. Today, Michelle oversees the company's 400 nannies and finds immense joy in connecting great families with nurturing childcare in a pinch. Services are available in Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Toronto, Victoria and Vancouver. Nannies on Call has a comprehensive screening process that includes a criminal background check, CPR and First Aid certification and references.

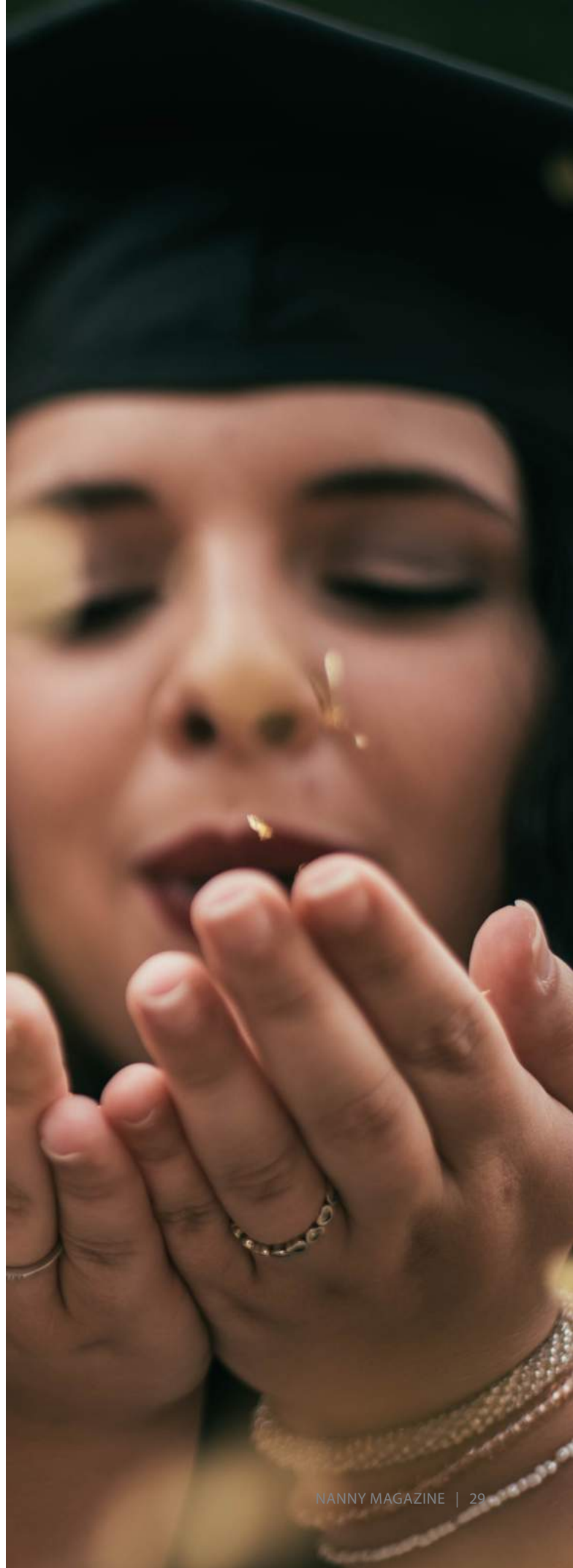
"Nannies on Call hires the most professional and experienced nannies, so continued education of the nannies is very important to us and our [nannies]," said Michelle. "We want to show how much we appreciate nannies and what they do."

Nannies can apply for a scholarship by writing a one-page essay outlining their educational interests and reasons for applying, the cost of the course, the name of the course, and a little about themselves and their childcare experiences.

All Canadian nannies are welcome to apply. The scholarship is not limited to those who work for Nannies on Call. Nannies can apply for scholarships throughout 2018. Funding will be available until all the money has been awarded.

"This is the first scholarship of its kind in Canada," Kelsey said. "This is a win for everyone. Families get better employees and nannies get better jobs with families who appreciate and respect them."

More information, including a list of suggested courses, can be found on the agency's website. ([www.nanniesoncall.com/nannies/nanny-scholarships/](http://www.nanniesoncall.com/nannies/nanny-scholarships/))





# Gifted Children: Misunderstood

**BY AMY WILHELM**

*M.S., CCC-SLP and Heather Marena-Miller,  
M.S., CCC-SLP, speech-language pathologists  
at Social Scouts Speech and Language Clinic,  
Los Angeles ([www.socialscoutsla.com](http://www.socialscoutsla.com))*

Children who are gifted may have very advanced vocabularies, language skills, and exceptional thought processes, yet often have significantly impaired social communication skills (the ability to use language for different purposes, adapt language to meet the needs of the listener/situation, use and interpret nonverbal communication). This unevenness between verbal and nonverbal skills is considered asynchronous development. With advanced intellectual skills and impacted social skills, engaging with peers can be difficult for gifted children. This is because they lack the ability to use, understand, and interpret nonverbal communication, which is necessary to fully express or understand the meaning of messages. Imagine not understanding that you can wave your hand to communicate “hi/bye.” Now imagine that you cannot figure out what the palm of a hand extended to you means. Does it mean stop, high five, or I’m five years old? These types of gestures are nonverbal communication.

Contrary to what many people think, nonverbal communication does not mean a child is unable to speak or understand speech. Rather, nonverbal communication is best described as communicating through facial expressions, gestures, body language, tone of voice, and eye contact. When you shake your head “no” and wave your index finger to children, you may be telling them don’t touch that and expect them to oblige, yet your gifted charge may not understand the message of those gestures resulting in him/her touching the object. This can frustrate nannies because it appears as though the child wasn’t following the direction. This can also leave your charge feeling confused and upset. Gifted children hear and understand verbal messages but miss the intent of the message because they





are not tuned in to and/or do not understand the accompanying nonverbal cues, leaving them lost and often misunderstood. It's not that your charge is being bad; he or she truly does not understand the expectation.

Think about how often gestures are used instead of words to convey messages; waving hi/bye, scrunching your face when mad, pointing to objects or places, crossing your arms, putting your head in your hands, sticking out your tongue to indicate yucky, waving your hand or holding your nose when there's a stinky smell, etc. It is innate in most people but not necessarily in gifted kids. Because gifted children can have exceptional verbal communication and mature interests, it is expected that they fully understand what is being said to them. Verbal and nonverbal communication go hand-in-hand, but if your charge is missing these crucial nonverbal cues, engaging with others can be confusing and frustrating. This could lead him or her to avoid such social interactions and instead, play alone or engage in solitary preferred activities such as reading or puzzles.

Enhancing and encouraging nonverbal communication can

start at a very early age. Nannies can play a crucial role in fostering this development by helping their charges to understand and use more gestures. Below are activities easy to incorporate into everyday scenarios to stimulate nonverbal communication. When you begin these activities, simultaneously pair words or sound effects with the gesture to ensure your charge understands the entire meaning of the message. Eventually decrease the words and sounds so your charge begins to focus more on your nonverbal gestures, facial expressions, and body language. It is imperative for you to put down your phone! If you continually look at your phone, charges will want to see what you see! When you take electronic devices out of the picture, it's easier for your charge to focus on you and your body language.



# ACTIVITIES TO STIMULATE NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Direct your eye contact to your charge and require him/her to do the same. Before you give directions or answer his/her questions, gain eye contact. When your charge is telling you a message, be sure he/she makes eye contact to see your reaction. When children sustain eye contact, they are open to seeing facial expressions, body postures, and gestures others make.
- When holding or feeding a baby, gain eye contact. You can also make silly faces and sounds, getting the baby to tune in to your face. When the baby looks away, get quiet. When he or she looks back to you, make sounds and faces again.
- Sing songs paired with gestures (i.e. Wheels on the Bus, Itsy Bitsy Spider, etc.). Once your charge is familiar with the songs, have him/her request a song by using a gesture from it (i.e., hands swishing back and forth for wipers on the bus or fingers showing a spider climbing up the water spout).
- Turn two bowls (cups or boxes) upside down. Hide something preferred under one bowl and ask, "Where's the [object]?" and then say, "It's here!" while dramatically turning your head to look at the bowl it's under.
- Hold a preferred food (or shirt, toy, etc.) in each hand. Have the child choose which one he/she wants by using only his/her eyes to look at the object.
- Cross your arms and scrunch your face when upset.
- When your charge doesn't give what you requested (doesn't share food or give you the toy, etc.), make an exaggerated sad face.
- When something is loud, cover your ears.
- Shake your head no while making an unpleasant face. Nod your head yes while making a happy face. Shrug your shoulders and make a not sure face to show I don't know.
- Play a yes, no, I don't know game with your charge. Ask various questions and have him or her answer only using a head shake, nod or shoulder shrug.
- When bringing food to your charge, rub your tummy and lick your lips to indicate yummy while saying "mmmmmm."
- If your charge is dirty, puts a non-food item in his or her mouth, picks his or her nose, etc., make a scrunched yucky face while sticking your tongue out, paired with an exaggerated "Yuck!"
- Gather a box full of play food toys and other various non-play food toys (i.e. farm animals, vehicles, etc.). Pull items out of the box one by one and have your charge practice using a yummy or yucky face to indicate if it's edible or not.
- Use a hand wave (pulling it towards yourself) to indicate come here.
- Put your arm up and palm out for high five after the child does something good but then use the palm out gesture to indicate stop when the child is running toward you.
- Play "Red Light, Green Light" and have your charge be the traffic controller to practice using the above-mentioned come here and stop gestures.
- When changing a diaper or taking out the garbage, alternate waving your hand by your nose and plugging your nose to indicate stinky -- pair this with saying "P-U!" in an exaggerated tone of voice.
- Wave your index finger and say "uh-uh-uh" to indicate don't do that/don't touch.
- Shiver and say "brrrrrrr" when cold or handling something cold.
- Play a little hide-and-seek game. Hide something and then hold your hands up and shrug your shoulders with an I don't know where it is expression on your face.
- Use "uh-oh" when something falls or breaks.
- Hold your index finger up to indicate hold-on or wait a minute if you're busy and your charge wants attention.
- Hold your finger up to your mouth to help with understanding be quiet (but don't say "Shhhhhh").
- Clear your throat or say "psst!" to get your charge's attention.
- Indicate tummy ache, headache, or boo-boo by pointing to a specific body part while squinting your eyes as if in pain.
- Use a playful sounding "no-no-no" versus a firm "NO!" (as in something is dangerous) to help your charge distinguish between the two intentions.
- If your charge is a little older, play a charades game acting out various daily activities/routines (i.e., brushing teeth, pouring a glass of water, buttoning up a shirt, licking an ice cream cone, etc.).

## Dear Stephanie,

My 8-year-old charge is extremely over-scheduled.

She goes from school to activities and then we are rushing to get homework, dinner, and a bath done before bedtime. She tends to get over-tired and cranky toward the week's end. She enjoys all the activities she participates in, and her parents want her in them as well, but I feel that sometimes it's more than she can handle at her age. How can I approach this topic with the parents?

If they don't agree to cut some activities, how do you recommend I proceed with trying to alleviate some of my charge's stress?

Sincerely,  
One Busy Nanny

## Dear One Busy Nanny,

*It is tricky to give advice when not asked for it, especially to your employers. In this instance, it is especially difficult because you admit the child actually enjoys the activities. Rather than asking that she quit activities she actually enjoys, I think a health-oriented discussion about balance of life and getting enough sleep is the way to approach the issue.*

*So that you don't offend the parents, I would simply state the facts: she is cranky because she is tired. A naturally even-tempered child should not be tired and cranky.*

*Children need a balance between some structured time, where they can learn a specific skill, and free time. Plus, if she is tired, she may need more sleep. There are many websites that show the research on how many hours of sleep are needed for children of every age.*

*It's important to honestly discuss your concerns with the parents, but ultimately you are an employee and it is the parents' decision how they schedule their child's day. If they choose to continue to keep the child in all the activities, try to stay calm yourself, even when you feel stressed out. I suggest keeping a clear and concise schedule. Make a checklist and use a children's agenda or calendar so the child can mark off all that needs to be completed daily before the parents arrive home.*


*Good luck bringing balance to both your day and your charge's day.*

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Felzenberg  
Be the Best Nanny Newsletter publisher



Photo via CreateHerStock.





When I arrived at the Larkin\* house, the first thing I noticed was that everything was sharp. The peaks of the house, tall and very pointed. Mrs. Larkin's nose, her high heeled shoes, narrow, tapered. And the timing schedule—everything ran to the minute. School ended at 2:07. Sharp. The piano teacher, Mr. Kapernik, arrived at 3:35. Sharp. And my day ended at 4:05 sharp, because Mr. Larkin got an extra five minutes out of me, without having to pay for another fifteen of overtime.

I was a nursing student during those days and by no means lazy, but I believed in letting kids express their interests through free play, and in this household, there seemed little time for this kind of nourishment. Furthermore, their job interview had given me the impression that the family ran like a well navigated, tight ship. I didn't realize then that I was tasked with creating this pedagogical achievement from the ground up.

I found the children, while kind-hearted, ready to dispute this reputation of daily rigor, with acrimonious expertise. My initial doubts with my assignment were not a problem of money, or any issue of mine with a rigid schedule. I'd never been late a day in my life in any of my previous, lower paying jobs, which included waitressing at the Bull and Finch Pub in knee high socks and a plaid skirt that rode up my bum, or while selling shoes at the mall to old people

# Mena and Natalie

BY MELISSA FRANCKOWIAK

*\*all names have been changed for privacy* Photo via Unsplash.






with doughy feet. My challenge as a nanny lay in getting the children to conform to their routines.

The littlest, Arianna, could barely put her own shoes on without pitching a fit on the floor. She was prone to attention seeking behavior and transforming everything that should've taken no more than five minutes into interminable acts of drama. The eldest, Martin, had a collection of bugs that numbered 106 when I arrived. He found the most inopportune times to show me his Japanese beetles, South American cockroaches, and subterranean earthworms.

The middle child, Natalie, was unabashedly my favorite. Patient and kind, never demanding, she had my heartstrings knotted from the first day. I especially like the way she would blush before asking me if she could help with dinner. Then, once she was in the kitchen, she became a culinary sorceress, tossing anything into the mixing bowls that she could get her hands on, not excluding coffee beans, potato chips, and ice cubes. Oddly, most of our joint creations were quite tasty. "I want to help," she'd insist, pulling rank over her younger sibling, but always seeking my permission first. "Thank you, Natalie." I'd smile, thankful there was one child under my care who seemed attached to me, and preferred my company to an electronic tablet, or to being parked in front of the television watching an episode of "Word Party," and this gave me courage, at 33, that I might one day succeed at motherhood myself. This was good for my soul. But it did not last, and it was what made the terrible news so devastating, gave me pause, and made me rethink that ambition entirely.

On my third Thursday of my employment for the Larkins, when I was feeling like I'd finally begun to adjust to the sharpness of the children's routines, everything changed. I had Martin practiced and ready for his piano teacher's arrival, and Arianna had woken from a nap that was not too short and not too long, one that had begun precisely at the prescribed time of 1 pm. She had her shoes on and was ready for a walk with her sister that would allow Martin to have a peaceful lesson. I had even started chopping vegetables for dinner, when something terrible brought the daily routine to a halt and would do so with or without





me for years to come.

It was 3:16. The piano teacher was due at the door in fifteen minutes, when I noticed something terribly wrong with Natalie. Her face was swollen, so much that she could barely open her eyes. Her breathing was heavy, labored. "I can't breathe, Mena," she said as she ran out of her playroom. The others called me Philomena, including the youngest, whose speech was excellent at three, but Natalie used my nickname. She was the closest to me.

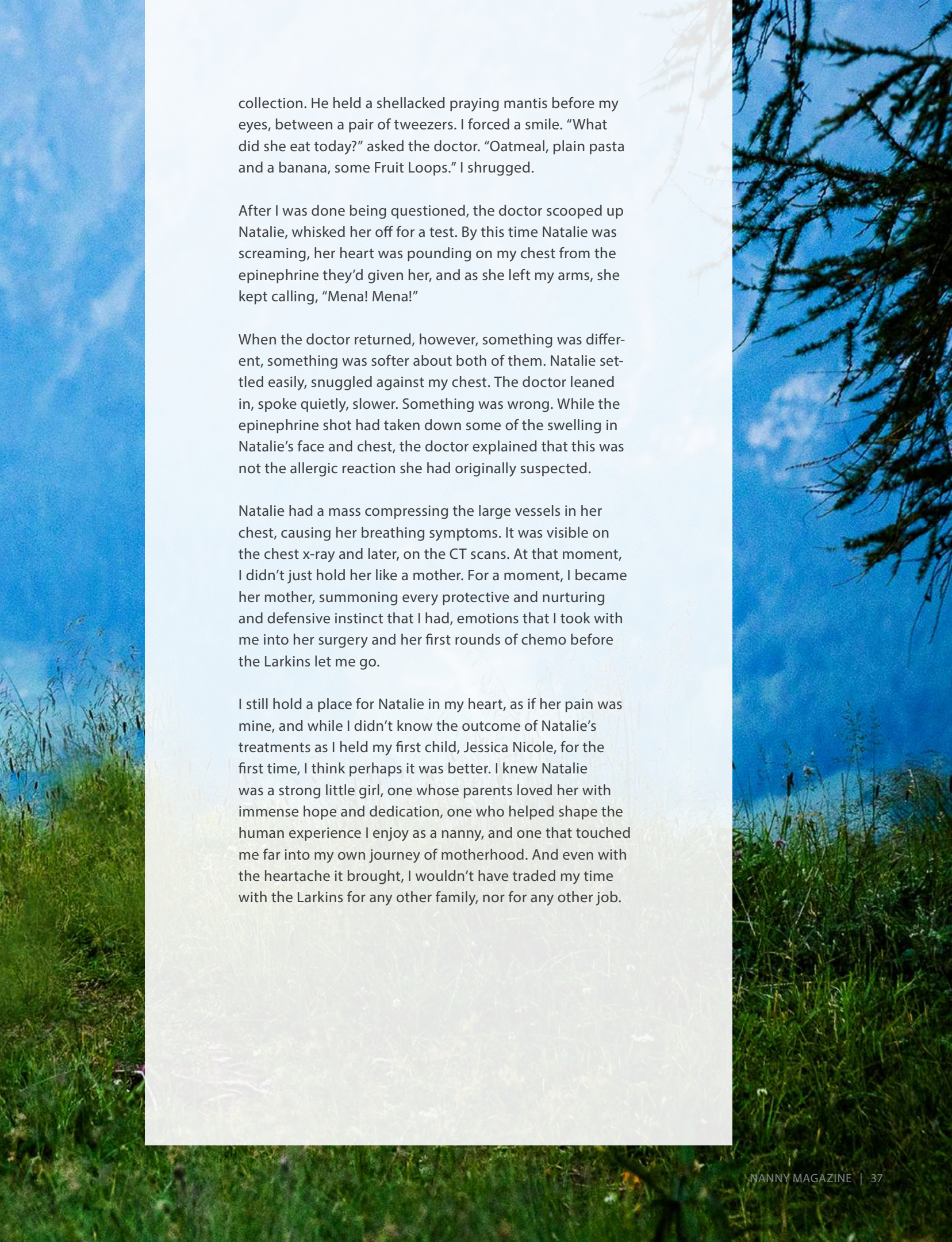
I should've called an ambulance, but I panicked. I wanted to care for Natalie myself, though I had no idea what to do. Her parents were away for three nights, on a trip to West Palm Beach, celebrating their anniversary. They weren't expected back until Sunday.

I put the kids in my car and raced to the Emergency Care clinic three blocks away. Natalie was crying now. Martin was making fun of her, told her she looked like a Shar Pei, the way the skin of her head and neck had puffed and wrinkled in coarse folds. "Cut it out," I said, losing my cool.

The doctor must have been having a bad day, because she snapped at me when I explained that the children's parents were out of town. I had no note indicating that I had permission to bring them in to be seen, but this was an emergency. Mr. and Mrs. Larkin could not be reached for several hours, which prompted Dr. Crabby to notify child services. Since this was apparently done anonymously, Mrs. Larkin presumed it was me who called, and I later lost my job with them. Maybe Mrs. Larkin let me go because I was a reminder of the guilt she struggled with, the hard truth that I was there for Natalie then and she was not. It's hard to say.

While I waited in the emergency clinic with Natalie, trying to reassure the other two that their sister would be fine, not even considering the piano teacher who had probably been wondering where we were, I wondered how I could ever deal with the stress of being a parent, bringing a child into the world. The doctor fired questions at me. "Is she allergic to anything?" "Not that I know of." "The parents didn't tell you?" "No, not specifically. If she was, I assume they would've mentioned it." "You assume?" "Yeah." "You should've asked." "Okay." "What about peanuts?" "She eats those all the time," said Martin, looking up from his bug





collection. He held a shellacked praying mantis before my eyes, between a pair of tweezers. I forced a smile. "What did she eat today?" asked the doctor. "Oatmeal, plain pasta and a banana, some Fruit Loops." I shrugged.

After I was done being questioned, the doctor scooped up Natalie, whisked her off for a test. By this time Natalie was screaming, her heart was pounding on my chest from the epinephrine they'd given her, and as she left my arms, she kept calling, "Mena! Mena!"

When the doctor returned, however, something was different, something was softer about both of them. Natalie settled easily, snuggled against my chest. The doctor leaned in, spoke quietly, slower. Something was wrong. While the epinephrine shot had taken down some of the swelling in Natalie's face and chest, the doctor explained that this was not the allergic reaction she had originally suspected.

Natalie had a mass compressing the large vessels in her chest, causing her breathing symptoms. It was visible on the chest x-ray and later, on the CT scans. At that moment, I didn't just hold her like a mother. For a moment, I became her mother, summoning every protective and nurturing and defensive instinct that I had, emotions that I took with me into her surgery and her first rounds of chemo before the Larkins let me go.

I still hold a place for Natalie in my heart, as if her pain was mine, and while I didn't know the outcome of Natalie's treatments as I held my first child, Jessica Nicole, for the first time, I think perhaps it was better. I knew Natalie was a strong little girl, one whose parents loved her with immense hope and dedication, one who helped shape the human experience I enjoy as a nanny, and one that touched me far into my own journey of motherhood. And even with the heartache it brought, I wouldn't have traded my time with the Larkins for any other family, nor for any other job.





# Simple Sensory Bottle Activity

By Brianna Hindmarsh of The Creative Toy Shop

Using sensory jars is a great quiet, focusing activity. Children love to watch the glitter float and the sparkles swirl around; it fascinates children and keeps them enthralled long enough to get a few jobs done. Sensory jars are incredibly simple to make. All the supplies are easy to source and are inexpensive.

Choosing the right bottle is half the battle. We use plastic Voss water bottles and have never had a problem but are always on the lookout for smaller, suitable plastic bottles. The painted label is very easy for an adult to scrape off with a razor blade.

I use a 20% glitter glue to 80% water mixture. You can change this if you want a bottle with more or less movement.

Have your littles help you measure out the glitter and add it to the warm water. Then they can choose the extra glitter and sparkles they would like to add. Whisk it all together and pour into the jar. To make sure the lid stays on, I add a bead of super glue before putting on the lid. Once the glue has dried, your sensory bottles are ready to go!

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Suitable bottle

Glitter glue

Extra glitter and sparkles

Warm water

Jug with a pouring spout

Whisk

Photo via Brianna Hindmarsh.



Photos via Kristy Jorgensen.

# get ready for spring with PANCAKE ART

BY KRISTY JORGENSEN #THECREATIVEKRISTY

With spring on the way, it's time to let some color back into the world. Get your littles involved in cooking breakfast by making some colorful pancakes; simple works of art that they can eat!

## GETTING TO WORK

1. Prep time! Have the children help you mix the pancake mix in a big mixing bowls. We used Bisquick, so the recipe was pretty standard: 2 eggs, 2 cups of Bisquick, and one cup of milk.
2. When the mix is ready, take the pancake mix and divide it into each of the squeeze bottles. Then, squirt some food coloring into each of the bottles, using one color per bottle, and as many bottles of colors that you and your littles wish to use!
3. Heat up the pancake griddle on low. Using a griddle on the counter enables better, safer access for your charges to help out, but if you don't have a griddle, you can use a pan on the stove. Always do what is safest for your little ones and discuss safety with them before starting their edible masterpieces!
4. Have your charges squirt the colored pancake mix of their choice onto the pan or griddle, mixing colors, or making fun designs. Adjust the temperature according to how quickly the children are making their pancake masterpieces. If they are moving more slowly and taking their time, keep the temperature on low so that it doesn't burn.

We chose to do this activity as a little experiment, and in the end, it turned out to be a great project! The pancakes turned out so cute and the kids made some for the entire family. While it ends up looking a little like a flat playdoh creation, once you take a bite, you'll be enjoying one fabulous pancake designed and made by your kiddos!

## INGREDIENTS

A creative imagination

2 cups pancake mix  
(we used Bisquick)

2 eggs

1 cup milk

Squeeze bottles (one for each color you choose use)

Food coloring (however many different colors you want!)

Pancake griddle or pan

\*Amounts should be adjusted according to the pancake mix you use





# Food and You: Friend or Foe?

BY CAROL SLAGER

Sources: <https://draxe.com/food-allergy-symptoms/>, <https://www.precisionnutrition.com/elimination-diet>, <http://www.kidswithfoodallergies.org/page/diagnosis-food-allergy-skin-prick-blood-test.aspx>, "Cookies No Milk, Pizza No Cheese: An Ice Cream Lover's Guide to Raising Children with Dairy Allergies," By Carol Ash Slager

Photo via Pexel.

It seems like such a simple thing: we eat food that appeals to our taste buds; we are nourished and feel good. Then there is the child who eats a scrumptious breakfast of pancakes, syrup, and eggs. Later that morning, the memory of that breakfast is not a happy one. That same child is vomiting and has a terrible stomachache. Is it a food allergy, food intolerance, or something else? The answer is not always simple.

This article references the difference between an allergy and intolerance regarding food. This is intended for informational purposes only. Consult a physician if you suspect a food allergy or intolerance for further information.

## ALLERGY VS. INTOLERANCE


**Allergy:** an immunologic response (the body recognizes a foreign substance that it does not like and begins producing specific antibodies to fight it off) to an allergen that results in reproducible symptoms that occur immediately (within a few hours) and with every exposure. Typical symptoms include: hives, swelling, itching, difficulty breathing and/or swallowing, vomiting, low blood pressure (which can cause the person to pass out), anaphylaxis, and death.

**Intolerance:** a non-immunologic response to a substance (food) that causes primarily gastrointestinal symptoms with exposure. These responses are not always immediate nor are they always reproducible. Symptoms may include bloating, gassiness, heartburn, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, and headache.

What does this mean when it comes to food, allergy testing, and staying healthy?

**ARE ALLERGY TESTS CONCLUSIVE?**





There are a variety of tests that help identify allergies: blood specific IgE testing, skin testing, and do-it-yourself kits to name a few. These tests can be costly and uncomfortable. Alone, these tests are not diagnostic of food allergies and often give a high rate of false positives. Seasonal allergies and some medications may also affect results (indicating a higher rate of food allergies than is actually the case). When the child's history is not taken into account, there is a high rate of misdiagnosis that may lead to unnecessary dietary restrictions and possible nutritional deficiencies.

#### THE MOST TROUBLESOME FOODS

The most common foods that cause allergic reactions are cow's milk, eggs, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish. These account for over 90 percent of food allergies. Immediate immunologic responses occur in five to eight percent of children and three to five percent of adults. There is no perfect test, and patient history must always be considered. The best prevention for a food allergy is to avoid ingestion of that food when you discover it causes an allergic response.

#### EXERCISE-INDUCED ALLERGIES

There are also exercise-induced allergies, which may occur if a food is eaten before exercise that causes symptoms when body temperature rises. In this case, avoid that particular food four to five hours before activity.

#### ARE ELIMINATION DIETS USEFUL?

Elimination diets may be helpful to determine food intolerances. This is done by eliminating the suspected food(s) for a finite period of time and noting the results. This is not advisable for young children, since important nutrients may

be eliminated as well. If your health practitioner feels this is safe for your child, the recommended period is seven to ten days for benefits to be seen. This type of diet may also be helpful for adults when followed for three to four weeks. There are a variety of elimination diets you can choose from, depending on your specific issues. The key is to discover what foods help you feel your best and which ones you should avoid.

#### GENETIC VS. ACQUIRED ALLERGIES

If your child has a genetic allergy, he/she will not outgrow it. Acquired allergies develop for a variety of reasons. Our immune system lines the intestinal tract, so it is important to avoid foods that cause an allergic response or are not tolerated. When the immune system is working at an optimal level, foods that previously caused symptoms may be tolerated. This is the common reasoning why some allergies are "outgrown." There may have been intolerances/allergies that the body's immune system is now strong enough to handle.

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

Any allergy test on its own is not conclusive in determining food allergies. Patient history is vital to interpreting adequate results. Do-it-yourself allergy test kits claim lots of promises, but instead may create more confusion. Ingestion of a food is the best test of an allergy. Avoid the problem food and eat a variety of fresh, minimally processed, whole foods, which promote a healthy immune system.



# Meals That Meet a Child's Needs

BY THE ALLERGY CHEF

Every child has the potential to be exceptional, no matter what their individual differences are, or what test scores may reveal. What's important for us as parents, guardians, and caregivers is to make sure that we are supporting children in various ways to help them see their own potential and develop a desire to pursue it. One of the many ways we can support the children we care for is to provide them with balanced, healthy meals. When supporting children through proper nutrition, we're giving their brains the necessary building blocks for daily success. However, what if your meals aren't working? In some cases, you may be dealing with a child who has a food allergy, food intolerance/sensitivity, or has a medical condition that requires a special diet. For example, one of my kids can't tolerate sugar, chemicals, pesticides, and food colorings. He requires an organic diet and eats a lot of Paleo-based meals. One of our other kids has wheat, dairy, and beef allergies, along with an egg intolerance. Their older brother required gluten-free and dairy-free meals for cognitive function. One family, many needs. It can take weeks or years, to get a proper diagnosis allowing you to fine tune a child's diet. If you suspect something may be wrong, keep a food journal, and stick with it. Document what the child eats (brand name, preparation method, serving size), along with any symptoms, sleeping patterns, and restroom patterns. No symptom is too small, including behavior. Our low-sugar/no-sugar kid can be an angel one minute, and the total opposite within minutes because of the wrong food.

Now that you have all of that on your mind, how do you go about making a healthy meal for a child on a special diet? The easiest solution is to stick to the basics. Try not to overwhelm the child with storebought substitutions, which often have more ingredients than the original product; opt for clean food as much as possible. Here are three fantastic meals that you can make, all of which are free from the top 8 allergens (wheat/gluten, dairy, eggs, soy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish), are GFCF (gluten free, casein free, a diet followed by many children on the autism spectrum) and are free from several not-as-common allergens.



## CHICKEN PARMESAN MEATBALL LUNCH

Allergy Status: Gluten Free, Top 8 Free, Sesame Free, Legume Free, Cane/Refined Sugar Free

- 1 lb. organic ground chicken
- 2 oz Follow Your Heart Parmesan Shreds (dairy free, you can sub in regular parmesan as well)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup gluten free breadcrumbs (we used the Metropolitan Gourmet brand)
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 TB organic dried parsley
- organic black pepper to taste
- 3 tsp organic garlic, finely chopped
- 3 TB dairy free milk of choice

### Directions

1. Combine all the ingredients together in a mixing bowl.
2. Line a baking tray with parchment paper. Using a small cookie dough scooper (2 tsp), scoop out meat and shape into balls, and place them on your lined tray.
3. Bake at 425 degrees for 20-24 minutes.

*This lunch features organic sweet potato fries, organic apple slices, a gluten free granola bar, and gummy hearts from Surf Sweets Organics. The fries were made with a crinkle-cutter and baked at the same time as the meatballs.*



## CINNAMON OAT PANCAKES WITH PEACH TOPPING

*Allergy Status: Gluten Free, Top 8 Free, Vegan, Corn Free, Sesame Free, Legume Free, Cane/Refined Sugar Free*

- 1.5 cup organic oat flour
- 1 cup sorghum flour, superfine
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup organic date sugar, packed
- 4 TB arrowroot
- 3 TB golden flax
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp sea salt
- 4 tsp baking powder (Hain Featherweight is corn starch free)
- 4 tsp organic ground cinnamon
- 1-2 cups milk of choice
- 4 tsp raw organic apple cider vinegar

### Directions

1. Combine the flax, vinegar, and milk of choice together in a measuring cup and set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, add the remaining dry ingredients and stir together.
3. Finally, add in your liquid mix and stir until all the ingredients are well incorporated. The range of milk allows you to choose the consistency of your pancakes. Alternatively, you can also use this as a foundation for muffins.

### Toppings

Creating a fruit topping is simple. Cut your fruit of choice into small pieces and cook on stove top on medium heat with a granulated sweetener of choice. Add a little butter to the pan when using fruits with less juice. To make our peach topping, we combined organic peaches, dairy free butter, and organic maple sugar.



## LEMON RASPBERRY COOKIES

*Allergy Status: Gluten Free, Top 8 Free, Vegan, Sesame Free, Legume Free, Cane/Refined Sugar Free, Diabetic Friendly*

- 3 TB golden flax seed, plus
- 7 TB water
- 4 oz dairy free butter
- 4-6 TB organic maple sugar
- 1.5 oz freeze dried organic raspberries, crushed
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup superfine sorghum flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup superfine millet flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp sea salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking soda
- 3 TB organic lemon juice
- 2 tsp organic vanilla extract

### Directions

1. Combine your water and flax in a small bowl and set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, using the paddle attachment, add your butter and maple sugar. Whip on medium-high speed for 30 seconds.
3. Next, add your raspberries and mix again. Allow the paddle to crush any large pieces.

4. Add your sorghum, millet, salt, and baking soda. Mix again and incorporate the ingredients.
5. Now add your lemon juice and vanilla. Pulse the mix a few times and allow it to sit for several minutes. The baking soda and lemon juice will combine and create rise.
6. Finally, add your water and flax mix to the bowl. Mix on medium speed until all the ingredients are well combined.
7. Line a baking tray with parchment paper and scoop out your dough using a medium cookie dough scooper (1.5 T).
8. Bake at 325 degrees for 14-17 minutes. Makes approximately 21 cookies.

*This is one of our new favorite cookies to make for our low/no sugar kid. The raspberry and lemon lend strong flavors that allow one to forget that the cookies are low in sweetener.*



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