

A FREE
MAGAZINE

THE MOM & CAREGIVER™

NOVEMBER 2025
VOLUME 27 ISSUE 11

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Guarding

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PREGNANCY - BABY - TODDLER



PRESCHOOL - SCHOOL AGE - FAMILY

Finding Balance in Busy November



November can feel like a month of rushing—school routines are in full swing, sports and activities are steady, and holiday preparations start sneaking onto our to-do lists. It's a season that can feel busy for kids and parents alike. That's why finding little moments of balance and connection is so important.

Dance is one way families can bring joy and calm into the middle of a hectic month. For children, dance offers an outlet for all the energy (and emotions) that come with busy schedules. It gives them a chance to move their bodies, clear their minds, and feel a sense of accomplishment. Whether it's a weekly class or an impromptu dance party in the living room, those moments of movement can shift the whole mood of the day.

Beyond the fun, dance builds resilience and mindfulness—skills children need when life feels full. They learn how to stay present, focus, and push through challenges, all in a supportive environment. And while they're building those skills, they're also laughing, connecting with friends, and creating memories.

For parents, seeing your child light up in class is a reminder that even in the busiest seasons, joy can be simple. A little music, a little movement, and suddenly the stress feels lighter.

This November, take time to pause, breathe, and dance together. It's a reminder that even when life feels full, there's always room for gratitude, laughter, and a little rhythm.

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ON THE COVER

Baby **Reece** has arrived! Beautiful mama, Megan, describes him as perfect, and reports that he loves contact naps on mom and dad, but hates diaper changes. Reggie the chihuahua is new to being around children, but he's been amazing!

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THE MOM & CAREGIVER is published by Anibas Productions Limited, Publications Mail, Agreement Number 40834037 PO Box 29118, London, ON N6K 4L9 www.themomandcaregiver.com

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DROWN THE DREARIES WITH READING!

November can be a dreary month plunked between the excitement of Halloween and December's festive holidays. Its chilly days, cloudy skies and wet snow can make anyone feel grumpy. But we have the perfect solution! Sit down with a mug of something warm and delicious, and settle into November's Mom & Caregiver magazine.

You see, we feel like November is the perfect month for reading! It's all about a big comfy chair, cozy blankets and your favourite magazine. This month's issue will warm you with dreams of travel (*Holiday Magic Awaits at Walt Disney World Resort* on page 13 and *Four Lessons from our Family's First Europe Trip* on page 18). And it will calm you with *Nature's Paintbrush* (page 5) and *Finding Balance in Busy November* (page 2).

Let's get the kiddos in on the action! Reading at home, of course, improves language skills, enhances cognitive development and is a foundation for academic success. But it also increases empathy and makes for stronger family bonds. So cuddle up with some of our team's favourite fall storybooks:

Red is Best by Kathy Stinson

Woodland Dance! by Sandra Boynton

Bear Feels Sick by Karma Wilson

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst

Something From Nothing by Phoebe Gilman

Have You Seen My Acorn? by D.K. Ryland

Hopefully the Scarecrow by Michelle Houts

Alive With Poppies by Tomos Roberts

From our family to yours, here's wishing you a November filled with warmth, joy and the love of reading!

Cheers!

Sabrina

PUBLISHER/CHIEF EDITOR



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EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2025

Fall Back! DAYLIGHT
SAVINGS TIME ENDS

02ND

London Knights vs. Kingston Frontenacs,
Canada Life Place,
www.londonchildrensmuseum.ca

07TH



REMEMBRANCE DAY -
WE WILL *Remember*

11TH

London Santa Claus Parade,
starting at Dundas & Ontario,
www.londonsantaparade.ca

15TH

Dinosaur Storytime,
Beacock Library,
www.lpl.ca

21ST

Free Family Fun Night,
London Children's Museum,
www.londonchildrensmuseum.ca

27TH

A Christmas Carol,
Port Stanley Festival Theatre,
www.psft.ca

29TH

Sensory Friendly Evening,
London Children's Museum,
www.londonchildrensmuseum.ca

04TH

Tune Time, Lambeth Library,
www.lpl.ca

08TH

Bored Teachers: The Struggle is
Real Comedy Tour, Centennial Hall,
www.centennialhall.london.ca

13TH

Frozen The Broadway Musical,
Grand Theatre,
www.grandtheatre.com

18TH

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole
Christmas The Musical, Canada Life Place
www.canadalifepace.com

23RD

The Taylor Party: Taylor Swift Night,
London Music Hall,
www.londonmusichall.com

28TH



Creative craft

Nature's paintbrush

As the warm weather fades and we begin to brace ourselves for the chill of winter, it's the perfect time to squeeze out every last bit of sunshine.

This activity is all about exploration and expression! There's no pressure to focus on the final product. Children of all ages will love the freedom of this art process, which allows them to build their creativity and artistic skills as they make and then paint with "nature's paintbrushes"!

Start with a nature walk, and talk about finding sticks that are just right – not too long, not too short, not too thick, not too thin. Think of it like Goldilocks finding the perfect porridge!

Once you've found a few ideal sticks, encourage your child to tap into their imagination and search for interesting items to attach to the ends for your natural paintbrush.

Grasses, leaves, pine needles, berries – the possibilities are endless!

After you've gathered your materials, you can attach them to the sticks using rubber bands, string, or twine. And then, it's time to create! Watch how your different "brushes" leave unique textures and patterns on the page.



montessori.on.ca info@montessori.on.ca

“ Parenthood turns you into a morning person the same way being chased by a bear makes you a runner. ”
unknown

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MOM & CAREGIVER

WHAT IS THE ROURKE RECORD?

The Rourke record is an evidence-based tool that guides primary care providers in caring for young children with evidence-based recommendations around prevention. It was developed here in London by Dr. Rourke. It is revised on a regular basis, and updates provide an opportunity to look at the latest evidence around prevention in the early years. Over the next three articles I will highlight some of the updates in the last Rourke record.

The following updates centre around nutrition, growth and development.

1 It is recommended that breast milk is the ideal exclusive source of nutrition for the first six months of life. Exclusive nursing lessens infections and SIDS. It also improves bonding between mothers and babies, and lessens allergies later in life.

2 Introduction of solid foods is recommended at around six months but not before four months.

3 Vitamin D supplementation is recommended for breastfeeding mothers as well as for babies. Supplements for moms can help reduce vitamin D deficiency in babies. Moms should use 400 to 600 IU a day of vitamin D

4 Plant based milks do not provide enough nutrition for young infants. If a parent does not choose to give breast milk or cows' milk at nine to 12 months, a soy-based formula is recommended until two years of age. Supplemented soy milk is an acceptable alternative to cows' milk after two years of age.

5 Milk consumption of more than 750 mL a day in babies can place babies at risk for iron deficiency.

6 Limit the use of highly processed foods, in particular those with high dietary sodium.

7 Allergenic foods like nuts/nut butters, eggs and seafood can be used once a week to maintain tolerance to those foods.

As evidence evolves, our guidelines evolve. In the next article, I will discuss recommendations from the Rourke record around environmental health and injury prevention.

.....
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!



WOMEN'S HEALTH AT EVERY STAGE

SUPPORTING WOMEN THROUGH EVERY CHAPTER

Women are strong, resilient and constantly evolving. With each stage of life comes change, and with change comes the power to choose how we care for ourselves. True empowerment means having a voice in our health, access to care that respects individuality, and the confidence to make decisions that honour both body and mind.

A NEW ERA AT LPS ADVANCED AESTHETICS

In London, Ontario, LPS Advanced Aesthetics is embracing this vision. Known for its artistry in plastic surgery and aesthetics, the clinic is now expanding into Women's Health Services. The goal is simple: to support women with evidence-based treatments, compassion and honesty at every stage of life.

The clinic feels different from the start. It is not about pressure or perfection, but about listening, guiding and creating space for women to feel heard and supported.



WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

These services address some of the most common, yet often unspoken, concerns women face:

- Pelvic Floor Therapy (BTL EMSELLA®): Restore strength and improve bladder control.
- Emsculpt Neo®: Build muscle tone, strength and definition.
- Menopause Symptom Management: Support for hot flashes, sleep and mood changes.
- Lifestyle & Nutritional Guidance: Care designed to restore balance and vitality.

THE TEAM BEHIND THE CARE

At the heart of LPS are two physicians dedicated to women's well-being. Dr. Damir Matic, a board-certified plastic surgeon with over 20 years of experience, is known for his meticulous approach to body contouring and reconstructive surgery. His artistry helps women restore balance and feel proud of their reflection.

Joining him is Dr. Dales, who will lead the clinic's new Women's Health Services. Together, they represent an integrated vision: combining advanced surgical expertise with compassionate, forward-thinking care for women at every stage of life.

CONFIDENCE, INSIDE AND OUT

Whether through surgery, non-surgical treatments or women's health services, the message is clear: women deserve to feel confident, supported and celebrated in every chapter of life.

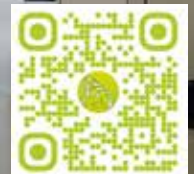
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IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU



HEALTHY SMILES START HERE!

At the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), our dental team is dedicated to preventing dental problems and making it easier to get dental care. A healthy mouth is essential for overall well-being. It helps children to eat, to speak and to grow properly.

Healthy teeth and gums prevent pain, infection and other issues that can affect their overall health, confidence and school attendance. Starting good habits early sets the foundation for lifelong oral health. Every child deserves a happy and healthy smile.

PREVENTION IS KEY

Tooth decay is preventable with awareness, early assessment and regular preventative care. We are committed to ensuring every child has access to proper dental services.

FREE PREVENTIVE DENTAL SERVICES

The MLHU offers FREE preventive oral health services for qualifying children under 18 years of age at our dental clinics in London and Strathroy.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Scaling - Removes soft or hard deposits on teeth
- Polishing - Helps to remove surface stains
- Fluoride varnish - Strengthens tooth enamel and helps to prevent tooth decay
- Sealants - Protects deep grooves in permanent teeth from cavities
- Oral hygiene instruction - Teaches and reinforces healthy dental habits

SCHOOL AND CHILDCARE SCREENINGS

Each year, our dental staff visit schools and a selection of childcare centres to provide free dental screening. These quick, “no-touch” checks help to identify cavities or other oral health concerns early. They also help children feel more comfortable with dental visits. If a child is found to have an urgent oral health concern, a dental hygienist will support the family to ensure the child receives

the necessary treatment. Hygienists can also assist families in applying for Healthy Smiles Ontario emergency coverage to ease any financial concerns.

EMERGENCY DENTAL SUPPORT

For children in urgent need of dental treatment, MLHU offers support through the Emergency and Essential Services Stream (EESS). After a quick assessment by the registered dental hygienist, eligible families can enroll in the Healthy Smile Ontario (HSO) program to help cover treatment costs.

WHY FLUORIDE MATTERS

Fluoride is a natural mineral found in soil, water and food. Research shows that an optimal level of 0.7mg/L in drinking water prevents tooth decay. Since Middlesex County does not have a water fluoridation system, professional fluoride treatments and fluoridated toothpaste are recommended.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Call us at 519-663-5317 and ask to speak to a member of the Oral Health Team.

REFERENCES:

- 1 McDonagh & al. (2000). *A Systematic Review of Water Fluoridation*. NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, University York. September 2000. 102p.
- 2 Rugg-Gunn. AJ & Do, L. (2012). *Effectiveness of water fluoridation in caries prevention*. *Community Dent Oral Epidemiol*. 2012 Oct; 40 suppl. 2:55-64.
- 3 Government of Canada. (2018). *Fact sheet - Community water fluoridation*. Retrieved from: www.canada.ca/en/services/health/publications/healthy-living/fluoride-factsheet.html

Submitted by Vijayasri Rajaganesh,
Dental Assistant on the Oral Health
and Clinical Support Services Team



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ENTRY #22: GETTING PAST YOUR PAST

I used to allow feelings of hatred, self-pity, grief and resentfulness rule my life. I saw therapists and told everyone who would listen to how my past wasn't fair. Today I am going to give you the key to being free from the prison of your past.

I always quote from the nursery rhyme "Going on a Bear Hunt" that says, "We can't go around it, we can't go over it, we've got to go through it," when we decide to face pain. How many years have you been holding onto what happened to you? I decided that I needed to *get past my past* because I had visions of screaming at the graves of those who broke me. No, it's not fair what people

did to you, but you get to decide how long you will stay broken.

I was watching Joyce Meyers on YouTube. She shared how she tried to get her husband to pay her back for all the abuse men had done to her. This resonates with me because if I don't let go of what my abusers did to me and they pass away, I might as well be in the ground with them. Why? Because they can't pay me back for what they did when they're gone. They can't even pay you back if they are living. They might not even think they did anything wrong! Also, are you making people pay you back that have nothing to do with

your past? If so, you will miss out on relationships because people don't want to be around a controlling, miserable person.

I had two benign lumps removed from my esophagus due to being upset with severe acid reflux for 30 years. My stomach is inflamed as well. If I stay upset, the people who hurt me won't experience this with me. They are living life! So, how do you get past your past? It's a decision. You won't feel it, but guard your peace by letting go repeatedly until you feel it. Every time you find yourself focused on the negative past, replace it with a positive memory. I promise you that this will change your life!



Stephanie Preston creates videos on managing bipolar disorder. She is a Social Service Worker, Health Care Aide and suffers from severe bipolar depression herself. She loves being a grandma and is Crossfit obsessed. Follow her at www.tiktok.com/@bipolaronthebrain and www.facebook.com/bipolaronthebrain.



INSIDE THE MIND OF A GEN ALPHA

The most grown-up thing I've ever done (so far) is...

Lander - Clean up the backyard without being asked.

Adi - Make mommy breakfast and coffee on my own.

Why do you think socks disappear in the laundry?

Lander They disappear because they get ripped apart.

Adi - They disappear because they get stuck in between sheets and you don't notice!

What is it like to be the youngest (or oldest) child in your family?

Lander I'm the oldest - I have more responsibilities and I get paid more!

Adi - I still get to have sleepovers with my mom because I'm the youngest.

If vegetables could talk, which one would be the sassiest and why?

Lander The turnip because it has the most dramatic look.

Adi - The mushroom is sassiest because it's gross.

Meet our Kid Zone writers, 12 and 8 year old siblings, Lander and Adi! Each month, they'll be sharing perspectives on life as a child sees it.

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KIDS AND ADHD

Some believe we have an epidemic of ADHD in the pediatric population; however, the evidence points to other directions.

The DMS-V diagnosis ADHD is a neuro-developmental disorder characterized by persistent patterns of inattention and/or hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interferes with functioning. Several symptoms must be present before the age of 12, last longer than six months, and have a direct impact on school/friends/home. **They include:**

- Distractibility
- Forgetfulness
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sleep issues
- Impacted self-esteem
- Impacted executive functioning
- Mood disorders
- Impulsivity
- Restlessness/fidgeting
- "On the go"
- OCD

Some believe that there is a greater awareness of ADHD symptoms, especially with girls, as they were often misdiagnosed. There is also a decreased societal stigma that makes parents more comfortable seeking support. Others believe that because our children are exposed to more trauma, processed foods, sugars, pesticides, less movement, less consistent sleep, less outdoor time, constant screen time and nonstop stimulation, there is an increase in ADHD diagnosis in children. These factors

can affect children in a way that they display the same



symptoms of ADHD. We were never designed to sit for eight hours under fluorescent lights with ready access to screens and stimulation.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

If you are concerned about your child possibly having ADHD, reach out to your medical team for a formal assessment. While you are waiting for the assessment, review their:

- Diet - is it heavy in processed food, sugars?
- Sleep pattern - are they getting the recommend hours of sleep per night?
- Exposure to trauma - there are a lot of overlapping symptoms with PTSD and ADHD
- Activity time - inside and outdoors
- Daily amount of downtime - screen-free with minimal stimulation

I really believe that knowledge is power, the more you know, the better you can support your kids.

Becky Morrison is a Nurse Practitioner based out of Calgary who has specialized in mental health for over a decade. She is finally, after years of infertility, a mother of two busy little boys, and doting fur mom of her gentle giant, Stella. She is, and always will be, a strong advocate for mental wellness at all ages.

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HOLIDAY MAGIC AWAITS AT WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT

There's Christmas magic. Then there's Disney magic. But when they come together, it's truly something special. Twinkling lights, towering Christmas trees, and snow on Main Street USA in front of Cinderella Castle, is the stuff of core family memories.

At Disney Springs, the holidays shimmer with charm. Stroll through the Christmas Tree Stroll, where beautifully themed trees (inspired by beloved Disney characters and stories) line the walkways. Try seasonal sweets, shop for festive treasures, and visit with Santa Claus himself (a perfect way to spend a rest day during a holiday trip).

The holiday cheer extends to the Disney Resort hotels, where each lobby is its own unique wonderland. From gorgeous Christmas trees to gingerbread masterpieces (yes, real gingerbread!), you'll be immersed in the holiday spirit.

Inside the theme parks, the season comes alive in spectacular ways. At EPCOT, the International Festival of the Holidays shares cultural celebrations from around the globe with storytelling, music and mouthwatering holiday kitchens. Disney's Hollywood Studios dazzles with nostalgic decor straight out of a classic Christmas movie.

But the crown jewel of the season? Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party at Magic Kingdom Park. On select nights, the park transforms into a snow-dusted dream. Families can enjoy exclusive holiday shows, a festive parade featuring Santa Claus, complimentary cookies and cocoa, and shorter wait times for popular attractions. When Minnie's Wonderful Christmas Fireworks Show shines over the castle, it's nothing short of breathtaking.

Whether it's your first visit or a cherished tradition, the holidays at Walt Disney World Resort bring out the child in all of us. Whether you're looking to make a last-minute trip

Jenna Mitchell is a travel advisor with Pure Magic Vacations specializing in family travel and Disney Destinations. You can connect on Instagram @puremagic.jenna or through email at jtmitchell@puremagicvacations.ca.

happen this year or start thinking about next year, I would love to help you bring some extra magic to your family this holiday season. Reach out and let's get planning!







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The EIR Centre in London, Ontario, led by Dr. Kylea Potvin, is revolutionizing cancer care with a compassionate, holistic approach that integrates mind, body, and spirit.

- Provides evidence-based medical practices and restorative therapies to support cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers.
- Cultivates a welcoming environment that empowers clients to thrive beyond their diagnosis.
- Delivers compassionate, interdisciplinary care addressing all aspects of well-being, including end-of-life support for patients and families.



THE EIR CENTRE
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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 Eir Centre: Redefining Cancer Care Through Whole-Person Healing

At the heart of London, Ontario, The Eir Centre is quietly revolutionizing the way cancer care and recovery are experienced. Founded and led by Dr. Kylea Potvin, an award-winning oncologist with over 20 years of clinical experience, The Eir Centre offers a model of care that extends far beyond conventional treatment—one rooted in compassion, connection, and the belief that true healing integrates mind, body, and spirit.

The Centre was created to support individuals facing cancer, survivors in recovery, and caregivers seeking balance and understanding. Its programs weave together evidence-based medicine with restorative wellness practices such as yoga, breathwork, movement therapy, nutrition counseling, sound healing, psychotherapy, and creative expression. Each offering is designed to help clients rebuild strength, manage stress, and reconnect with themselves in meaningful ways.

Unlike traditional medical settings, The Eir Centre is intentionally warm and welcoming—a sanctuary where people feel seen, heard, and supported. The focus is not only on treating illness but on helping people thrive beyond diagnosis, cultivating resilience and vitality through integrative, whole-person care.

Dr. Potvin's vision has always been to bridge the best of modern oncology with holistic, patient-centered support. Under her guidance, The Eir Centre's interdisciplinary team—including physicians, psychotherapists, movement coaches, somatic practitioners, and nutrition specialists—works collaboratively to address every facet of well-being. The Centre also provides compassionate care through end-of-life, guiding patients and loved ones through advanced illness and transition with dignity, presence, and peace.

Through community workshops, educational sessions, and personalized and group wellness plans, The Eir Centre continues to expand access to integrative oncology in Southwestern Ontario. As more people seek care that nurtures the whole person, The Eir Centre stands as a beacon of innovation and humanity—a place where hope is restored, wellness is cultivated, and life with cancer is embraced with courage and grace.





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SMART MONEY MOVES TO PREPARE FOR MORTGAGE RENEWALS

With interest rates higher than they've been in years, many families are facing the reality of larger mortgage payments at renewal time. While this can feel overwhelming, knowing what your options are is an opportunity to ensure your mortgage matches your family's lifestyle.

WHY AUTO-RENEWING COULD COST YOU

Most lenders send a renewal letter with a pre-set rate. It feels convenient to just sign and move on, but that convenience often comes at a cost. You may be locking yourself into terms that aren't the best fit for your family's finances or long-term goals.

THE POWER OF A SECOND OPINION

A quick mortgage renewal and rate review with a mortgage professional can uncover better rates, more flexible terms, and strategies that align with your goals. Even a small difference in rate or structure can translate

into thousands of dollars saved over the life of your mortgage.

HOW MORTGAGE EXPERTS HELP FAMILIES SAVE

Unlike a single lender, mortgage brokers compare multiple options across the market. That means more opportunities to lower your payments, free up room in your budget, or explore solutions like debt consolidation or prepayment strategies. Renewal time is the perfect time to evaluate your options.

KEY STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE YOU RENEW

- Gather your renewal letter
- Review your household budget to get clear with your spending habits
- How will higher payments impact your cash flow?
- Book a quick call with your mortgage broker to compare options
- Decide on a strategy that supports your family's future

TURNING RENEWAL INTO AN OPPORTUNITY

From fixed versus variable rates to amortization adjustments and prepayment privileges, there are often choices your lender doesn't highlight. Having professional advice ensures you see the full picture, and can turn your renewal decision into a chance to save, shorten your mortgage timeline or re-align your finances with your goals.

CALL TO ACTION

Don't just renew — review. If your mortgage renewal is approaching, call me today to explore the best options for your family. A quick review now could mean real savings and a stronger financial future.

.....
Rhonda Stark, Mortgage Agent, Level 2, Mortgage Intelligence, (519) 868-6794, www.rhondastark.ca, www.facebook.com/YourMortgageResourceConnection/



Don't Just Renew. Review.

Your mortgage renewal is a chance to save, not just a form to sign.

A quick review with a mortgage broker can uncover better rates, flexible terms, and strategies that fit your family's lifestyle.

CALL TODAY

for a **free mortgage renewal review.**

519.868.6794 | RHONDASTARK.CA



RHONDA STARK
MORTGAGE AGENT
BROKERAGE #10428
LEVEL 2

 MORTGAGE INTELLIGENCE



TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT ADOPTION

I was adopted at nine months old and always knew my sisters and I were adopted from China. My parents started by retelling my adoption story at bedtime, introducing me to picture books featuring adoptive families, and later encouraging me to journal my feelings. They always reinforced that I was loved and showed respect toward my birth mother by acknowledging the difficult geopolitical situation in China during the one-child policy.

Each adoption situation is different and children can be adopted in many ways – from another country, through private agencies domestically or through foster care. Here are some tips for talking about adoption with your child:

Leah Sutterlin, www.adoptioncouncil.org

1 *Encourage them to explore their roots*

Many children in open adoptions desire to maintain relationships with their biological parents, and you can help keep those lines of communication open. Always try to be respectful when talking about their biological family and avoid terms like “gave up for adoption” (better options include “placed for adoption” or “made an adoption plan”). For children adopted from another culture, you can also help them learn more about their ethnicity through language programs, music, films and food.

2 *It's okay to not have all the right answers*

In the case of closed adoptions, you may have limited information about your child's biological family. Many children appreciate it if you share what you know about their family history, but also be honest about the parts of their story you don't fully know.

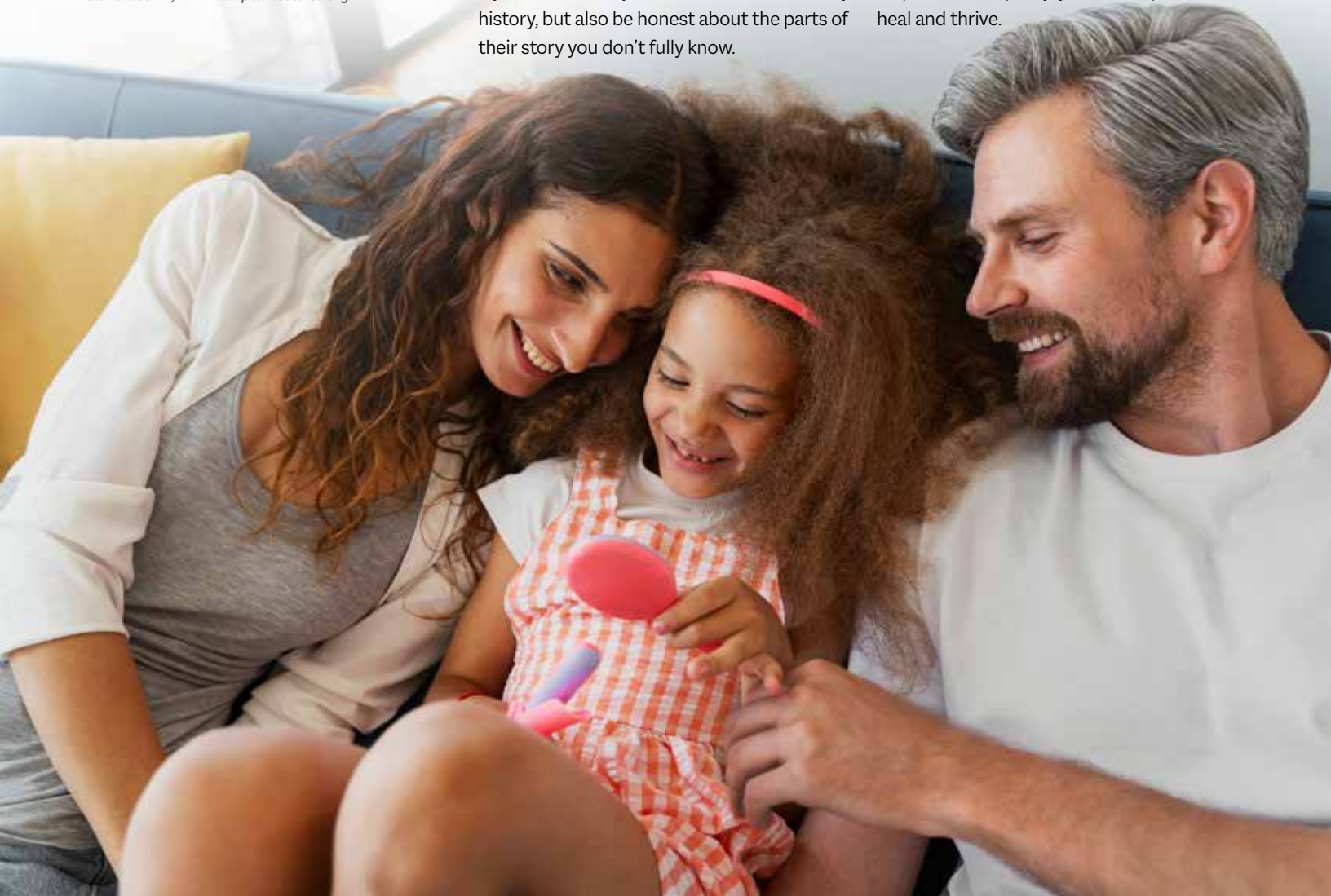
3 *Accept their honest emotions*

Adoption isn't easy and it's natural for children to experience a range of grief and confusion. Position yourself as a supportive sounding board and listening ear. If helpful, many children and teens also find it helpful to seek additional counselling.

4 *Provide unconditional love*

Adopted children may doubt that they belong and are accepted, or they may fear that adoption is reversible. Reinforce that the necessity of adoption was not their fault, and that they are deeply cherished.

Processing adoption is a lifelong experience and feelings may change over time, but by instilling values of openness, respect and empathy, you can help children heal and thrive.



FOUR LESSONS FROM OUR FAMILY'S FIRST EUROPE TRIP

My family recently cashed in a decade's worth of credit card points to take only our second plane trip together—and our first ever to Europe.

At first, Italy was the dream. My wife has read and watched *Eat, Pray, Love*, so it seemed fitting. But a few minutes of research convinced us otherwise. Everything is far apart, and the stairs alone would have turned my kids into 1980s crash-test dummies. I may be able to climb like a mountain goat with bags strapped on like Sir Edmund Hillary's Sherpas, but my kids? Not so much.

So, we turned to our trusty AI sidekick, ChatGPT (who named herself "Casey"), for advice. Casey suggested the top five kid-friendly cities worldwide, with London and Paris claiming the top two spots. They're connected by a high-speed train through a tunnel (cool factor: high), and one of them has Disneyland. Decision made.

We chose mid-September—after the kids had settled into school—armed with the knowledge that Europeans do not share our devotion to air conditioning.

Along the way, I picked up some valuable lessons:

1 Overnight flights are cheaper for a reason. My kids don't sleep in cars, and it turns out they don't sleep on planes either. The overnight Toronto-London flight left us exhausted, and our Westminster Abbey and London Eye tickets became nap fodder.

2 Pack smart. European Ubers and planes fit fewer bodies per square inch. "XL" still means someone holds a bag on their lap. Airlines also charge for everything. A sneeze? That'll be five bucks.

3 Simplicity saves. Not everything needs to be fancy. We mastered the Metro, and my kids actually loved French McDonald's. The exchange rate? Brutal.

4 Ages matter. At 8, 10, and 12, our kids were the perfect age to balance our must-sees—like the Crown Jewels and the Louvre—with theirs—like Euro Disney and Harry Potter Studios. Credit card bills come and go, but these memories will last forever.

.....
Jeremy McCall is a married father of 3, a social service case manager, and known as "The Dadfather", being the founder and Past President of Dad Club London.



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OBSERVED IN THE WILD: MOMUS CANADENSIS

Observe... the elusive Canadian Mom in her natural habitat, mid November. As the days shorten and temperatures drop, she begins a curious and deeply instinctual preparation ritual known only to her kind: hibernation.

After months of relentless activity, her body—worn by mere weeks of school lunches, work meetings and cart rage at Costco—begins to slow. She is inexplicably exhausted. Her plumage changes. Gone are the breezy linens of July. She now dons fleece lined leggings, oversized cardigans and socks that haven't matched since 2003.



Here we see her emerge from her lair (mudroom), wrapped in six protective layers and a jacket that weighs more than her emotional baggage. Her gait is slower now—not from age, but from the weight of so many damn layers. She will soon begin the shedding process. At entrances. In piles. Everywhere.

Stockpiling begins in earnest. Watch as the Canadian Mom instinctively gathers her survival staples:

- Electric blankets (plural — one is merely decorative)
- Mending, ironing, thank you correspondence and holiday cards she has no intention of completing
- Four half used journals for “self care” and 57 unread books she swore she’d get to this year
- Cheese - in bricks, wheels and string form
- Wine — boxed and blessed
- A healthy stash of passive aggression toward festive newsletters and anyone

who skis “recreationally.”

As the temperatures drop, her social calendar does too. She begins her hibernation rituals, a marvel of maternal evolution. Excuses echo in the wind: “Weather’s iffy,” “My car is frozen,” or the increasingly common, “I lost the will to leave my house.”

Each morning, she adjusts her schedule to the changing barometer, devoting 5% of her morning to work prep, 15% to warming and scraping her vehicle, and 80% to digging out her SUV — which, like her will, is buried somewhere under last night’s snowfall. But make no mistake — this is not laziness. This is strategic survival. While the world demands productivity, the Canadian Mom conserves energy for real emergencies — like running out of wine.

By March, she’ll re emerge: pale, powerful and slightly less patient. But for now, she rests, wrapped in fleece, fortified by charcuterie and her own irreverent grit.

Janet Smith is a proud mom of one daughter and a marketing professional who is grateful for her rural roots in the London area. Follow Janet’s funny and honest journey at IG & TT | @re.marketable.janet or FB | @janetsiddallsmith

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UNDERSTANDING SCOLIOSIS: WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

As children grow, most parents focus on school, sports and milestones, but sometimes subtle changes in posture can be a sign of something more. Scoliosis, a condition where the spine curves sideways, affects about 2-3% of adolescents, yet many cases go unnoticed until they become more serious.

Scoliosis often develops during periods of rapid growth, right before or during puberty. The spine may curve into a C or S shape, and in some cases, the ribs can twist, making the shoulders or hips look uneven. In most cases, scoliosis is painless at first, which is why early observation is so important. Catching a curve early can make a significant difference in treatment and long-term outcomes.

Parents don't need specialized tools to notice potential signs. Keep an eye out for:

- Shoulders or hips that appear uneven
- Arms that hang differently from the sides



- Head not centered over the body
 - A visible curve or twist in the back
 - Complaints of back discomfort, though this is less common
- If any of these signs appear, a pediatrician or family doctor can order a spinal x-ray

to confirm the diagnosis and recommend next steps. Treatment varies depending on the curve's severity. Some children are monitored with regular check-ins, while others may benefit from custom back braces designed to support the spine during growth. In more advanced cases, surgery may be needed to correct the curve.

Scoliosis isn't just a medical condition, it can impact confidence, participation in activities and daily comfort. With proper support, children can continue to enjoy sports, hobbies and daily life while minimizing the risk of progression. For parents and caregivers, the key takeaway is simple: watch closely, act early and seek guidance if anything seems off. If you have concerns about your child's posture or development, our clinic is here to answer questions and provide support. Early intervention can make all the difference in helping children grow strong, healthy and confident.

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MY JOURNEY WITH HORMONE THERAPY

Perimenopause hit me like a tidal wave. For months, I found myself waking every night at 2 am, unable to fall back asleep. Anxiety crept in and my emotions became unpredictable... I used to call it my "crazy lady syndrome" because I could go from calm to uncontrollable in seconds. Brain fog and difficulty concentrating made simple tasks feel daunting.

Like many women, I tried to manage these symptoms with lifestyle changes like nutrition, exercise, mindfulness. These helped, but they didn't touch the intensity of what I was going through. Eventually, I made the personal decision to start hormone therapy.

A CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC

Hormone therapy has been debated for decades. Many of us grew up hearing warnings about risks, especially around breast cancer. It's still a controversial choice, and I want to be clear: as a registered dietitian, this is not within my scope, but I

feel it's important to share and bring light to this important topic. For me, hormone therapy (specifically estrogen, progesterone and testosterone) has been life-changing to say the least. My sleep improved, my anxiety calmed and I felt like myself again.

LOOKING AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

What ultimately gave me confidence was the research. Studies show that estrogen therapy can support:

- Brain health: Lowering the risk of dementia and supporting cognitive function
- Heart health: Offering protection against heart disease, the leading cause of death for women
- Bone health: Reducing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures
- Diabetes & colon cancer: Decreasing the likelihood of developing certain chronic conditions

.....
Jenn Giurgevich is the founder of Spark Nutrition & Health, a virtual nutrition consulting business. Visit www.sparknutritionandhealth.ca for more information



Of course, hormone therapy isn't for everyone. Some risks exist and the decision is deeply personal. But for me, the benefits outweighed the concerns and the improvements in my quality of life have been undeniable.

WHY I'M SHARING THIS

Talking openly about menopause and perimenopause is important. Too often, women suffer in silence or dismiss their symptoms as "just getting older." My hope in sharing my story is to reduce the stigma, to let other women know they're not alone, and to encourage you to explore your options... whether that's nutrition, lifestyle changes, therapy, medication or a combination.

NOTE: This article shares my personal experience with hormone therapy. It is not intended as medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider before starting or changing any treatment.



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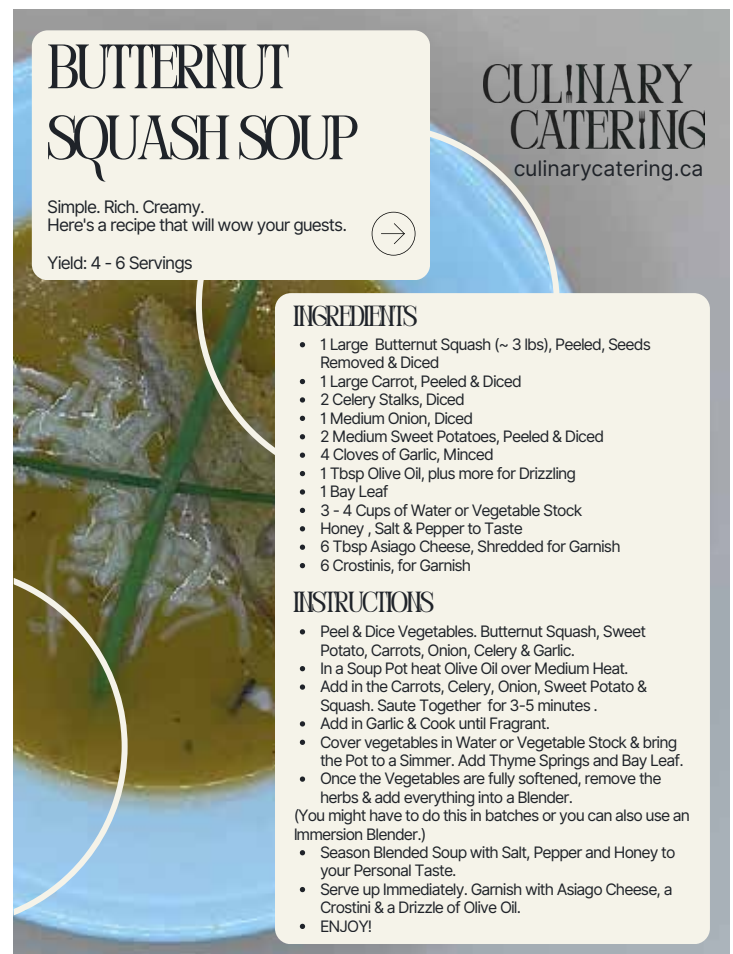
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Yield: 4 - 6 Servings

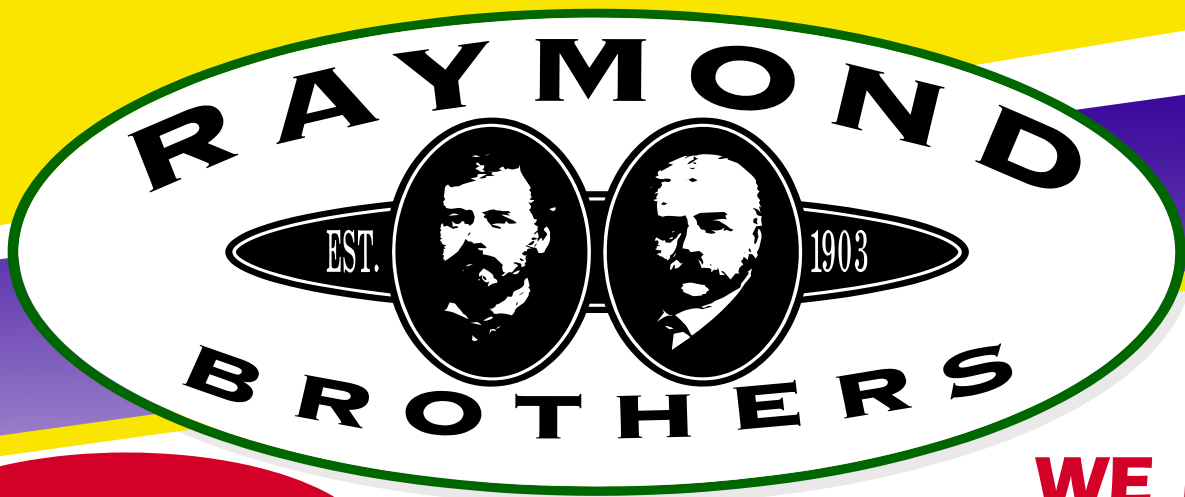
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INGREDIENTS

- 1 Large Butternut Squash (~ 3 lbs), Peeled, Seeds Removed & Diced
- 1 Large Carrot, Peeled & Diced
- 2 Celery Stalks, Diced
- 1 Medium Onion, Diced
- 2 Medium Sweet Potatoes, Peeled & Diced
- 4 Cloves of Garlic, Minced
- 1 Tbsp Olive Oil, plus more for Drizzling
- 1 Bay Leaf
- 3 - 4 Cups of Water or Vegetable Stock
- Honey, Salt & Pepper to Taste
- 6 Tbsp Asiago Cheese, Shredded for Garnish
- 6 Crostinis, for Garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

- Peel & Dice Vegetables. Butternut Squash, Sweet Potato, Carrots, Onion, Celery & Garlic.
- In a Soup Pot heat Olive Oil over Medium Heat.
- Add in the Carrots, Celery, Onion, Sweet Potato & Squash. Saute Together for 3-5 minutes.
- Add in Garlic & Cook until Fragrant.
- Cover vegetables in Water or Vegetable Stock & bring the Pot to a Simmer. Add Thyme Sprigs and Bay Leaf.
- Once the Vegetables are fully softened, remove the herbs & add everything into a Blender.
(You might have to do this in batches or you can also use an Immersion Blender.)
- Season Blended Soup with Salt, Pepper and Honey to your Personal Taste.
- Serve up Immediately. Garnish with Asiago Cheese, a Crostini & a Drizzle of Olive Oil.
- ENJOY!



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