

A FREE
MAGAZINE

THE MOM & CAREGIVER™

FEBRUARY 2026
VOLUME 28 ISSUE 02

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A DASH OF
Sweetness
WITH A *Sprinkle*
OF FUN!

PREGNANCY - BABY - TODDLER



PRESCHOOL - SCHOOL AGE - FAMILY

| | |
|---|----|
| 10 THINGS I LOVE MORE THAN CANDY | 11 |
| THE BIG SQUEEZE | 20 |
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Love in Motion:

SMALL WAYS TO CONNECT THIS FEBRUARY



February is often associated with hearts, chocolates, and big gestures, but for families, love usually shows up in much quieter ways—shared routines, inside jokes, and moments of connection in the middle of busy days.

One simple (and fun!) way to connect with your children is through movement. Dancing together doesn't require plans, props, or perfect timing, just a bit of music and willingness to be silly. Put on a favorite song while making dinner, dance in the living room before bedtime, or let your child teach you their newest moves. These little moments often become the ones kids remember most.

Movement is also a way for children to express emotions. February can feel long and cold, and kids may have extra energy or big feelings stored up. Dancing gives them a healthy outlet to release stress, build confidence, and reconnect with their bodies in a positive way.

You can even turn dance into a Valentine-themed activity:

- Create a “dance card” with moves you love
- Share one thing you’re grateful for after each song
- Have a family slow-dance before bed
- Make up a dance that tells a happy story

These moments don’t need to be polished or planned. What matters is the time spent together—laughing, moving, and being present.

This February, remember that love isn’t always wrapped in a bow. Sometimes it looks like dancing in socks or giggling in the kitchen. And those are the moments that truly fill our hearts.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT Nutrition for Women in Midlife During Ramadan

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ON THE COVER

Piper and chef Luis of Culinary Catering became fast friends! Was it because of the Valentine's cookies he brought, or because he was calm and soft-spoken around Piper? We'll never know! One thing is for sure - Piper loves sugar... and KPop Demon Hunters!



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WE LOVE OUR READERS!

I've always felt that Valentine's Day is a day to go retro - to reminisce about the good old days of making a big envelope, covered in construction paper hearts, to attach to your primary school desk. A day when everyone got lots of Valentines and treats, and making sure you dressed in red or pink was your only priority. So we're kicking it old school with our Valentine's Day acrostic poem - you know the kind - the first letter of each line spells out a word that acts as the poem's theme. This one introduces you to the amazing articles we have in our February Mom & Caregiver!

Why not bake bread with your little ones? (page 5)

Each month we feature a great local business - this month? Jayden's Mechanical! (page 14)

Love is in motion - find ways to connect as a family with Dance Extreme (page 2)

Our KidZone kids list 10 things they love more than candy this month (page 11)

Very good tips for loving your home (page 16)

Everything you need to know about Caregiver Burnout (page 12)

Our resident Dad, Jeremy, shares invisible things Dads can do (page 18)

Understanding breath work (page 15)

Rethink your drinking with Middlesex-London Health Unit (page 8)

Rare Disease Day is in February (page 21)

Everything you need to know about vaccinations in Ontario (page 6)

Answering questions sent in by YOU! (page 10)

Did you say sandwich generation? Maybe it's the big squeeze! (page 20)

Envelopes full of cards - a retro look at Valentine's day (page 4)

Ramadan nutrition is especially important for middle-aged women (page 22)

Self-Care is essential this month (page 7)

Sending you all the love in the world this month,

PUBLISHER/CHIEF EDITOR

Sabina

25+
YEARS

THE
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EVENTS

JANUARY 2026

WILL THE
Groundhog SEE
HIS SHADOW?

London Knights vs. Guelph Storm,
Canada Life Place,
www.chl.ca/ohl-knights

HAPPY
Valentine's DAY!

HAPPY
Family DAY!

RAMADAN
MUBARAK!

Nerf Battle: After Dark
(ages 12-15),
Pond Mills Library,
www.lpl.ca

Light Up at the
Library Playgroup,
Sherwood Library,
www.lpl.ca

02ND

Bruce McCulloch: The Dark
Purple Slice Tour, Aeolian
Hall, www.aeolianhall.ca

11TH

Lovin' Local Market,
Covent Garden Market,
www.coventmarket.com

14TH

The Offspring,
Canada Life Place,
www.canadalifeplace.com

16TH

HAPPY *Lunar*
NEW YEAR!

18TH

Jully Black,
London Music Hall,
www.londonmusichall.com

20TH

Mrs. Krishnan's Party,
Grand Theatre,
www.grandtheatre.com

27TH

05TH

13TH

14TH

17TH

19TH

25TH

Baking bread together

Baking with little ones is a fun way to slow down, build independence, and fill your home with yummy smells. Here's a simple bread recipe that's Montessori-inspired and kid-friendly!

Ingredients

- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp Greek yogurt



Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Encourage your child to measure and mix the flour, baking powder, and salt. *Sifting the flour into the bowl helps develop coordination, concentration, and control of movement.*
3. Add milk and yogurt — stir slowly and notice the texture change!
4. Spoon into a greased muffin tin or small loaf pan.
5. Bake for 30 minutes, until golden. Let it cool and then enjoy!

Tips for Grown-Ups

- Let the child scoop, pour, and stir — it builds confidence.
- Talk about the textures and smells.
- Muffin tins = faster cooling and kid-sized portions.

Remember: It's not about perfect bread — it's about sharing time, laughs, and the joy of creating something together!

“ The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away. **”**
William Shakespeare

VACCINATIONS IN ONTARIO



The current paring back of vaccines for children in the United States has allowed us to reflect on our own vaccine schedules to help us make more informed decisions for the children we care for.

We are very fortunate to have a tremendous public health universal childhood immunization program in Ontario. Routine childhood vaccines are available through primary care providers, schools and public health units. The recommendations followed are by NACI, the National Advisory Committee on Immunizations.

There are a couple of thoughts to ponder to allow caregivers to make an informed choice regarding vaccination. These are as follows:

1 Vaccinations are provided in middle school (grades 7 and 8) for hepatitis B. Hepatitis B infection is transmitted through a variety of sources. The choice to administer in middle school is because sexual transmission is one

of the forms of transmission. However, if you travel to areas of the world where this is highly prevalent, it is possible to contract hepatitis B in other ways, so it might be worth speaking to your provider about early vaccination. In some areas of Canada, the vaccine is provided in infancy. In babies of parents who are hepatitis B carriers, the vaccine is provided at birth.

2 Meningitis is an infection of the covering of the brain. It can have devastating consequences including seizures, neurologic sequelae and even death. There are many different viruses and bacteria that cause meningitis. The most common bacteria to cause meningitis has several subtypes. All children receive the vaccine for the C subtype at the age of 12 months. The vaccine for a combined A,C,Y and W is given in grade 7. There is a vaccine, Bexsero, that covers the

B subtype. This is not part of the publicly funded vaccines and can be prescribed by your provider. It is worth raising the question about this vaccine to decide whether you might want this added protection.

3 Finally the Gardasil vaccine, also given in middle school, prevents the human papilloma virus, the virus that causes cervical cancer. It is a very safe vaccine. It is the first time we have been able to prevent a cancer with a safe and effective vaccine.

Consider these three talking points on your next visit to your provider as you consider your child's vaccine schedule.

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!

FEBRUARY IS FOR ESSENTIAL SELF-CARE

February often brings a welcome pause.

The holiday rush has passed, routines return, and for many moms and caregivers, attention quickly shifts back to everyone else. But February is also a timely reminder that self-care isn't indulgent—it's essential.

At London Plastic Surgery & Advanced Aesthetics, we see every day how even small acts of self-care can restore confidence, energy and emotional wellbeing. This month, we're highlighting subtle, natural-looking aesthetic treatments designed to help women feel refreshed—not transformed.

Self-Care That Honors Your Natural Look: Facial Balancing with Dermal Filler

Modern dermal filler treatments focus on balance, proportion and restoring what time and stress may have softened. Facial balancing isn't about changing your appearance—it's about enhancing your natural features so you still look like you, just more rested.

Dermal fillers can gently restore volume

in areas such as the cheeks, under-eyes and temples, create soft contouring, and support facial harmony affected by years of stress or lack of sleep. With minimal downtime, it's an ideal option for busy moms. Patients often hear the same feedback afterward: "You look refreshed," without anyone knowing exactly why.

Botox® Neuromodulators: Small Treatment, Big Impact

Stress often shows first in the face—between the brows, across the forehead or around the eyes. Botox® and Dysport® are neuromodulators that relax targeted facial muscles, helping soften expression lines before they deepen.

Treatment is quick—often under 15 minutes—and results appear within 7-14 days. The outcome is a smoother, softer expression that still looks natural and expressive, making it a convenient self-care option for hectic schedules.

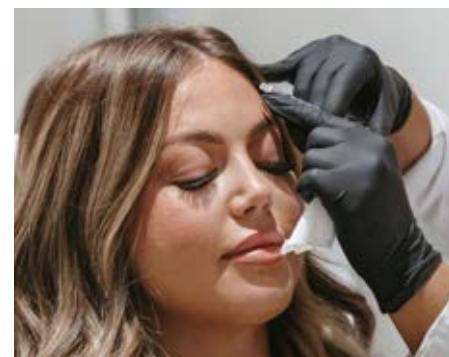
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A New Space for Confidence

We're proud to introduce our expanded procedure suite, thoughtfully designed with comfort, privacy and efficiency in mind. This space allows us to offer treatments such as eyelid surgery, neck lifts and minor procedures with improved scheduling flexibility—perfect for caregivers who value both time and care.

This February, Choose Yourself

Caring for yourself helps you show up better for those you love. Whether it's a subtle refresh or exploring new options, self-care is an act of confidence—and this month, it's one worth embracing.



London Plastic Surgery & Advanced Aesthetics

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU





WHAT'S IN YOUR GLASS? MAYBE IT'S TIME TO RETHINK YOUR DRINKING

Just because it fits in one glass does not mean it's one standard drink. With so many different sized containers and alcohol percentages, it's not surprising that many of us don't know how much alcohol we consume.

In January 2023, The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction released Canada's New Guidance on Alcohol and Health, replacing the 2011 Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines. This new guidance can help us make informed choices about our health and alcohol consumption by providing evidence-based information about what a standard drink is, and the alcohol-related health risks (e.g. cancer) at low, moderate, and high drinking levels.

WHAT IS A STANDARD DRINK?

In Canada, one standard drink = 13.45 grams or 17.05 mL of pure alcohol, which equals:

- 5 oz. or 142 mL of 12% wine
- 12 oz. or 341 mL of 5% beer or cooler/cider
- 1.5 oz. or 43 mL 40% spirits (e.g., vodka, gin, etc.)

Measuring our beverages and checking alcohol percentages are simple ways to become aware of how much alcohol we drink.

ALCOHOL AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

In Canada, drinking alcohol is a common and socially accepted behavior. Many people drink to celebrate, socialize, cope with stress, connect with others, or forget problems. Additionally, women are heavily targeted by the alcohol industry through their advertising, reinforcing the myth that alcohol is a requirement for a good time. However, alcohol affects women differently than men. Biological factors such as body size and weight, genetics, enzyme levels, organ function, and metabolism all influence how alcohol is processed. These differences often lead to higher blood alcohol levels, faster intoxication, and greater health risks for women, including:

- breast cancer,
- stroke and impaired brain function,
- liver disease, and
- alcohol-related injuries.

Which drink contains the most alcohol?



Beer (341 ml/12oz)



Wine (142 ml/5oz)



Spirits (43 ml/1.5oz)

RETHINK YOUR DRINKING.ca



TAKE ACTION

RethinkYourDrinking.ca includes valuable, judgement-free information to support those exploring their relationship with alcohol. It encourages women to talk to each other about the risks of alcohol and the benefits of reduced consumption. A simple conversation can make a big difference.

For more information about alcohol, visit www.RethinkYourDrinking.ca

REFERENCES

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2022). Sex, gender and alcohol. www.ccsa.ca/en/sex-gender-and-alcohol-what-matters-women-low-risk-drinking-guidelines-report

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2023). Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health: Final Report www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2023-01/CCSA_Canadas_Guidance_on_Alcohol_and_Health_Final_Report_en.pdf



You can connect
with friends with
or without alcohol.

RETHINK:
YOUR
DRINKING.ca





ENTRY #25: ANSWERING QUESTIONS SENT IN BY YOU!

I asked you to send in your questions and they're so awesome! Let's GO!

How do you recuperate after social events?

I say, "Know thy self." Self-care is knowing about events **BEFORE** I go. I use "radical acceptance." No matter how much I wish I could attend events, some I can't. I also accept when I do go out, I need to leave when I'm overwhelmed. I must respect how bipolar disorder, ADHD and PTSD limit me so I can remain stable, peaceful, as well as not allow any situation to steal my joy. When we're tired, we're vulnerable to making bad decisions on all fronts in our lives.

How do you practice what you preach for your mental health?

I touched on this in question 1. I want to share my self-care routine next month. In short form, I would add that nothing gets in the way of my sleep, fitness, seeing my psychiatrist, and taking my meds as prescribed. Personal responsibility is key to living a stable life.

Why is the gym so important to you?

I struggle with an eating disorder. I grew up in a family obsessed with diet culture. Living a healthy lifestyle helps me win the mental war of the vicious cycle of overeating, weight gain and feeling bad about myself. The gym is my natural medication. Also, if

we invest in our health now, we reap the rewards as seniors.

Do you believe in setting resolutions?

We should show up for ourselves every day because each day we breathe is precious. There's a quote that says, "Love your neighbour as you love yourself." You can't give what you don't have. Let's love ourselves in a balanced way (by ways of self-care that I shared above) so we can love others on a full tank. July 1st, 2025 was no less important a day than July 1st, 2026 will be. What is stopping you from creating the life you want?

Didn't see your question? I will be answering it in Entry #26. To be continued...



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/@bipolaronthbrain and www.facebook.com/bipolaronthbrain.



10 THINGS I LOVE MORE THAN CANDY

We're looking to share the love this Valentine's month, so we want to know... What are 10 people, places or things you love more than candy and why?

Adi

1. Mom - because she raised me
2. Lander and Daddy - because they are always there when I need help
3. Sketching - it helps me with drawing skills
4. Reading - takes me on wild adventures in the book
5. My dogs - because they are cute
6. Puzzles - because they challenge your mind
7. Sephora - because I love make-up
8. My hamster, Meatball - because he is so cute
9. Airplanes - because when you are in the sky, you can see the world
10. Myself - you should always love yourself first

Lander

1. Animals - because they are cute
2. Family - because they are not food and you can spend time with them
3. Music - because it makes me happy
4. Exercise - to stay fit and healthy
5. Electronics - because I can communicate with my family
6. Birthdays - because you get to celebrate
7. Christmas - spending time with family
8. Television - who doesn't love shows?
9. Everest - my silver lab!
10. Bed - a good sleep!



CAREGIVER BURNOUT

My career as a Nurse Practitioner/Trauma Therapist started 24 years ago. In that time, I was the primary provider for thousands of people day, evening and night, while caring for my family, and if time allowed, myself. Like most first-time caregivers, I started this journey with the energy of a teenager, determined to provide whatever care was needed, whenever it was needed AND for as long as needed. I started to cut out my self-care so that I could provide care to more people by having shorter breaks, quicker meals, and less "me" time. Pretty soon I started to notice feeling tired and more drained by the end each day. So I would have another coffee or hit the snooze button a couple more times to temporarily boost my energy levels. Then the irritability, resentment, and feeling withdrawn from my loved ones, including my children, set in. I started to have headaches, sleep problems and get sick more often. This is the start of caregiver burnout, and if I didn't address it, it would only worsen.

After there are physical symptoms of caregiver burnout, you will experience a decline in your mental health, such as trouble concentrating, anxiety, worsening stress and hopelessness. At this point, you have lower quality of life, higher mortality rates, higher rates of chronic illnesses and provide subpar care.

So, what can you do to prevent and/or undo caregiver burnout? One word: self-care. Here is a list of things you can do daily for self-care:

1 Daily enjoyment - Wordle, read a book, watch your favorite YouTube or Netflix.

2 Eat healthy foods.

3 Exercise daily - Go for a walk, yoga, 5 min. of meditation a day has proven to decrease stress, blood pressure, heart rate and improve sleep.

4 Use your support network - Lean on loved ones, join support groups and ACCEPT help. We used to raise our children with a village.

5 Set boundaries - Learn to say no especially when you're feeling burnout.

6 Seek professional help - There is no shame going to see a cardiologist for your heart disease and thus no shame seeking help for your mental health.

If we do not take care of ourselves, we cannot give the best care to others, including our children.



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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 dating for 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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VALENTINE'S COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

COOKIES

2 Large Egg Yolks
1 Teaspoon Vanilla Extract
2 Cups All-Purpose Flour
½ Cup Granulated Sugar
½ Cup Confectioners' Sugar
½ Teaspoon Salt
1 Cup Unsalted Butter
(Room Temperature & Cut
Into 1 Inch Pieces)

ICING

1 Cup Confectioners' Sugar
1+ Tablespoons Milk
½ Teaspoon Vanilla
Pink or Red Food Colouring

DIRECTIONS

- In a small bowl, use a fork to mix egg yolks and vanilla together.
- In a food processor, pulse flour, granulated and confectioners' sugars, and salt together. Scatter the butter over the top of the flour mixture and pulse until the mixture looks like wet sand. 8 to 10 one seconds pulses. Pour egg yolk mixture over the top of the flour mixture, and pulse until the dough is smooth and starts to pull away from the sides of the processor (about the 10 more one-second pulses.)
- Scrape the dough out of the processor and move it to a workspace to form a long log. Wrap the log in the plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm (2 hours or leave overnight best flavour)
- While the cookie dough rests make the icing. Whisk sugar and 1 tbsp of milk until smooth (add ½ tbsp at a time as needed)
- Add Food colour and let it set for 20-20 minutes.
- Adjust oven rack to the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 325F (165C).
- Remove log from fridge let it sit 2-3 minutes, use a sharp knife to create 1/3 inch thick slices.
- Place the cookies 1 ¼ inch apart on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper.
- Bake 12-16 minutes (rotate the tray halfway) cookies should be pale blonde in colour.
- Let sit on tray 5 minutes.
- Once cooled, decorate with icing and enjoy!

AS SEEN
ON OUR COVER



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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. 

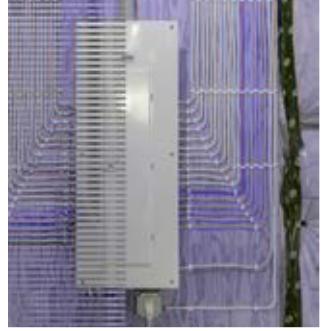
For over a decade, Jayden's Mechanical has been a trusted name for homeowners across Southwestern Ontario. Built on technical excellence and genuine, neighbor-first service, the company has grown from a local operation into a full-service mechanical firm with five locations, proudly serving Exeter, Goderich, London, Strathroy and Alvinston.

Jayden's Mechanical has been serving London homeowners for nearly two years, delivering the same high standard of workmanship that defines their reputation across the region. From heritage properties to modern builds, London residents have come to rely on Jayden's for dependable plumbing, heating and electrical solutions under one simple promise: "One Call Does It All."

At the core of the company are three guiding pillars: Comfort, Care and Community. These values drive every service call and are the foundation of the Jayden's Comfort Care Maintenance & Protection Plan. Designed for proactive homeowners, the program focuses on preventing breakdowns before they happen through scheduled maintenance for furnaces, air conditioning systems, fireplaces and water heaters.

Care is not a marketing phrase at Jayden's Mechanical. It is how they operate. Technicians are trained to treat every home like their own, prioritizing safety, long-term reliability and clear communication at every step.

With five locations and a strong presence across Southwestern Ontario, Jayden's Mechanical continues to raise the standard for home comfort. When it comes to protecting what keeps your family comfortable, there is only one call to make. Call **(519) 237-HEAT (4328)** or visit www.jaydensmechanical.com.



THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF BREATHWORK

Breath is one of the most accessible yet underutilized tools for healing and self-regulation. Breathwork is the intentional use of breathing techniques to support physical, emotional and mental well-being.



When practiced with guidance, consistency and care, breathwork can help recalibrate the nervous system, deepen self-awareness and create meaningful shifts in how we experience stress, emotion and connection.

At Eir Centre, breathwork begins with the fundamentals. Participants are invited to understand how proper breathing mechanics influence the body and mind, and to build awareness of habitual patterns that may no

longer serve them.

IN RICHELLE'S WORDS

"As a breathwork facilitator at the Eir Centre, my role isn't about fixing or healing anyone. It's about holding space so people can tap into their own innate healing potential and feel safe doing it.

We start simply: no special experience, no need to share your story. Through gentle guided breathing, the body shifts from constant alert into a state of rest—offering a pause in a world that rarely allows one. The body loosens, breath deepens and emotions surface naturally because the body finally feels supported enough to let go. People often tell me it's the first time in a long while they've felt truly present in their own bodies.

Breathwork doesn't require strength or flexibility. It meets you exactly where you are. It's not about pushing or performing—it's about remembering. At the Eir Centre, breathwork becomes a quiet act of self-com-



passion. A reminder that even in the midst of responsibility, uncertainty, or change, you are allowed to soften. You are allowed to slow down. You are allowed to rest.

And sometimes, the most powerful thing you can do for yourself—and for those you care for—is simply to breathe."

—Richelle Masse, Certified Breathwork Facilitator, Integration Coach & Reiki Master

Richelle leads breathwork sessions at Eir Centre on Tuesdays and Saturdays, welcoming individuals seeking stress relief, emotional regulation, deeper self-connection or a renewed sense of calm and vitality.

.....
Dr. Kylea Potvin, Medical Oncologist and Founder, Eir Centre, 226-289-6644, Info@eirhealing.ca

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- ✓ Nutrition Counselling
- ✓ Sound Therapy
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LOVE YOUR HOME: RENOVATIONS AND REFINANCING

For many families, a home is far more than a place to live, it's where milestones are celebrated, routines are built and memories are made. As your family grows and needs change, the home that once felt perfect may start to feel tight, dated or less functional. The good news? You don't have to leave the neighbourhood you love to create a home that works better for your family.

One of the most powerful tools available to homeowners is home equity. As you pay down your mortgage and property values increase, you build equity that can often be accessed through refinancing. This equity can be used strategically to fund renovations that improve both your lifestyle and your home's long-term value.

Kitchens and bathrooms are among the most popular renovation projects. A functional kitchen can make busy mornings smoother, family dinners more enjoyable and entertaining less stressful. Updating a bathroom can improve comfort, efficiency

and daily routines, especially in households with multiple children. These upgrades enhance day-to-day living and are proven to add value to your home.

For growing families, space is often the biggest challenge. Refinancing can help fund additions, basement developments or reconfigured layouts creating extra bedrooms, play areas or home offices. Instead of uprooting your children from their schools, friends and routines, you can adapt your current home to meet your evolving needs.

Comfort-focused improvements also make a meaningful difference. Better insulation, new windows, improved heating and cooling systems or accessible design features can make your home more energy-efficient and comfortable year-round. These changes support your family's well-being today while preparing your home for the years ahead.

Refinancing to renovate isn't just about borrowing, it's about planning. By rolling renovation costs into your mortgage, you may benefit from lower interest rates compared to other forms of credit, all while investing in a space that supports your family's lifestyle.

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INVISIBLE THINGS DADS CAN DO THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Fatherhood comes in many forms: two-parent households, shared custody, single dads, blended families. No matter how often you see your kids or how much time you spend together, the things you do that aren't obvious — the planning, organizing and mental juggling — can be just as impactful as the movie tickets or camping trips.

No one in their right mind would argue that dads carry the majority of emotional labour in parenting. Not even Leafs fans, or people who think Oasis will get back together and last more than two shows this time. But what dads do contribute matters — and most of us probably have more capacity to help than we realize.

Here are three practical ways dads can reduce the emotional load at home while teaching their kids valuable life skills:

Be organized — and teach organization.

If your child is in elementary school, they can probably put away their own laundry. Labelling drawers with masking tape and a marker helps. For older kids, introduce a family calendar — digital or on the fridge — and have them add school events, hot-lunch days and practices themselves. As I often tell my kids, "you aren't born knowing things." Organization is a learned skill, built through repetition.

Teach kids how to stay socially connected.

When my kids were younger, they made handwritten thank-you cards for birthday gifts and we relied on teachers to help slip invitations into backpacks. As they get older, staying in touch might mean messaging friends from teams or exchanging phone numbers. Helping kids learn how to follow

up, make plans and maintain friendships isn't just social development — adults call this networking.

Stay on top of the details.

Free tools like Google Calendar, reminders and spreadsheets are powerful. I track everything: school spirit days, library due dates, dog medication, even vehicle maintenance. Building systems like these reduces stress, models responsibility and lightens the load on your partner or co-parent.

Gone are the days of the Archie Bunker-style dad who works, comes home, expects dinner and checks out. Modern dads can — and should — do more. Often, it's the invisible things that make the biggest difference.

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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THE BIG SQUEEZE

They call us the Sandwich Generation — but honestly? It feels more like a sad tortilla wrap. Overstuffed, flattened and barely holding it together.

The term showed up in the 1980s to describe adults, mostly Gen Xers, who found themselves caring for both their aging parents and still-dependent kids. Back then, it sounded like a theory made at the sociology factory. Now? It's our daily, unpaid side hustle on top of our actual jobs, complete with exhaustion, guilt and perimenopause.

Our kids are staying home longer thanks to housing prices that look like phone numbers, groceries that require a second mortgage and fewer marriages delaying financial independence. Meanwhile, our parents are living longer — which is amazing — but now we're helping them with technology, navigating new pension and tax rules, and chauffeuring them to cataract and hip surgeries like we're running a geriatric Uber.

Then there's retirement. Or as I like to call it: fiction. The pension age keeps creeping up, and our savings keep getting raided for car repairs,

down payments or student loans. Every time we try to save, another expense crops up.

But here's the part nobody warned us about: the long-term side effects. Not just the financial hit, but the missed milestones, the shrinking bucket lists and the gradual disappearance of "me time." We're supposed to be planning retirement and starting to slow down, not rescheduling a mammogram because our kid needs the car. Our "golden years" are looking more nickel-and-dime by the minute.

And still — we show up because we were raised on latchkeys and low expectations, only to become fiercely independent (and

oddly good at folding fitted sheets). We know how to stretch a dollar, a minute and a smile even when we're running on fumes.

So, if you're feeling the squeeze, know this — you're not failing. You're just doing what Gen X has always done — holding it together. Quietly. Efficiently. And probably with a little sarcasm and stubbornness. We may be the filling in this multigenerational sandwich, but we're also the glue — and some days, that glue tastes a lot like peanut butter, duct tape and chewing gum.

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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HOW ORTHOTICS SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH RARE CONDITIONS

Every year on the last day of February, families around the world recognize Rare Disease Day. It's a time to raise awareness for the millions of people living with rare conditions, and to acknowledge the caregivers who often navigate complex medical systems, long diagnostic journeys and day-to-day uncertainty.

A rare disease is typically defined as a condition that affects a small number of people, but taken together, rare diseases are not rare at all. Many are diagnosed in childhood and can affect muscle tone, joint alignment, balance, coordination or overall mobility. For parents, one of the most common questions becomes: How can I help my child move more comfortably and confidently?

This is where orthotics can play an important role. Orthotics are custom-made devices designed to support alignment and movement. In children with rare conditions, orthotics are not about restricting motion,



they are about making movement easier, safer and less tiring.

For some children, orthotics help improve stability at the ankles or feet, reducing falls and increasing confidence when walking. For others, they help support proper alignment, which can reduce pain and prevent unnecessary strain on growing joints. Many caregivers notice that with the right support, their child has more energy throughout the day and can participate more fully at school, at home or on the playground.

Orthotics can also support developmental progress. When balance or strength is a

challenge, a child may hesitate to explore movement. By providing added support, orthotics allow children to practice walking, standing or running while continuing to build strength and skills, often alongside physiotherapy. Regular follow-ups ensure devices continue to fit well and meet a child's changing needs. Caregivers play a vital role here by monitoring comfort, watching for skin issues, and sharing observations with their orthotist.

Rare Disease Day is about visibility, understanding and support. While orthotics may not change a diagnosis, they can make a meaningful difference in how a child experiences the world, supporting mobility, independence and participation in everyday life.

For many families, that support matters more than words can say.

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NUTRITION FOR WOMEN IN MIDLIFE DURING RAMADAN

As February unfolds, many families are beginning to prepare for Ramadan, which starts mid-February this year. This season of reflection, spirituality and community can also be a time when women, especially those in their perimenopausal and menopausal years, pause to consider how fasting fits with their changing energy needs, hormones, sleep and overall well-being.

In my work with women in midlife, one topic that comes up often is fasting. While intermittent fasting has gained popularity, it is not something I routinely recommend for women navigating perimenopause or menopause. During this stage of life, our bodies are already adapting to fluctuating hormones, changes in blood sugar regulation, shifts in sleep and increased stress sensitivity. Extended periods without food can sometimes amplify symptoms like fatigue, irritability, poor sleep, dizziness or intense cravings later in the day.

That said, Ramadan fasting is very different from a diet trend. It is deeply meaningful and spiritually grounded, and for many women, it is non-negotiable. So instead of asking whether to fast, a more supportive question becomes: How can I best support my body during this time?

MAKE SUHOOR COUNT

Skipping Suhoor can make the fast feel much harder, particularly in midlife. Aim for a balanced meal that includes protein, fibre and healthy fats to help sustain energy and keep blood sugar more stable. Think eggs with whole grain bread and avocado, Greek yogurt with berries and nuts, lentil soup with olive oil and fruit, or lentils with vegetables and olive oil.

PRIORITIZE PROTEIN AND FIBRE ATIFTAR

After a full day of fasting, it can be tempting to rely on refined carbohydrates or sweets for quick energy. While these foods certainly have a place, pairing them with protein

and fibre can help prevent energy crashes and support muscle mass, which becomes increasingly important as we age.

HYDRATION MATTERS MORE THAN YOU THINK

Hormonal changes can increase sensitivity to dehydration. Between Iftar and Suhoor, sip fluids consistently rather than trying to catch up all at once. Water, milk, soups and herbal teas all contribute.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO ADAPT

Your body at 40, 50 and beyond is not the same as it was at 25. Feeling more tired, needing more rest or adjusting portion sizes is not a failure. If fasting significantly worsens symptoms or affects your health, have a conversation with a trusted healthcare provider.

Ramadan is a time of intention and care. Care for your spirit, your family and your community. Our bodies deserve that same care. Wishing a very meaningful and peaceful Ramadan to all those observing this year!

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



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