

A FREE
MAGAZINE

THE MOM & CAREGIVER™

JANUARY 2026
VOLUME 28 ISSUE 01

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LITTLE
Scrubs,
BIG
Dreams

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PREGNANCY - BABY - TODDLER



PRESCHOOL - SCHOOL AGE - FAMILY

A Fresh Start:

MOVING INTO THE NEW YEAR WITH JOY



January always feels like a breath of fresh air. The holidays settle, the decorations come down, and families return to routines with a mix of excitement and relief. It's a month that naturally invites new beginnings, not the pressure-filled kind, but gentle, meaningful shifts that help children (and parents!) feel grounded and energized.

One of the simplest ways to ease into the new year is through movement. After weeks of festive meals, busy schedules, and late nights, kids often have energy to burn and dance is a fun, accessible way to channel it. You don't need a studio or equipment; just turn on music and let everyone move in their own way. A five-minute kitchen dance break can turn a grumpy morning around faster than you'd expect!

January is a great month for reconnecting as a family. Try a shared movement activity:

- Family dance challenges
- Try-a-new-move-of-the-day
- Follow-the-leader dance games
- Stretching or simple yoga before bed

These moments help children release stress, boost mood, and build confidence; important ingredients when they're heading back to school after the holiday break.

If you're looking for something structured for your child this winter, dance classes offer routine, creativity, and social connection all in one. They give children a place to express themselves, make friends, and feel proud of their progress—especially during the colder months when outdoor play is limited.

So as you step into 2026, consider adding a little more movement, music, and joy into your days. Sometimes the best “new beginning” is as simple as pressing play and dancing into the year together.

REGISTER NOW AT DANCE EXTREME

Let's Dance!



Dance extreme

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ON THE COVER

Dr. Haven was all smiles at her photo shoot! She's wearing 21 year old scrubs that belonged to assistant editor, Melissa's, daughter on her first Halloween. *Haven* adored chewing on the stethoscope - thanks to Medpoint Health Care Centre for providing it!

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THE MOM & CAREGIVER

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THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW

In honour of Dr. Haven on our front cover, we're talking all things health this month. January is the perfect time of year to reassess your health care and how you're taking care of yourself first (and then others, mamas!) Here's just a taste of the information you'll find in our January issue:

"A Fresh Start: Moving Into the New Year With Joy" by Dance Extreme (page 2)

After weeks of festive meals, busy schedules and late nights, we can all burn off some energy through dance. Try a-new-move-of-the-day, follow-the-leader dance games or yoga before bed.

"Building Balanced Meals and Snacks" by Claire Bilik RD, for the Middlesex-London Health Unit (page 8)

What does a healthy meal look like? How can I put together a balanced snack for my child? Balanced meals and snacks provide the nutrients children need to grow, focus in school, stay active and feel their best.

"Eating Disorders and Our Children" by Nurse Practitioner, Becky Morrison (page 12)

Warning signs for parents that your child might have an eating disorder include making excuses to skip meals, becoming more secretive and isolated, excessive chewing or rearranging food on the plate and dizziness or fainting.

"Healthy Routines for Kids" by Dr. Bhooma Bhayana (page 6).

Dr. Bhayana highlights important recommendations from the Rourke record – read, speak and sing to your child, minimize screen time and encourage daily physical activity.

"January Wellness Reset: Winter Skin, Strength & Women's Health" by London Plastic Surgery & Advanced Aesthetics (page 7)

Why does my skin feel so dry this winter? Between cold temperatures outside and dry indoor heating, the skin's protective barrier becomes compromised. A winter routine should focus on deep hydration, barrier repair and gentle exfoliation.

"Tiny Steps, Real Change" by Registered Dietitian, Jennifer Giurgevich (page 22)

This new year, instead of big resolutions, try small steps. Start small, celebrate tiny wins and give yourself grace. Because it's the quiet resolutions, the ones rooted in self-care, intention and compassion, that often create the biggest impact.

Let's raise a glass (of water!) to a healthy and happy 2026!

Cheers!

Sabina
PUBLISHER/CHIEF EDITOR



25+
YEARS

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EVENTS

JANUARY 2026

Happy
2026! 01ST

London Knights vs.
Brantford Bulldogs,
Canada Life Place,
www.chl.ca/ohl-knights

09TH

Car Seat Clinic,
Family Centre
Fanshawe,
www.familyinfo.ca

14TH

Junie B's Essential Survival
Guide to School JR.,
Palace Theatre,
www.palacetheatre.ca

16TH

Primary Trust,
Grand Theatre,
www.grandtheatre.com

20TH

Books for Babies,
Byron Library,
www.lpl.ca

23RD

PA Day Winter Olympics,
Pond Mills Library,
www.lpl.ca

30TH

Tune Time,
Children's Library,
www.lpl.ca

06TH

Reini's Camp
Adventure,
The Factory,
www.thefactorylondon.ca

11TH

Disney on Ice
Road Trip Adventures,
Canada Life Place,
www.canadalifeplace.com

15TH

Groupe de jeu,
Centre de la famille
Huron Heights,
www.familyinfo.ca

19TH

Swan Lake,
Centennial Hall,
www.centennialhall.london.ca

21ST

The Harlem Globetrotters:
The 100 Year Tour,
Canada Life Place,
www.canadalifeplace.com

28TH



Montessori
ACADEMY OF LONDON

Sensory activity

Snow Painting!

Snow painting in a bin is a fun, hands-on way for kids to explore art and science—right at the kitchen table.

What You'll Need

- A large bin or tray
- Fresh, clean snow
- Paint brushes, droppers, or spray bottles
- Watered-down paint or food colouring



Set-Up & Play

Scoop snow into the bin and place it on a towel to catch drips.

Mix your "paints" using water and food colouring or diluted paint.

- Make a few colours!

Let creativity flow!

- Encourage experimenting - what happens when we mix colours?
- Paint, drip, or spray the snow
- Mix colours, swirl with brushes or spoons
- Use a small jug of warm water and encourage them to gently pour on the snow and paint. What happens?

What a fun and creative way to bring the magic of snow fun indoors.



montessori.on.ca



info@montessori.on.ca

“

I love the toddler calendar. Today is tomorrow. Christmas was yesterday. And they don't need to 'bursh' their teeth because they brushed them last year.

”

unknown

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MOM & CAREGIVER

5

HEALTHY ROUTINES FOR KIDS



This is the third and final article in a series looking at recent recommendations on the Rourke baby record, an evidence-based tool used by primary care practitioners in Canada. In this article, we will look at the guidance around development and healthy routines

The following are some updated recommendations:

1 Read, speak and sing to your infant and child. This promotes language development and early literacy skills. This also helps to develop socio-emotional skills and the development of healthy relationships. London libraries can be a resource as they provide a book bag as a starter reading kit, and host many Books for Babies groups.

2 Decrease sedentary pastimes and encourage daily physical activity. Parents can be good role models of an active lifestyle.

3 Minimize screen time and ensure that any content on screen is good content.

4 Milestones for development often include areas of gross motor (things like walking, crawling, stairs, etc.), fine motor (things like holding a pencil or using two fingers for finger food), communication (verbal and also signed gestures), cognitive (reasoning and thinking) and socio-emotional (engaging with others, play). It can be helpful to take stock of some of these domains before your visit to the primary care provider. If you are not certain of what to look for, the Nippissing development scales

are widely available online. These are simple checklists of developmental milestones that will help you to communicate these milestones to your provider. Do not be alarmed if your child does not meet some of the milestones. Not all children develop all skills at the same time!

Our children are our future and having tools like the Rourke baby record updated helps us to provide the best and most up to date recommendations to help them thrive.

.....
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!



JANUARY WELLNESS RESET: WINTER SKIN, STRENGTH & WOMEN'S HEALTH

January marks a fresh start—a moment to refill your own cup after a busy season of caring for everyone else. For many moms and caregivers, winter can take a toll not just on skin but also on energy, strength and overall women's health. Cold weather, stress and daily responsibilities can leave us feeling depleted, making this the perfect time to focus on renewal, balance and self-care.

WINTER SKIN: WHY IT FEELS DRY

Between cold temperatures outside and dry indoor heating, the skin's protective barrier becomes compromised. This can lead to flakiness, tightness and increased sensitivity. A winter routine should focus on deep hydration, barrier repair and gentle exfoliation.

SKIN CARE THAT WORKS IN WINTER

We recommend medical-grade products that deliver concentrated results:

- **SkinBetter Science** for barrier-repairing moisturizers and antioxidant protection.
- **SkinCeuticals** for hydrating serums like Hyaluronic Acid Intensifier and protective Vitamin C formulas.

- **Vivier** for advanced vitamin C serums and nourishing hydrators that brighten and restore.

- **Colorescience** and **Elta MD** is a SPF must—even in January.

HYDRAFACIAL FOR A WINTER RESET

When skin is looking dull or feeling dry, the **HydraFacial** delivers immediate radiance. It deeply cleanses, gently exfoliates and infuses hydration, giving tired winter skin a fresh, glowing boost with zero downtime.

FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH & WOMEN'S HEALTH: EMSCULPT NEO & Emsella Chair

Women's health is closely tied to physical strength and core stability. **Emsculpt Neo** & **Emsella Chair** helps build muscle, improve posture and enhance core and pelvic floor function—all essential for busy women juggling family, work and self-care. Many notice improved energy, confidence and daily movement.

COOLSCULPTING FOR WINTER CONTOURING

If body-confidence goals are part of your 2025 wellness plan, **CoolSculpting** helps reduce stubborn fat in areas like the abdomen, thighs and flanks. Starting in winter means results arrive just in time for spring.

WELLNESS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

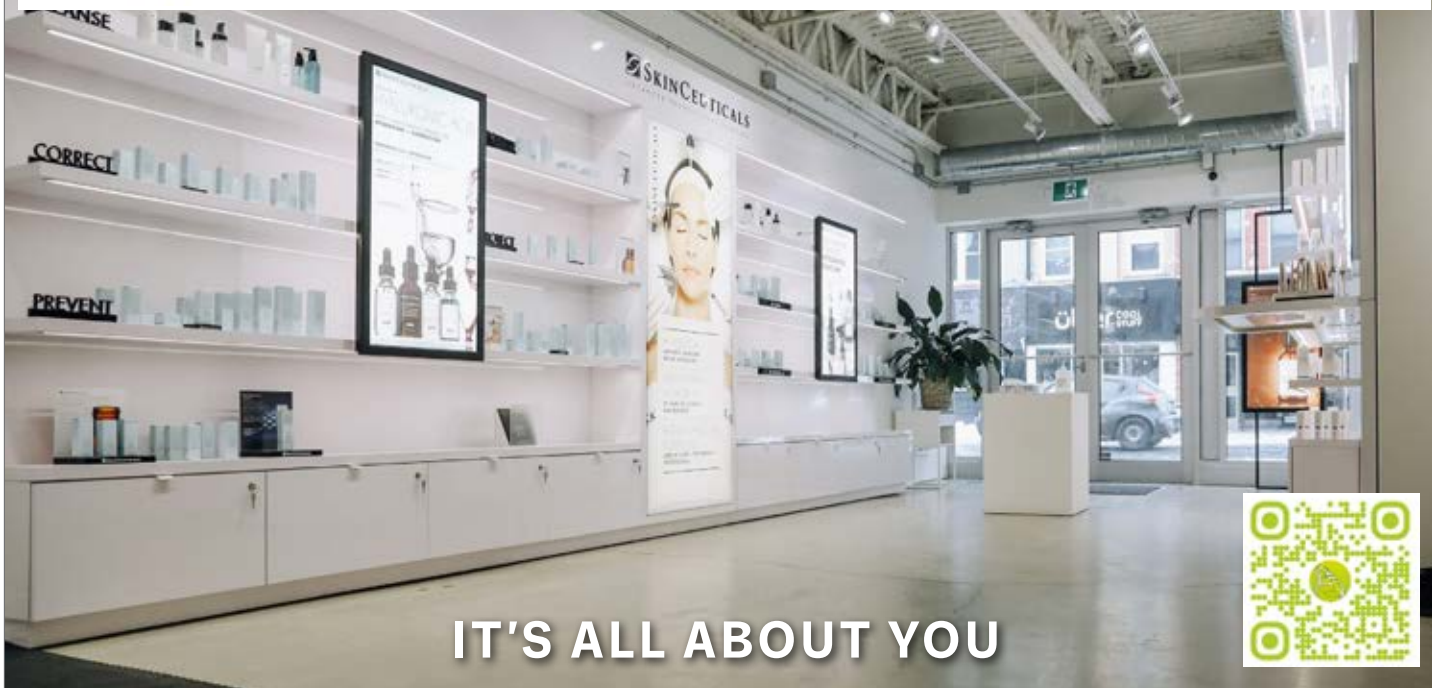
This January, nourish your skin, support your strength and prioritize your health. Our team at London Plastic Surgery & Advanced Aesthetics is here to help you feel radiant, confident and cared for—inside and out.



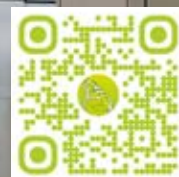
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London Plastic Surgery & Advanced Aesthetics



IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU



BUILDING BALANCED MEALS AND SNACKS

As parents, we all want to support our children's growth, development and overall well-being. One of the most effective ways to do that is by serving balanced meals and snacks at home. Canada's food guide (www.food-guide.canada.ca/en/) offers practical guidance to support families as they inspire lifelong positive eating habits.

Balanced meals and snacks provide the nutrients children need to grow, focus in school, stay active and feel their best. Planning with variety in mind also helps build a positive relationship with food and encourages children to try new flavours and textures.

WHAT DOES A BALANCED MEAL LOOK LIKE?

When planning meals, aim to include:

- at least one vegetable or fruit
- one whole grain food
- one protein food
- a glass of milk or fortified plant-based beverage

Use Canada's food guide plate as a visual tool and aim for:

- half the plate: vegetables and fruits
- one-quarter: whole grain foods
- one-quarter: protein foods (choose plant-based proteins more often, such

as beans, lentils, tofu or nuts)

BUILDING BALANCED SNACKS

Create a satisfying snack by including:

- one fruit or vegetable, and
- one protein or whole grain food

SNACK IDEAS:

- morning: Apple slices with Greek yogurt
- afternoon: Hummus with carrot sticks and cucumber slices

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Help your child meet their nutritional needs by offering:

Daily:

- one dark green vegetable (e.g., spinach, broccoli)
- one iron-rich protein (e.g., lean meats, beans, lentils)
- one calcium-rich food (e.g., dairy products, fortified plant-based beverages)

Weekly:

- one plant-based protein meal (e.g., chickpea curry, lentil soup)
- one meal with eggs or fish

ROUTINE AND CONNECTION MATTER

Children thrive on routine. Offering meals and snacks every two to three hours helps keep their energy levels stable. In between, make sure water is always available to keep

them hydrated.

Involving your children in meal planning and food prep not only teaches valuable life skills but also makes them more likely to try the foods. Whenever possible, eat together as a family. Shared mealtimes are a great opportunity to connect and model healthy eating habits.

Looking for more Ideas? Canada's food guide website offers helpful videos and tips for families, including: Eat together using Canada's food guide plate www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/video/food-nutrition/plate-eat-together.html Healthy snacks using Canada's food guide plate - www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/video/food-nutrition/plate-healthy-snacks.html

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Eat well. Live well.

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day

Have plenty
of vegetables
and fruits

Eat protein
foods

Make water
your drink
of choice



Choose
whole grain
foods

Discover your food guide at

Canada.ca/FoodGuide

ENTRY #24: HOW TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR 2026 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION!

Most people make New Year's resolutions that fail before February 1st. The most popular New Year's Resolution is losing weight. This month let's use this example. Make sure you see your doctor before starting any fitness program!

1 Plan ahead so that any temptations you might have won't control you. You will control the situation. Going to a birthday party after work starving? Bring a protein enriched meal with you to eat before you arrive. Arrive after the meal, but before the cake. (I didn't say this would be easy).

2 You **MUST** change the way you see food. I teach people that food is how you fuel your body, not entertainment.

Do you mindlessly eat popcorn while watching a movie? I am joking but serious at the same time when I say, "The movie still plays without you eating popcorn." Reframing why and when you fuel your body will help the pounds fall off sometimes on their own.

3 Muscle weighs more than fat? Last year my bipolar meds stopped working. I gained 30 pounds in hospital due to depression. Once my new meds were working with doctors' help, I lost it all but gained back 10 pounds after doing heavy lifting and running for 12 months. Even though I gained weight, I went from a size 12 down to a 4. Why? Because when you work your muscles, they tone up, which leads to you shrinking in inches.

The value of strength training with cardio is incredible. Can't afford a gym membership? Buy a used set of cheap weights and go running/walking outside for free!

4 Make a workout appointment in your calendar and **KEEP IT!** I like to workout Monday - Friday for one hour per day. I take weekends off. Do what works for you. When my kids were little, I would tuck them into bed and then do fitness.

It's like I have said before that, "If you want things to change, **YOU** have to change things." What tips are you going to apply from this example to all of your goals?



.....
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.



NEW YEAR'S PLAY

Why is 2026 going to be the best year ever?

Lander - I'm going to be a teenager!

Adi - We get to celebrate our birthdays at Disney!

What do you want to do better this year?

Lander - Sales profit.

Adi - I want to make money at lemonade stands.

How does your family start the new year?

Lander - We have dinner with friends.

Adi - We spend time with our family.

Why is bedtime hard after the holiday break?

Lander - I want to stay up later because I am older!

Adi - Over the holidays, mom and dad let us stay up later and I like that.

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.



Our LONDONLICIOUS Menu

Enjoy our \$12 Londonlicious special at Cafe Connect at 254 Adelaide Street S
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10am - 3pm

**Join us weekdays
January 16 - February 8**

Gourmet Grilled Cheese and choice of 2 soups!

Thanks to our Partners!

EATING DISORDERS AND OUR CHILDREN

In Canada, typically eating disorders occur between the age of 12-15, and of those children diagnosed, 12% to 30% are girls and 25% are boys. At the same time, 50% of those children diagnosed with eating disorders meet the criteria for depression. Eating disorders are characterized by an unhealthy relationship with food which negatively affects their daily functioning. The types of eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge-eating disorders and avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID).

The warning signs for parents that their children may have an eating disorder would be:

- Obviously sudden weight loss
- Restricting type and amount of food, like making excuses to skip meals
- New worries or rules around eating food, such as excessive chewing or rearranging food on the plate



- Excessive exercise to burn off calories quicker
- Eating food in secret
- Going to the bathroom after meals to vomit
- Obsession with weight loss and calorie counting
- Withdrawal from friends and hobbies
- Becoming more secretive and isolated
- Stomach cramps, constipation, heart burn
- Difficulty with concentration
- Dizziness or fainting
- Feeling cold all the time
- Difficulty sleeping

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.

- Issues with teeth (from repeated vomiting)
- Dry skin, hair, brittle nails, fine hair on the body
- Getting sick more often as the immune system is weaker

If you are concerned that your child may have an eating disorder, the best treatment options always include counselling/ psychotherapy/talk therapy with a therapist that specializes in children's eating disorders, which may also include group therapy.

This therapy will last months to years. A prescribing provider like a doctor or nurse practitioner may prescribe medications to treat binge eating, anxiety, depression or other mental health concerns your child may have. As a parent, make sure you learn as much as possible about the type of eating disorder with which your child is struggling. Tell them often how much they are loved, that you will always be there for them and that there is professional help available to them. Suggest activities that do not involve food and spend time together. The more you know, and the more your child feels supported, the best chances they have to overcome this disease.

HEIRLOOM TOMATO SALAD

Yield: 4 Servings From the minds at Culinary Catering

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Grape tomatoes, cut in half length wise
- 3 Tbsp Roasted Pumpkin Seeds
- 1 Shallots Petals, Pickled
- 2 Medium Blanched Heirloom Carrots, cut into thin coins
- Sea Salt + Cracked Pepper To Taste
- 4 Tbsp Olive Oil
- Frisée Lettuce for Garnish
- White Wine Vinaigrette
- ¼ Cup Honey
- ¼ Cup White Wine Vinegar
- ½ Tbsp Sea Salt
- ½ Tbsp Crack Pepper
- ½ Cup Olive Oil

DIRECTIONS

Bring water to a low boil in a Medium Saucepan. Marinated them with olive oil sea salt and crack pepper let them sit for 20 minutes before plating.

To build the Salad put the tomatoes as a bed for the salad.

Then add your pickle shallots on top of the tomatoes

Place the heirloom carrots all around & Sprinkle on the Pumpkin Seeds.

Drizzle the salad with the dressing & Garnish with 2 small pieces of Friese lettuce. Add Salt & Cracked Pepper to Taste & Enjoy!



GIVE DANCE A TRY **WORRY-FREE** WITH OUR

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STARTING FEBRUARY



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WHY DISNEY CRUISE LINE IS PERFECT FOR EVERYONE IN YOUR FAMILY (NOT JUST THE KIDS!)

What if I told you Disney Cruises aren't designed for children? They aren't. They're designed for families. How is this different? Because your kids will love Disney Cruise Line, but so will you (and so will the grandparents, cousins, uncle, etc.). Here's why:

UNFORGETTABLE ENTERTAINMENT FOR ALL AGES

Disney Cruise Line brings the magic of Disney storytelling to sea. Families can enjoy Broadway-caliber shows featuring beloved characters, first-run Disney movies (often before they're released on land), and deck parties complete with fireworks at sea. Kids will delight in meeting Mickey, Minnie and friends in a more relaxed environment than the parks. Evenings are filled with entertainment that the whole family can share, from dance parties to themed nights like Pirate Night.

DEDICATED SPACES FOR EVERY AGE

Parents can relax knowing their children are having the most fun ever in safe, age-appropriate spaces. Meanwhile, parents can unwind at adult-exclusive areas such as serene pools, lounges and fine-dining restaurants.



FAMILY-FRIENDLY DINING AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Mealtimes are made easy with Disney's signature rotational dining, where families enjoy a new themed restaurant each night while keeping the same attentive servers who get to know your family. Menus feature options for every palate including picky-eater classics (hello chicken fingers!). Staterooms are thoughtfully designed for families, offering split bathrooms, generous storage, child amenities and magical touches like pull-down beds with twinkling stars.

UNMATCHED DESTINATIONS AND SERVICE

Disney Cruise Line sails to breathtaking destinations. Sailings often include a stop at one of Disney's island destinations, Disney Castaway Cay or Disney Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point, where families can enjoy pristine beaches and fun-filled activities during this easy port day. With exceptional service and attention to detail, Disney Cruise Line ensures every family feels special from the moment they step on board.

A Disney Cruise is the perfect spot to reconnect as a family and make memories together. So let's get planning! No extra cost, just extra support and guidance every step of the way.

Jenna Mitchell is a travel advisor with Pure Magic Vacations specializing in family travel and Disney Destinations. You can connect on Instagram@[puremagicjenna](https://www.instagram.com/puremagicjenna) or through email at jmitchell@puremagicvacations.ca.

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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. 

Welcome to Dolphin Dive Baby Spa & Wellness, London's first baby spa and the only family-focused wellness centre of its kind in the region. Created by local parents Dhara and Vraj, Dolphin Dive was born from one simple mission: to support babies, parents and growing families through gentle wellness experiences that nurture development, strengthen bonds and create unforgettable memories.

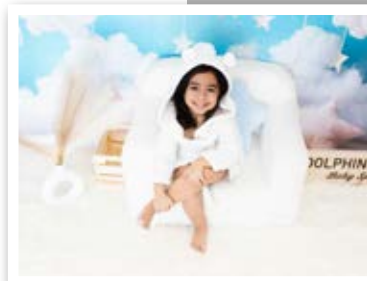
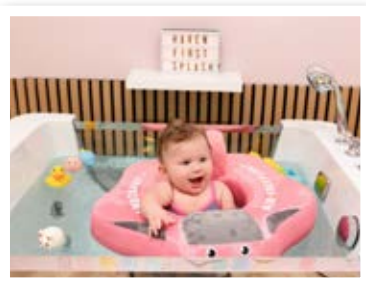
At Dolphin Dive, every detail has been thoughtfully designed with your little one's comfort and safety in mind. Their signature service, Baby Float/Hydrotherapy (for ages 1 month to 3 years), is a beautiful way to support physical development, strengthen motor skills and encourage relaxation. Babies love the warm water, weightless movement and soft sensory environment, and parents love watching their little ones splash, smile and explore in the state-of-the-art hydrotherapy tubs.

They are also proud to offer Infant & Pediatric Massage performed by Registered Massage Therapists. These sessions help with digestion, sleep, muscle tension and calmness. For parents, they provide Prenatal and Postnatal Massage, giving expecting and new moms a safe space to unwind, recover and feel cared for. They also offer Therapeutic and Deep Tissue Massage for adults seeking pain relief, tension reduction and overall wellness support.

Beyond their spa services, Dolphin Dive has quickly become a community hub for families. From Parent & Baby Workshops to Mom & Baby Yoga, sensory play, seasonal celebrations, birthday experiences and special themed events, their space brings families together in an environment filled with warmth, laughter and connection.

What makes Dolphin Dive truly special is the feeling families get the moment they walk through the doors. The pastel ocean-themed environment, friendly staff, and commitment to safety and cleanliness create a calming, magical space where parents can relax while their babies learn, grow and thrive. They also offer direct insurance billing for eligible massage services, making family wellness easier and more accessible.

Dolphin Dive isn't just a spa, it's an experience, a community and a place where little ones make big memories. They invite you to discover why so many families are calling Dolphin Dive their new happy place. Book your visit today at dolphindive-babyspa.com.





CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE PROVIDENCE

Discover French Catholic Education for Your Family

The Conseil scolaire catholique Providence welcomes nearly 9,500 students in 31 schools — 23 elementary and 8 secondary. Known for top academic results and innovation, Providence boasts a graduation rate of 95.8%, ranking among the highest of Ontario's 72 school boards.

Providence schools offer high-quality education in a fully francophone setting. Graduates master both of Canada's official languages, opening doors to postsecondary studies in English or French. Their bilingualism and strong sense of francophone identity prepare them for a bright future with many career opportunities.

As a Catholic school board, Providence helps students become engaged citizens, proud of their faith, language, and culture. There are no tuition fees, and transportation is provided within the catchment area.

This year, all Providence elementary schools invite you to their Open House Event on Thursday, January 22nd at 6pm. Reserve your spot online at MyFrenchSchool.ca and

discover the advantages of a French-Catholic education for your child.

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START 2026 FRESH: DEBT CONSOLIDATION & FINANCIAL RESET

As the new year approaches, many families feel the weight of lingering debt and the desire for a clean financial slate. Balancing a desired lifestyle with ongoing financial obligations can stretch cash flow thin. That's why now, especially with interest rates easing in the latter part of 2025, is an ideal time to reassess your financial strategy and explore whether debt consolidation or refinancing could help you reset.

For parents juggling multiple high-interest debts, consolidation can simplify your

financial life by rolling everything into a single, more manageable payment. With lower rates available, refinancing existing loans can also significantly reduce monthly obligations, freeing up room in the budget for the things that matter most to your family. Imagine redirecting those extra dollars toward your child's sports or music interests, RESP contributions, investments or a much-needed family getaway.

Homeowners have an additional option: tapping into home equity. Whether through a refinance, a home equity line of credit or a blended mortgage solution, leveraging equity can be a strategic way to pay down high-interest debts, enhance your savings strategy or finance larger purchases planned for the new year. When used thoughtfully, this approach can improve long-term cash flow and reduce financial stress – two goals every parent can appreciate!

But a true financial reset isn't just about

restructuring debt, it's about building habits that support a stable, lower-stress future. Starting the year with a preplanned, realistic budget is one of the most effective steps you can take. Map out monthly expenses, set limits that reflect your family's priorities and carve out space for both planned savings and unexpected surprises. A well-crafted budget turns your financial reset into a sustainable lifestyle shift.

Ultimately, your goal as a parent is to create stability and opportunity for your family.

By consolidating debt, exploring refinancing while rates are favourable or using home equity strategically, you can free up cash flow and start the year feeling empowered, organized and ready for what's ahead. With a clear plan and a fresh financial outlook, 2026 can be the year you finally give your family the breathing room—and the possibilities—they deserve.

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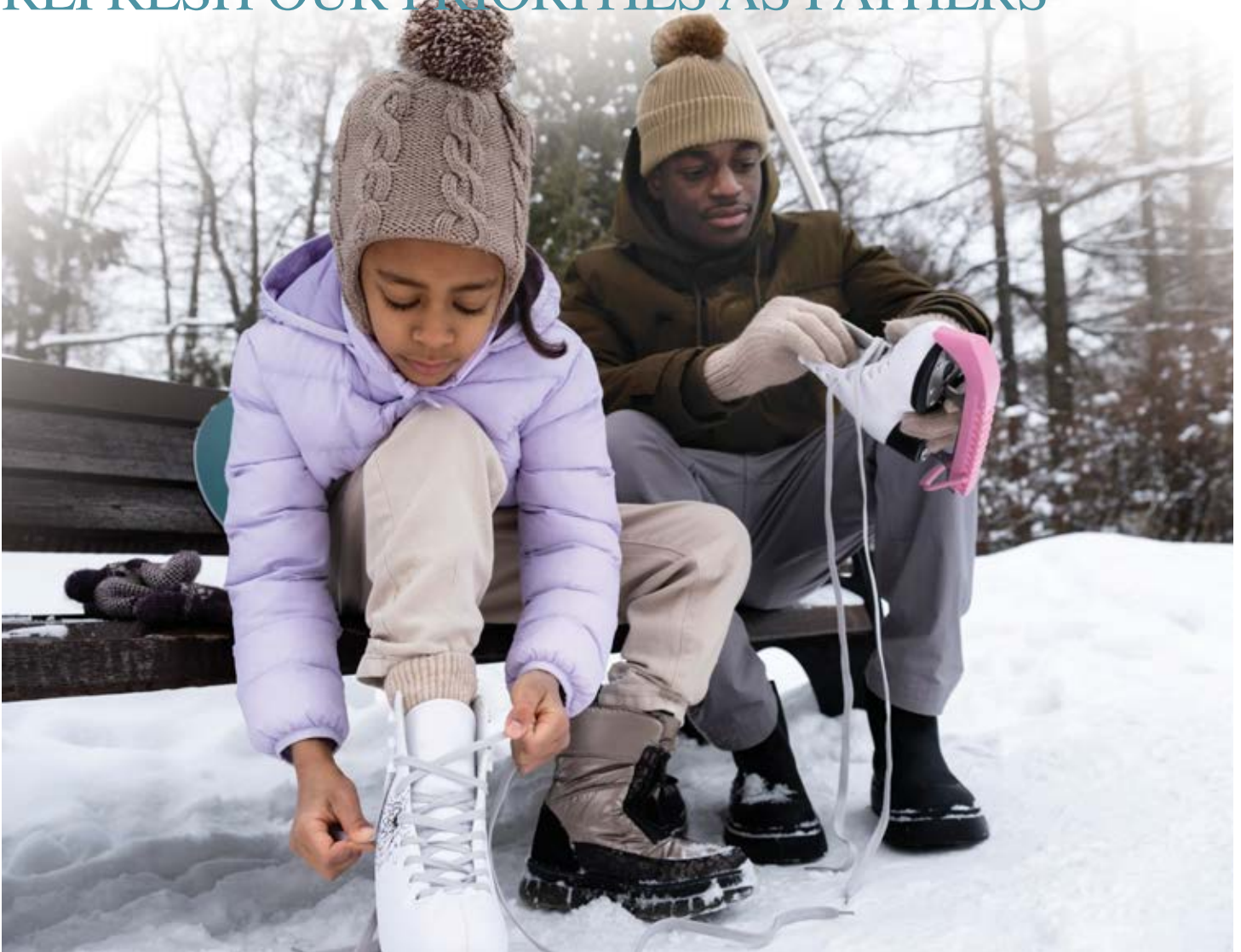
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WELCOME 2026! AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFRESH OUR PRIORITIES AS FATHERS



If you're an elder millennial like myself, you might remember that by 2026 we were supposed to be living in a very different world. According to *Demolition Man* (1993), we'd be using cryogenic freezing prisons. *Barb Wire* (1996) predicted a second American Civil War. The Simpsons even forecast Lisa Simpson as President.

Other than the wrong Simpsons character occupying the Oval Office, daily life feels far closer to *Leave It To Beaver* than *T2: Judgment Day*. The biggest upgrade is that instead of copying the smart kid's homework, Wally and The Beav would now just "ask their AI chatbot."

The point I'm trying to make is this: 2026 turned out far better than the dystopian futures we grew up expecting—though yes, we are long overdue for the first female

U.S. president. Honestly, my air fryer could probably do a better job than what we're currently subjected to. It's a 9-in-1, but its tenth feature could easily be "not causing global chaos with every social media post."

Anyway, this is supposed to be a parenting column. For some, a new year is a chance to reset and try new habits. For others, it's about sweatpants and watching college football bowl games straight through January. I'm not here to tell you which one to choose. ***But if I were YOUR dad, I'd tell you two things.***

First: make time to play outside with your kids this winter. Bring the dog. These snowy moments—toboggans, snow pants, hot chocolate—are annoyingly cold but unforgettable. You only get so many of them.

Second: take a minute to remember what

really matters. Sure *Demolition Man* didn't win best picture in 1993, but *Unforgiven* was an excellent choice. And you can make excellent choices too. A little less social media rage bait taking. A little earlier bedtime. A bit more exercise and a few more vegetables. Remembering all behaviour from our children is probably normal, and a form of communication. ***It all helps.***

So let's be grateful we don't have to chase down a bleach-blond super-criminal like Stallone did in '93—and let's work a little more kindness, patience and gratitude into our everyday lives. Our kids will never forget your commitment to them or to being your best self either.

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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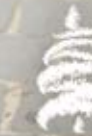
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SIZE ISN'T SIN

My daughter has always been big. Bigger than the growth chart. Bigger than her peers. Bigger than what society quietly deems “normal.”

At two, she was too big for grocery cart seats. And as a single mom, grocery shopping often ended in whispered judgment or not-so-quiet “tsk-tsks” from passersby who assumed my toddler was an out-of-control five-year-old. I spent more time fielding parenting critiques than choosing tomatoes.

When she played her first year of soccer and hockey, I was bombarded by parents demanding her birth certificate. She was fast, strong and constantly on breakaways. Not because she was cheating, but because her leg span was almost as long as their entire child.

Don't get me wrong, there were perks too! My daughter got to ride rollercoasters early, sit in the front seat first and crush every sport she tried. She's strong, capable and unfazed by things that would have made me crumble at her age.

But here's the thing: she didn't ask to be

big. And when adults — grown adults — yell at her from the bleachers, it doesn't just sting, it sticks. She starts to question her presence, her worth and whether her size is something she should apologize for. Parents, your side-eyes, your sideline accusations, and your accusations - they shame. And your child learns it just as fast as you're modelling it. Your child's inability to control their body is not my daughter's fault. Her elbows are at their eye level. That's physics, not bullying.

Now, as a teen, she's 6'2" on skates. She's received penalties just for existing. Kids

bounce off her because they're half her size. She's been taught to play restrained her whole life — not because she's aggressive, but because she's powerful.

To the parents of “bigger-than-average” girls: help them love their strength. Remind them that their body is not “too big”—it's exactly the right size for the life they're meant to lead. And to those judging from the sidelines: If she can carry the weight of everyone else's expectations, surely you can carry your own disappointment quietly to the car.

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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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PARKWOOD'S TLC PROGRAM

When a child grows up with a condition like cerebral palsy, spina bifida or a developmental delay, families naturally become familiar with the pediatric care world. There are regular check-ins, specialists who know your child well and a sense of routine. But when those same children begin to reach adulthood, that familiar system changes and families are unsure of where to turn next.

To help bridge that gap, Parkwood Hospital created the Transitional and Lifelong Care (TLC) Program, a unique adult-focused program designed specifically for people who were born with, or developed, physical disabilities in childhood. For many families, TLC is a steady and reliable support system during a time that can feel overwhelming.

WHO THE TLC PROGRAM HELPS

The TLC Program supports individuals 15 years and

older who live with conditions such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, neuromuscular conditions and complex developmental disabilities. These individuals need specialized medical oversight, mobility support and rehabilitation as they move into adulthood, but traditional adult healthcare systems aren't always set up for this. TLC fills that gap by offering care that understands where patients come from and what they will need throughout their lives.

A TEAM APPROACH TO LONG-TERM SUPPORT

One of the things that makes the TLC Program so valuable is its multidisciplinary team.

The program assists youth and their families as they move out of pediatric care, helping them understand what adult care looks like and how to navigate it. The care team may

include a physiatrist, nurse practitioner, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, social worker, rehab therapists, dietitian and more. Families may receive help with:

- Mobility and posture assessments
- Bracing or orthotic needs as bodies grow or change
- Spasticity and tone management
- Strength, flexibility and gait training
- Daily living skills and independence planning
- Access to community resources and long-term support services

ACCESSING THE TLC PROGRAM

The TLC Program is covered by OHIP, and a referral from a physician is required. The clinic is located at Parkwood Institute in London, Ontario, and serves communities throughout Southwestern Ontario. TLC offers something invaluable: continuity, expertise and a place that truly understands lifelong mobility and rehabilitation needs.

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TINY STEPS, REAL CHANGE

There's something about January that makes us want to overhaul our lives overnight... new routines, new workouts, new planners, all the things! But let's be honest. By the end of the month, most of us are just trying to get through the week without burning out. So this year, what if we skip the "new year, new me" vibe and try "new year, same me... just with a few small tweaks"?

If you took December to reflect (or even just to breathe - that counts too!), now's the time to pick one small thing to focus on. Maybe it's adding a veggie to dinner most nights, getting outside for ten minutes a day, or leaving your phone in another room after 9 pm. Small steps work because they fit into real life (that messy, busy, beautiful kind we're living every day).

A FEW REMINDERS AS YOU EASE IN:

1 START SMALL. One little change done consistently beats five you abandon by week two.

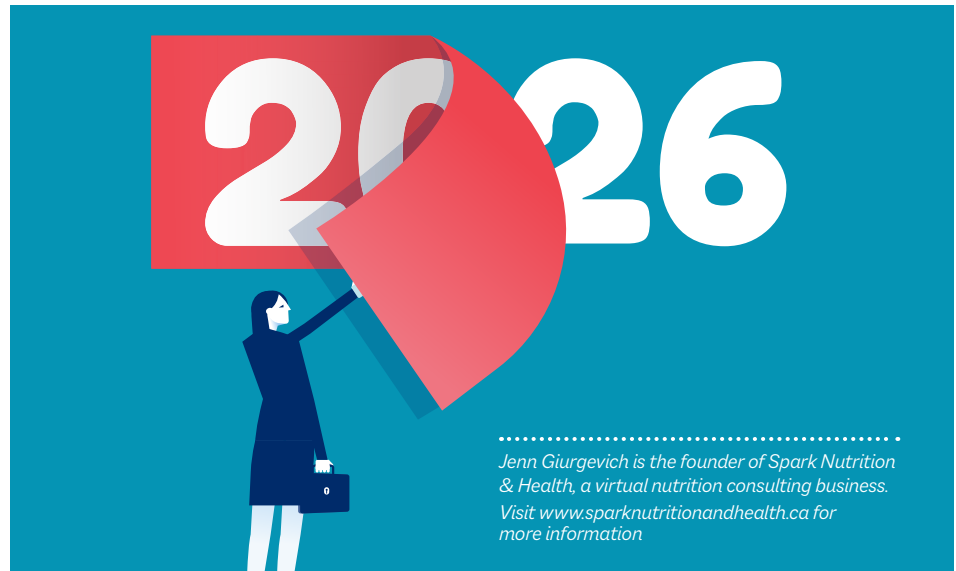
2 ANCHOR IT. Stack your new habit to something you already do, like drinking

water while you wait for your coffee to brew.

3 CELEBRATE THE TINY WINS. They add up faster than you think.

4 GIVE YOURSELF GRACE. Some days you'll nail it; some days you won't. Progress, not perfection.

At the end of the day, resolutions don't need to be loud or dramatic to be powerful. The quiet ones, the ones rooted in self-care, intention and compassion, often create the biggest impact. Here's to a year of small shifts, steady progress and showing up for ourselves, one kind choice at a time. Happy new year!



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CHOCOLATE CHIP, BLUEBERRY AND PEANUT BUTTER CHIP BANANA BREAD

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ cup all purpose flour
 - 4 over ripe bananas, mashed
 - 2 eggs
 - 2 tsp vanilla extract
 - 1 tsp baking powder
 - 1 tsp baking soda
 - 1/2 tsp kosher salt
 - 4/5 cup brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup butter
 - ¼ cup chocolate chips
 - ¼ cup Reese's peanut butter chips
 - ¼ cup fresh blueberries
- 18.5" x 4.5" loaf pan, buttered

METHOD:

Pre-heat oven to 350F. In a stand mixer, cream together sugar and butter, approximately 4-5 minutes. Add all wet ingredients and combine. Add all dry ingredients and combine. Remove mixer bowl and fold in by hand chocolate chips, peanut butter chips and blueberries. Add to loaf pan and bake for 1 hour or until a toothpick or skewer inserted into the middle of loaf comes out clean. Allow to rest for 15-20 minutes before slicing and serving.

Recipe by Chef Devan Rajkumar



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