

# THE MOM & CAREGIVER™

DECEMBER 2022  
VOLUME 24 ISSUE 12

[www.themomandcaregiver.com](http://www.themomandcaregiver.com)

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READ” GIFT BUYING GUIDE **11**

SECRET SANTA SOCIETY **12**

A CO-PARENTING  
CHRISTMAS **20**

**ALL IS CALM  
ALL IS  
BRIGHT**





# Happy Holidays from your friends at the Y.



*Join the Y  
Community!*



**YMCA of  
Southwestern  
Ontario**

**[ymcaswo.ca](http://ymcaswo.ca)**

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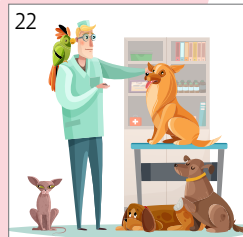
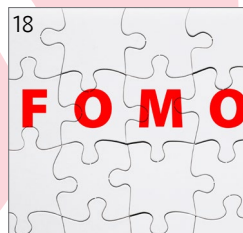
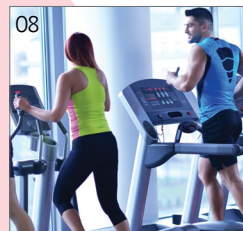
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It was joyful having **Camille** and Dad together for this shoot! She sat so calmly as we admired her curls, put on a white bow, a red bow, a slouchy hat and a furry hood. Then she crawled away as soon as the shoot was done!

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# WHAT'S YOUR HOLIDAY STYLE?

**W**hat do the holidays mean to you? Are you an all-in celebrator who loves hosting parties and exchanging gifts? Or do you prefer a quiet holiday around the fire surrounded by close family and a hot cocoa. Or maybe you choose not to celebrate at all and find December to be a month just like any other.

Our December issue will meet the needs of all holiday styles. Find yours below and reference the articles that will fill your emotional cocoa cup this month.

**CHRISTMAS IS FOR KIDS (& ADULTS)** - Do you still act like an excited kid on Christmas morning? Then this is your category! You'll love the simple pleasures like making snow angels and cutting out snowflakes that you'll find from London French Day Care on page 5!

**FAMILY MAKES ME GRINCHY** - If working out family challenges is high on your list, this is your category! Find realistic tips for making the holidays run smoothly (even if you're co-parenting) on page 20.

**GIFT-GIVER EXTRAORDINAIRE** - If you shower those you love with presents, but the budget's as tight as Santa's belt this year, you belong here! We love the "Want, Need, Wear, Read" gift plan you'll find on page 11.

**NO THANK YOU TO CELEBRATIONS** - There are many reasons some do not choose to celebrate this month, and that is totally okay by us! So if you just want some general information amongst the clanging of jingle bells, we've got you. Find out about fall prevention for young children (page 6) and choosing a new veterinarian (page 22).

**SEASON'S GREETINGS & HOLIDAY EATING** - Is Hanukkah or Kwanzaa all about the eats and sweets? Then you'll find your people here! We all love the decadent food that the holidays bring, but you can learn some easy tricks to avoid total over-indulgence on page 14.

**THE TRADITIONALIST** - If you're all about holiday traditions that should never be broken, then you're in the right place! Father Christmas (a.k.a. Dad, Frank Emanuele) holds our hand through giving your kids the talk - the Santa talk, that is (page 12). This means that traditions might need to change slightly, but only for the better, we promise!

Warm wishes for a merry December,

*Sabina*



*"Your children need your presence more than your presents."*

- Jesse Jackson

*Editorial photography  
by Flavia Zaidan  
Make-up by Sanah Zebian*





# 2022 EVENTS

# December

Elf: The Musical,  
Grand Theatre,

[www.grandtheatre.com/event/elf](http://www.grandtheatre.com/event/elf)

01<sup>ST</sup>

London Knights vs. Oshawa  
Generals Teddy Bear Toss,  
Budweiser Gardens,

[www.londonknights.com/](http://www.londonknights.com/)

06<sup>TH</sup>

Stars on Ice: A Special Holiday  
Performance, Budweiser Gardens,

[www.budweisergardens.com/  
events/detail/stars-on-ice-  
holiday-performance](http://www.budweisergardens.com/events/detail/stars-on-ice-holiday-performance)

11<sup>TH</sup>

Bring Your Dog to the Pack Walk,  
Gibbons Park,

[www.facebook.com/  
events/646477257089333](https://www.facebook.com/events/646477257089333)

17<sup>TH</sup>

Winter Begins – Warm Up with

[www.themomandcaregiver.com/  
nutella-hot-chocolate/](http://www.themomandcaregiver.com/nutella-hot-chocolate/)

21<sup>ST</sup>

Happy Kwanzaa! Feast on These  
Yummy, Traditional Recipes,

[www.tasteofhome.com/collection/  
kwanzaa-recipes/](http://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/kwanzaa-recipes/)

26<sup>TH</sup>

Happy New Year's Eve!  
Find a Great Appy at

[www.themomandcaregiver.com/  
warm-cream-cheese-spread/](http://www.themomandcaregiver.com/warm-cream-cheese-spread/)

31<sup>ST</sup>

Magic of Lights, Longwoods  
Road Conservation Area,

[www.magicoflights.com/events/  
longwoods-conservation/](http://www.magicoflights.com/events/longwoods-conservation/)

05<sup>TH</sup>

Victorian Christmas Crafting  
for Kids, Eldon House,

[www.eldonhouse.ca/product/vic-  
torian-christmas-crafting-for-kids/](http://www.eldonhouse.ca/product/victorian-christmas-crafting-for-kids/)

10<sup>TH</sup>

Disney's Frozen Jr.,  
Palace Theater,

[www.palacetheatre.ca/2022-shows/](http://www.palacetheatre.ca/2022-shows/)

16<sup>TH</sup>

Happy Hanukkah! Celebrate  
with Deliciousness at

[www.themomandcaregiver.com/  
zucchini-latkes-12-latkes/](http://www.themomandcaregiver.com/zucchini-latkes-12-latkes/)

18<sup>TH</sup>

Merry Christmas!

Make Breakfast Special with

[www.themomandcaregiver.com/  
holiday-challah-french-toast-  
serves-6/](http://www.themomandcaregiver.com/holiday-challah-french-toast-serves-6/)

25<sup>TH</sup>

TD Free Family Fun Night,  
London Children's Museum,

[www.londonchildrensmuseum.ca/  
event/free-family-fun-night](http://www.londonchildrensmuseum.ca/event/free-family-fun-night)

29<sup>TH</sup>

## LONDON FRENCH DAY CARE

HOME CHILD CARE AGENCY

**THE FESTIVE SEASON IS HERE!  
EMBRACE IT AND HAVE FUN!  
GET THE CHILDREN INVOLVED!**

That's what Home Child Care Providers do.

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- Build snowmen
- Do snow angels
- Frolic in the snow
- Shovel snow

### INDOOR PLAY:

- Cut out snow flakes
- Create tree ornaments
- Decorate gift bags
- Prepare a show for parents

*Home Child Care Providers create  
lasting memories for families.  
They help create future leaders.*

Do you speak French or English  
or another language?  
Consider becoming a Home  
Child Care Provider.

For a free consultation, contact:

**London French Day Care –  
Home Child Care Agency**

**T** 519-439-5192

**W** [www.londonfrenchdaycare.ca](http://www.londonfrenchdaycare.ca)

**E** [Info@londonfrenchdaycare.ca](mailto:Info@londonfrenchdaycare.ca)



For More Details and Events Visit

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# FALLS: KEEPING BABIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN SAFE

There is so much to think about as the parent of a young child, and their safety is often at the top of the list. Minor injuries such as scrapes and bruises are common as children grow, develop and learn to use their bodies in coordinated and effective ways. Unfortunately, more serious injuries can sometimes occur. According to local statistics, most young children who end up in the Emergency Department were injured due to falls that could have been prevented.

## HOW TO PROTECT BABIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN FROM FALLS

Active supervision is always the most important strategy for keeping children safe. Young children are unpredictable and often do not understand the potential dangers around them. One of our roles as parents and caregivers is to provide safe environments for them to play and grow, as well as to help them develop physical and other skills so that in the future they can meet new challenges.

### SAFETY TIPS:

- While changing a baby on a raised surface such as a change table or a bed, always keep one hand on them. Take them with you if you forget something.<sup>1</sup>
- Use Health Canada approved safety equipment<sup>2</sup> when you are unable to supervise closely. Make sure you follow any directions and do not forget to register your items so you can be notified of any future recalls.
  - Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. The wall-mounted style is safest, especially at the top of the stairs.
  - Always secure the harnesses provided when you are placing your baby/child in a car seat, swing, stroller or highchair.
  - When using items such as carriers, bouncy seats or car seats (outside of the car) with your baby, always place them on the floor instead of a table. Wiggly babies can cause the carrier to move right off the edge of a high surface!

- For windows or balcony doors, use stops, guards or locks and keep all furniture away to prevent little climbers from accessing windows or door handles.<sup>1</sup>

For more tips about keeping your baby or young child safe, see [www.healthunit.com/child-safety](http://www.healthunit.com/child-safety) and The Home Safety Checklist.

Do you have questions about yourself or your baby? Call **519-663-5317** and ask to speak to the phone nurse at the Middlesex-London Health Unit. &

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[www.healthunit.com/cannabis](http://www.healthunit.com/cannabis)  
[www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis.html)

<sup>1</sup> Parachute Canada. (2022). Falls in children. Retrieved from [www.parachutecanada.org/en/injury-topic/fall-prevention-for-children/](http://www.parachutecanada.org/en/injury-topic/fall-prevention-for-children/)

<sup>2</sup> Health Canada. (2016). Is your child safe? Retrieved from [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety/reports-publications/consumer-education/your-child-safe/is-your-child-safe.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety/reports-publications/consumer-education/your-child-safe/is-your-child-safe.html)



Heather Bywaters RN PHN  
Middlesex-London Health Unit



# LOW RISK DRINKING

**D**ecember marks the most festive time of the year. It is a time when we partake in holiday cheer. Before the arrival of the holidays, it can be helpful to consider the risks and benefits to your health of the extra rum toddy or spiked eggnog.

Recently, the “Low Risk Drinking Guidelines” have been updated. There has been a recognition that the amount of alcohol that it takes to challenge our liver and heart is perhaps less than we originally thought. These guidelines can help us to have a way of taking stock and maintaining our health as we enjoy the occasional drink to celebrate.

## WHAT IS A STANDARD DRINK?

In recent years, everything from restaurant meals to servings of alcohol have been “supersized”. A standard drink is 5 oz. or 142 ml. of wine, 12 oz. or 241 ml. of beer and 1.5 oz. or 43 ml. of liquor.


## HOW MUCH CAN I DRINK?

The biggest change in the guidelines is a reduction in the number of drinks that is considered safe. Any more than two drinks a week increases the risk of alcohol related diseases such as liver disease, cancer and heart disease. The risk of breast cancer in women begins to rise after three drinks a week. The risk rises with the number of drinks per week. The current guidelines recommend no more than six drinks a week. Recent studies also discount the initial thought that alcohol might have protective benefits for heart health.

The new guidelines are now undergoing public consultation and will be likely widely released soon by the Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction.

This is a sobering thought indeed. There are two take away messages from this. First of all, any amount of alcohol is associated with risk. Secondly, it is important to take stock.



In the end, it is time to raise a glass and toast (with a mocktail) to your health. 

*Dr. Bhooma Bhayana is a family physician in London and the mother of two young men and proud grandmother of three! She continues to find wonder and enjoyment in family practice despite more than 30 years on the job!*



# HOLLY JOLLY MARKET

## DECEMBER 2ND-18TH

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# COLD DAYS AND HEALTHY WAYS

With the days getting shorter and the weather getting colder, many of us are in need of more indoor activities to stay healthy and connected. Luckily, the Y has so much to offer people of every age and stage during the winter months.

Child and youth programming has returned at many of our branches to offer your kids a chance to stretch their legs, have some fun and even try something new in the comfort of your local Y branch. Look for our All Sorts of Sports program where children can learn a new sport or play one that they already enjoy.

For adults, we offer many drop-in fitness programs from Aquafit to open gym and a dynamic selection of group fitness classes. Drop in for a game of Pickleball - one of the hottest sports right now! Pickleball is like tennis, but slower in pace, easy to learn and great for all ages. Don't forget, if you have little

ones, many of our branches offer child minding services to allow you to spend some dedicated wellness time while your child is cared for in a quality, interactive space.

Plus, did you know the Y offers Winter Break day camps? We do! On top of our PA Day

camps that run throughout the school year, many branches host two weeks of camp to keep your kids busy and engaged during the holidays.

*See you at the Y!* 🧘



YMCA of Southwestern Ontario  
ymcaswo.ca

## OPEN HOUSES THURSDAY, JANUARY 19 | 6PM

### FRÈRE-ANDRÉ

400 Base Line West, London  
519-471-6680

### SAINTE-JEANNE-D'ARC


35 Fallons Lane, London  
519-457-3141

### SAINT-JEAN-DE-BRÉBEUF

270 Chelton, London  
519-963-1219

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# A MONTH OF REFLECTION, CELEBRATION AND CRAZINESS

Regardless of whether you are a Christian religion adherent or not, you are bombarded with the preparations for the largest commercial holiday of the year. And other religions also celebrate special holidays during this time which involve family time, gift giving and celebration.

We barely make it past Halloween before the stores come alive with trees, lights, gift ideas, decorations and Christmas music. We decorate our homes and look forward to parties with friends, family time, and hopefully, some relaxation time.

However, that is not the reality for many. For some, it is the first celebration without a special loved one. For some, it is a time when we must face the reality that we are unable to provide the flashy gifts and toys that our

kids see advertised on TV or on the internet. And for a growing number in our community, trying to pay the rent (if indeed, we even have a stable home to live in) and put food on our family's table, it's becoming an insurmountable reality.

My daughter-in-law is a front line health worker with some of London's most disadvantaged. The trauma that many of her clients live with daily is heartbreaking. I have had firsthand experience in dealing with a new friend who has been homeless for some time and struggles with the reality that if you don't have a permanent address, your social assistance and health care is difficult to access. In order to find housing, you must have money that is so difficult to access. These are people with families somewhere, real people with names and stories (some that will make you cry).

This Christmas, consider foregoing the value of one of the gifts you would normally purchase for a loved one and explain to them that instead, you have made a donation of time or money to help someone less advantaged. There are many options available where a small bit of money or time can make a huge difference. It will do your heart good!

Wishing you and yours a very happy, healthy holiday season! 🎄



Janice Brock,  
Owner, Custom Covers and Custom Shades

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www.customshadesoflondon.ca



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of London





# THE OLD “WAIT AND SEE”


Many things are worth waiting for. Most of us are waiting right now...Christmas time is just around the corner for many of us!

There are other things, however, for which waiting isn't such a good idea. Child development is one. In the case of language or speech delays, it's OK to give a little latitude, such as if Sally is six and doesn't have her “s” sound perfected yet. We wouldn't expect that sound to be perfectly clear until she's seven and she's perfectly clear otherwise. Maybe Ahmed, who's a year old, doesn't say five words yet. He's doing really well in every other part of his development, including understanding language. We'll keep a close eye on him for a few more weeks.

But there are times where the signs are much clearer, and regardless of what others say about waiting, it's just not a good idea to wait. If Sally is slushing or lisping her “s” so badly that we can't understand everything she's saying, it's time to look into it. If Ahmed

doesn't understand “give me the ball”, it's time to check on him. Many later learning and developmental concerns are predicted by the early signs that professionals can pick up on.

Partners, grandparents, teachers, doctors all shape how we act on our concerns. But when it comes to child development, listen to your gut. If you think something's not right, act on it. In the case of speech and language, there's no harm in taking action. It's not as if we perform exploratory surgery! And the answers you get from us may give you peace of mind or, better yet, catch issues that are easier to treat at a young age than when kids are older.

And you shouldn't have to wait for months to get help. A few months may not seem that much to you, but to a child's development, that is a very long time to miss out on identifying a problem and working on it. You can avoid waiting by reaching out to your Friendly Neighbourhood Speech Pathologist! 



Mohamed (Mo) Oshalla, MHS.,  
Speech-Language Pathologist & Executive  
Director, Ontario Speech & Language Services



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519-680-3770 [www.ontariospeech.ca](http://www.ontariospeech.ca)





# WANT, NEED, WEAR, READ

*Happy holidays! There's a gift-buying plan called "Want, Need, Wear, Read." It means you buy a person only one gift from each category. This can be a great way for parents to keep to a budget and not go overboard on holiday gift buying for the kids. But we wanted to ask our Kid Zone kids, "If you were buying your dads one thing from each category, what would it be?"*

**Nico wanted to shop for Papa and Luca decided to buy for Daddy.**

## **SOMETHING HE WANTS:**

**Luca:** Daddy wants a vacation somewhere warm.

**Nico:** Papa wants a picture of me, Daddy and Luca

## **SOMETHING HE NEEDS:**

**Luca:** Daddy needs a haircut (LOL).

**Nico:** Papa needs doctor tools like a stethoscope.

## **SOMETHING TO WEAR:**

**Luca:** A shirt with a poop emoji to wear at work!

**Nico:** A shirt that says LOVE!

## **SOMETHING TO READ:**

**Luca:** A Star Wars cookbook because he loves Star Wars and Daddy makes delicious meals. Plus, I want to eat a lightsaber!

**Nico:** The next Harry Potter book because Papa can read it to us at bedtime. 📖

*Meet our newest Kid Zone writers, 9 and 6 year old brothers Luca and Nico.*

*Each month, they'll be sharing perspectives on life as a child sees it.*





# SECRET SANTA SOCIETY

**W**e absolutely **LOVE** the Christmas holidays and as they approach, there is always a sweet gingerbread buzz in the air! We start talking about gatherings, decorations, presents, and of course, jolly old St. Nick. But this year there's been a cynical hint of doubt in my 9-year-old's voice, "Well, IF Santa is real, then I'll ask him for..."

Like a candy-cane sucker-punch to the gut, I felt the magic of the season fade away like the credits to our mandatory viewing of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. How is it possible we've reached this point so soon? I was not ready for THE TALK just yet, but the snide remarks kept happening and I was afraid that our 7-year-old would miss out on at least a few more years of Christmas magic.

I guess we are to blame for raising a smart kid who is always exploring and challenging the world around him. We're always telling our kids to not believe everything they hear or see (especially in the media). We talk about how movies are made, the process of writing fiction novels, and the amazing scientific discoveries that happen during our lives. So

it's no wonder that our son is questioning the ridiculousness of a magical fat man who can travel the world on a sleigh with flying reindeer.

In my frantic search on HOW to break the news, I scoured the internet and asked some friends for advice. I gathered the best tidbits I could find and together, my husband and I introduced our son to the Secret Santa Society. First, we asked him what he thought about Santa. He responded with honest doubt and began questioning all the impossible, magical feats that accompany the lore. We then explained that Santa may have been a real person at some point and that he had a wonderful giving spirit that everyone loved. That spirit has been kept alive through generations and parents often become Santa for their kids. We went on to say that when kids are ready, they are introduced to the ever-elusive Secret Santa Society. Being a part of this club means that he now has been awarded the responsibility of keeping the secret safe by choosing someone and becoming their Santa.

I could hear the quiver in my voice as we talked and I couldn't help but think we ruined the holiday for him. Our son listened carefully, taking it all in, and was rather quiet at first. I asked him how he felt about it all. He seemed to choose his words wisely and said "Well, I'm kinda relieved that I don't have to lie anymore. It was bit confusing. And I want to choose my brother to be Santa for. I already know what I'm going to get him - he's going to love it!"

He wasn't the only one who felt relief! Despite the initial feeling of dread, I now feel that this brought us a bit closer. We now have a beautiful secret to share and a new tradition to keep alive. Now he can be part of the holiday magic in a different way, a way that makes more sense for him, and a way that can easily evolve into his adult years. 🧡

---

*Frank Emanuele is a proud father of two sons, a special education teacher, and a director of Dad Club London*







# SEASON'S EATINGS: HEALTHY HABITS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

It's holiday season- that time of year that's full of friends, family, FOOD and parties! Did someone say food?! It's a busy time of year and common for 'healthy eating' to fall to the bottom of the list of to-dos.

*Here are my top tips for healthy eating habits to get you through the holidays this year:*

## **GIVE VEGGIES A LEADING ROLE**

You've heard me say this many times before... Aim to make half your plate vegetables when you can, and include them as snacks (with a dip if you choose - my favourites are hummus and tzatziki) throughout the day.

## **EAT THOSE VEGGIES FIRST**

While we're on the subject of veggies, eat them first! Before digging into the turkey, mashed potatoes and delicious savoury stuffing, try to have at least a few bites of the veggies on your plate. They are jam-packed with fibre and nutrients.

## **DON'T SKIP MEALS**

Skipping meals (like breakfast and lunch) to "save" calories for later, usually leads to overeating. Instead, plan for a healthy breakfast and lunch, and even an afternoon snack, on days you are celebrating later with family or friends.

## **ALTERNATE BETWEEN WATER AND ALCOHOL**

Try having a glass of water between drinks to help minimize your intake of alcohol and keep you hydrated.

## **TAKE 10 BEFORE GOING FOR SECONDS**

After finishing your first helping, take a 10-minute break before going in for seconds. It takes a few minutes for your stomach to register the "Oh, I'm getting full" signal to your brain.

## **PRIORITIZE MOVING YOUR BODY**

Consider including some winter physical activities into your holiday festivities. Sledding and skating are two activities that the whole fam can enjoy. I would count shoveling snow as one too!

All the best to you and yours this holiday! Stay safe, stay warm and stay healthy! 🍷



Jenn Giurgevich is the founder of Spark Nutrition & Health, a virtual nutrition consulting business. Visit [www.sparknutritionandhealth.ca](http://www.sparknutritionandhealth.ca) for more information.





# STRUGGLING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

**A**re you between the ages of 20-65? Have you been sold the idea that the holidays mean cheery, emotional and connected family moments with the whole gang? If so, you might be entitled to compensation because frankly, the holidays are not what they are sold to be for many, many people.

Now, if you're the kind of person who does not need compensation because your family is that cheery, loving crew all wrapped up in chunky Fair Isle print sweaters hugging around the tree, then you can just skip to the next incredible article in this magazine. For everyone else, I am writing to you. For many people I have worked with, known, or personally been, the holidays have the potential to cause more distress than yuletide. Fraught family

relations paired with great expectations yield disappointment, frustration and hurt time and time again. For those of us with shared custody arrangements, this time can be especially bitter when the kids aren't around. You might be nodding but wondering, "what can I do?"

If you are one who is struggling this year with a broken heart or the loneliness of the season, please deeply understand that you are not alone. Some years are just harder than others, and it does not mean that there is anything wrong with you. Do not make the mistake of basing your entire conceptualization of yourself on who is or is not present at the holidays. It can be helpful to get some perspective on the holidays- they are one or two weeks out of 52. It can help to prepare in advance - if you

know you're going to dinner with insufferable relatives, have an exit strategy. If you know you're going to be alone, line up some good movies for the day or try to tag along to another dysfunctional family's dinner.

If you're struggling, please connect with your friends, loved ones or a therapist to get through this season. Opportunities masquerade as problems and there might be a lesson in here for you. In any case, you're not alone and 2023 is on its way. 🧡

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*Jordan Thomas is a psychotherapist and the owner of an award-winning trauma therapy centre. After recovering from debilitating PTSD, she has built an inspiring life and wants to help you do the same.*

# FAMILY CENTRES



## Let's get TOGETHER.

At London's Family Centres, we help more families connect - at home and in your neighbourhood.

[familyinfo.ca/family\\_centres](http://familyinfo.ca/family_centres) to learn more.



*Each month we introduce you to a business that offers families in London and the surrounding area services or products you won't want to miss.* &

The more we get together, the happier, healthier, more confident and connected we'll be!

Raising children is a big, important and sometimes challenging job. Most families need at least a little support to thrive, and that's where Family Centres come in.

With eight locations across London, Family Centres bring together parents, families, service providers, neighbours and friends to make the ordinary and extraordinary experiences of raising children just a little bit easier for all London families. Like every big, important job, it's so much better when we tackle it together.

Through free and low cost programs and events, they help families connect with each other, to neighbours and to the important community services and resources they need for parenting and family life. This includes play groups with crafts, music and stories, programs to introduce children to math, science, and reading, and parenting workshops on children's behaviour and development. What's more, with play at the heart of every Family Centre, families learn new ways to have fun together, make new friends, access a range of programming and get the support they need to thrive, all in one friendly and accessible space!

"At Family Centres, we like to say that one door means unlimited opportunities for all London children, youth and families, of every possible kind." A Community Connector will greet you when you arrive, and work to understand your needs. If needed, they can make the connection to a service on your behalf, tell you more about how a service can support you and your family, or even make the call to a new service together with you. No matter your path, Community Connectors are there for you with their warm, welcoming ways and a focus on helping your family thrive.

Thanks to Family Centres, more London families feel connected, included and supported, and the more we get together, the happier, healthier, more confident and connected our entire community will be. So if you're looking for a place for your family to connect, play and have fun, visit London's Family Centres.

Check out [Familyinfo.ca/Family\\_Centres](http://Familyinfo.ca/Family_Centres) to learn more and explore the services available at the location nearest you. Let's get together!



WHERE PLAY ISN'T **JUST** FOR THE KIDS



# GIVING THE GIFT OF HOME THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Everyone deserves a home, and that's especially true for youth — it's a principle that guides all of our work at Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU).

For too many young people across London, the reality is bleak. Nearly 26% of those living unhoused across our city are youth, including young moms and their babies. It's an unacceptable reality, and it's one we're fighting to change at Joan's Place.

Joan's Place, named for Joan Smith, Ontario's first female Solicitor General and a tireless advocate for women and children, is currently coming to life at the intersection of Richmond and York Streets, and it will be a step towards ending youth homelessness across London, particularly for young moms and their babies. Pairing 39 units of affordable housing with a youth wellness hub, Joan's Place will provide unhoused youth and young families with

the resources and support they need when at their most vulnerable, which includes providing them with a sense of home.

Joan knew, like we do, that home is much more than a place to stay. It's somewhere safe to learn and play, somewhere to grow and thrive, and creating that takes work. It requires focusing on the aspects of affordable housing and shelter that people don't often consider - factors like cozy bed sheets for a crib or a new Paw Patrol toothbrush. Just ask our CEO:

"Giving a young person a home means thinking about all the little things that won't just make it a safe place to live, but providing the necessities that they need to feel comfortable and safe," says Steve Cordes. "There are numerous crucial supports that homeless young people need to thrive — from mental health care, to help navigating



complex systems — but at YOU, we know that at the top of that list is also the feeling of home."

That's what we're building at Joan's Place, but we need your help to do it. While construction is underway, we're now working hard to ensure we'll be able to provide the young families who'll live in Joan's Place all that they'll need for it to feel like home. So this holiday season, we're asking you to help create that.

Can you help give the gift of home at Joan's Place? Visit [you.ca/joans-place](http://you.ca/joans-place) to give today. 

*By Jamie Lee Arseneau, Community Engagement Manager, Youth Opportunities Unlimited*



## This holiday season, give the gift of home — at Joan's Place.

At YOU, we know a home is more than a place to stay — it's somewhere safe to grow, learn, play and thrive. This holiday season, we're asking for your help to create that.

When you make a gift to Joan's Place, it will be used to help buy the essentials to make our deeply affordable apartments feel like home for the young families who will be living in them. From children's bed sheets to a new toothbrush, *your gift will help give a young family a sense of home.*

**Donate today:** [you.ca/joans-place](http://you.ca/joans-place)



YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED  
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NEW ADDITION CAMPAIGN

# FOMO

I have struggled with FOMO as far back as I can remember. It is associated with being bullied and excluded as a child and the desire to be accepted and fit in.

Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) is the anxious feeling a person gets when they miss out on fun by not attending a social event because they weren't invited or couldn't attend. When experiencing FOMO, a person can experience multiple and simultaneous emotions of inferiority, inadequacy, alienation, isolation and rejection. It triggers unhealthy self-talk and irrational thoughts, which can easily manifest until it becomes overwhelming. It can temporarily impair a person cognitively, emotionally and physically.

Recently my daughter experienced an unexpected case of FOMO. She was sick and

missed a milestone hockey game. I did not consider how she would respond when I was passing on a play-by-play from the parents in the stands to her. She ran to her room crying because she was missing out on all the fun and bonding her team was doing. She wished she was with her teammates.

My personal experiences with FOMO helped me empathize with her, but it also made me aware that I never developed any healthy coping strategies to move through FOMO. The frequency of FOMO just faded. Sure, I have the occasional relapse, but my visceral responses are minimal compared to when I was young. So I initially thought I was going to fail miserably at guiding her through this, but then I remembered the skills I've learned in other areas of my life that were relevant to this challenge.

We talked about it. I started the conversation by asking simple questions like "what were you looking forward to most?", "what are you most upset about missing?", "who is going that you will miss the most?" This may help your child realize that the scope of the problem is not as significant as originally believed. If it reoccurs, try logging the circumstances in a journal to help identify future patterns and coping strategies. And, of course, there are also mindfulness techniques that bring them back into the here and now. This seemed to help my daughter build bridges within to quickly process the disappointment. 🧠

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*Janet Smith is a proud single-mom of one daughter and a marketing professional who is grateful for her rural roots in the London area. She is a big believer in connecting with people through laughter and honesty.*







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# A CO-PARENTING CHRISTMAS

Regardless of how you slice the fruit cake, landing into the co-parenting lifestyle during this winter season could come with some big emotions to unwrap. Whether it's waking up alone on Christmas day, splitting your time with the kids or swapping out a traditional meal and replacing it with a slice of pizza over the sink, just remember that the best gifts come in small packages of joyful moments.

## HERE ARE 3 TIPS TO EMPOWER YOU

**1** Notice if any cranberry sauce comparison or self-judgement starts to sprinkle in with how you used to do the holidays, how your friends still have their traditions or what your ex will be doing to which you are no longer

invited. The more you focus on what you do not have, the longer you are going to feel that disenchantment. Rather, garnish yourself in gratitude for the time that you do get with the kids, the moments you are creating and the colourful ways to celebrate sparkling new traditions.

**2** Filling your calendar with activities, people or experiences that make you feel good will help you pass the time you normally would be spending with the family. Get intentional with your schedule and take some space to figure out how to add in social opportunities, indulge in mindfulness and self-care, or mingle under the mistletoe to support your holly jolly good vibes.

**3** When you choose to anchor into unconditional love of self and others, very merry miracles can occur when you least expect them, and from people whom you least expect. Stay committed to Santa's nice list and know that even if things don't turn out how you wanted, you can be proud of yourself for being the angel of kindness.

You are not alone if you find yourself getting a little Grinch'd out by the complexities of what this holiday season has in store as you navigate the co-parenting holiday lifestyle. Just ride the waves of emotionality, keep your bells jingling, yourself mingling and let your heart stay available to titillating tingling. 🎅



Lyndsay Campbell is a co-parenting mother of two boys, a Life Transformation Coach and Reiki Master.



# PROTECTING YOUR NOGGIN' PART 2

Last month, we discussed the importance of wearing a helmet during activities to prevent brain injuries. This month we will discuss a few other reasons one might wear a protective helmet.

Individuals with a seizure disorder, post surgery (craniectomy) or who self-harm are just a few of the reasons one may wear a protection helmet.

## PROTECTION HELMETS ARE WORN TO EITHER:


- 1** help absorb the shock when one hits their head and redistribute the impact on contact
- 2** protect the individual from self-harming behaviours such as head banging, picking, scratching, hitting or biting
- 3** protect the brain post operatively and allow healing (craniectomy, craniosynostosis)

The design of a protection helmet and the materials used depends on the clinical goals

of the individual and their family. However the exterior of the helmet is either a dense foam shell or rigid plastic shell with different padding designs internally. Usually a chin strap is necessary to ensure proper fit and purchase on the head.

If the individual hits their head, you would consider a face shield to help protect the front of the face (teeth and nose). If the child has drop seizures, a more rigid design is needed to protect the head during the falls and seizure.

With any presentation, consult a certified orthotist to ensure the design is appropriate for the situation and the fit of the helmet is correct. Without a proper fitting helmet, there are severe risks and complication of harming oneself and damaging the brain.

These helmets are eligible for funding through the assistive devices program. We are able to help you and your family navigate this process and ensure the proper coverage. If you have any questions about protective helmets or the process to obtain one, please do not hesitate to reach out to our office. 



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# 6 TIPS FOR CHOOSING A NEW VETERINARIAN

In some ways, choosing a veterinary clinic to care for your furry family member is like dating - it's all about finding the right match for what's important to you! Here are some questions you can ask to help you in your search for "the one".

## 1. DO YOU TREAT MY PET'S SPECIES, AND IF SO, ARE YOU ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS?

Just like in human medicine, many veterinarians are working at capacity and may be unable to accept new patients. Therefore, the best time to start looking for a new vet is before you need one!

## 2. HOW MANY DOCTORS DO YOU HAVE?

Multi-doctor practices may have more ability to accommodate last-minute emergencies and may have later office hours. A single-doctor team may be better for a pet parent who prefers to deal with the same medical team each time and has more flexibility in their own schedule.

## 3. WHAT DIAGNOSTIC AND SPECIALTY SERVICES DO YOU OFFER?

Many clinics will refer out for services such as ultrasound, X-rays, dental care and lab work. However, others may offer some of these services in-house, giving you faster access to care if needed.

*Dr. I. Wonder is here to answer your questions regarding your furry family members. If you have a question, email it to us at [danielle@NeighbourhoodPetClinic.com](mailto:danielle@NeighbourhoodPetClinic.com). Our team at Neighbourhood Pet Clinic will tap into their collective experience to answer your various questions.*

## 4. HOW DO YOU HANDLE AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCIES?


Understanding your veterinarian's protocols in advance can be lifesaving. Some veterinarians may cover their after-hours emergencies, others may refer to the closest 24/7 facility, and others may offer free or paid tele-triage services.

## 5. WHAT DO YOU OFFER FOR END-OF-LIFE CARE?

Often, the most important appointment you will ever have with your furry family member is the last one. Some clinics may have a comfort room with a private exit, and others may even offer at-home euthanasia.

## 6. WHAT DO YOU VALUE?

For many pet parents, this is the most important question. Look at the duration of their appointments, their online presence, any special services they offer (such as free delivery, wellness plans or a clinic app) and the training they provide for their team (such as "Fear Free") as an indication of their values, to see if they align with your own pet parenting philosophies.

Choosing a team to trust with your furry family member can be a huge decision, especially when experiences can vary so greatly. No matter your decision, just keep in mind that you and your veterinary team have at least one shared core value: you both truly want what's best for your furry family member! 





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