

A FREE  
MAGAZINE

# THE MOM & CAREGIVER™

MARCH 2026  
VOLUME 28 ISSUE 03

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*Soul*  
**MAN!**

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PREGNANCY - BABY - TODDLER  PRESCHOOL - SCHOOL AGE - FAMILY

# March Break Magic!

March Break sounds like sunshine and spring... but in Canada, it usually looks more like boots, snowbanks, and “Mom, I’m freezing!” ten minutes into being outside. The good news? You can still have a fun, active March Break as a family without spending a lot of money or needing the perfect weather.

Here are a few simple ideas that work **indoors AND in the cold outdoors:**

## Indoor Activities

- **Family Dance Party:** Put on a playlist and do a “song challenge” (freeze dance, slow-motion dance, or dance like an animal).
- **Indoor Snow Day Olympics:** Use painter’s tape lines to jump over, pillows to hop across, and a “spin then walk” race.
- **Build-a-Blanket Fort + Movie:** Add popcorn and let the kids perform a quick “dance show” inside the fort after.
- **Kitchen Helper Day:** Bake muffins or decorate cookies, then dance while you clean up (it helps, trust me!).

## Outdoor Activities

- **Snow Fort or Snow Kingdom Build:** Add tunnels, walls, and “dance stage” areas for imaginary performances.
- **Tobogganing:** The ride down is fun... and the climb back up counts as exercise!
- **Snow Walk Scavenger Hunt:** Look for animal tracks, pinecones, icy shapes, or “something that sparkles.”
- **Snowball Target Practice:** Stack buckets or draw targets in the snow, and everyone gets a turn.

And for those days when kids need something exciting to do, *and* grown-ups need a little time to work, organize, or reset, **Dance Extreme’s March Break Camp** is a great option. Families can choose a **full week** or **individual days**, and kids stay busy with dancing, games, crafts, and lots of movement, perfect for burning energy. March Break doesn’t need fancy plans. A little creativity, a little movement, and a few snowy adventures can make it a week your kids will remember.

REGISTER NOW AT DANCE EXTREME

*Let's Dance!*



**Dance Extreme**

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519.657.3262





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What a cool guy **Rafael** is! He's a wonderful listener and talented musician - he played Jingle Bells on the harmonica for us while standing right on the spot we pointed out. Whatever **Rafael** chooses to do in life, we think this youngest of 5 kids is going big places!



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# THE MOM & CAREGIVER

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MOM & CAREGIVER

# VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

We are extremely proud to offer such a variety of articles in The Mom & Caregiver magazine! We've gathered experts in their fields to share information, stories and parenting tips. And March is no different - we really took a "variety is the spice of life" angle for this spring edition!

We always, of course, cover parenting topics, and I found these two extremely interesting this month. Have you ever wondered about the science behind tantrums (page 12)? Why do kids turn to this behaviour (especially at grocery stores - haha) and how can we use this knowledge to prevent tantrums? Also, how can I teach my child to be a good friend? Our kids aren't born knowing how to share, take turns and handle the rollercoaster of friendship, so surely it's up to us to teach them (page 18).

Now let's focus on this fact - adulting is hard! But we're here to help you out with two ways you can be very "grown-up" this year. Page 16 brings Tax Time Opportunities - say hello to paperwork, deadlines and financial stability with less stress. Put Radon on your Radar on page 8 - did you know that millions of homes in Canada have high levels of cancer-causing radon?

March wouldn't be March without dreams of spring! So we're sharing a Gentle Spring Reset (it's the small changes that stick!) on page 22. And you'll love a Spring Skin Clean Up for that dull and dehydrated outer layer after a harsh winter - find it on page 7.

Let's have a little fun this month. Our cover "Soul Man" inspired us to add a little soul music onto our spring playlist. Why not check out classics like "Respect" by Aretha Franklin, "A Change is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke and "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye. They all just seem so fitting right now.

Lastly, we want to wish everyone a happy International Women's Day on March 8th! Women embody the quote "Variety is the spice of life" in that we are all so different - we are different shapes, sizes and colours, have different roles and different ideas - but we are all working towards the same goal. International Women's Day is about equality, but also about celebrating our individualities!

PUBLISHER/CHIEF EDITOR

*Sabrina*



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# EVENTS

MARCH 2026

Shared Beginnings  
(ages birth to 6),  
Beacock Library, [www.lpl.ca](http://www.lpl.ca)

03<sup>RD</sup>

Magisterra at the  
Museum: Piano Trios,  
Museum London,  
[www.museumlondon.ca](http://www.museumlondon.ca)

05<sup>TH</sup>

*Spring* AHEAD!  
*Daylight* SAVINGS  
TIME BEGINS

08<sup>TH</sup>

It's International  
Women's Day!  
#GiveToGain

08<sup>TH</sup>

The Music of the Lion King:  
Live in Concert, Centennial Hall,  
[www.centennialhall.london.ca](http://www.centennialhall.london.ca)

11<sup>TH</sup>

The Rock Orchestra  
by Candlelight,  
Canada Life Place,  
[www.canadalifeplace.com](http://www.canadalifeplace.com)

14<sup>TH</sup>

The Great Canadian  
Fiddle Show, Aeolian Hall,  
[www.aeolianhall.ca](http://www.aeolianhall.ca)

16<sup>TH</sup>

March Break Camp: Tropic  
Xscape, Museum London  
[www.museumlondon.ca](http://www.museumlondon.ca)

16-  
20<sup>TH</sup>

HAPPY  
*St. Patrick's* DAY!

17<sup>TH</sup>

From Sheep to Sweater  
with Fanshawe Pioneer  
Village, Masonville Library,  
[www.lpl.ca](http://www.lpl.ca)

19<sup>TH</sup>

IT'S THE FIRST  
DAY OF *Spring*

20<sup>TH</sup>

The Sheepdogs,  
London Music Hall,  
[www.londonmusichall.com](http://www.londonmusichall.com)

26<sup>TH</sup>

The Importance of Being  
Earnest, Grand Theatre,  
[www.grandtheatre.com](http://www.grandtheatre.com)

24<sup>TH</sup>



## ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1-2 cans enchilada sauce
- 1-2 lbs of ground beef
- 1 small onion finely chopped
- 1-2 cans of corn
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 taco seasoning packet

### DIRECTIONS:

- Brown beef with onions.
- Add taco seasoning, corn and enchilada sauce once beef is browned.
- Lightly fry the corn tortillas.
- Layer tortillas and meat mixture like you would a lasagna.
- Top with cheese.
- Bake at 350 for 20 minutes or until cheese is to your liking.

*Recipe by: Jody Krahn*

“ Here’s to strong women: May we know them.  
May we be them. May we raise them. ”

Michelle Obama

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# CANNABIS AND NICOTINE POISONING: KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE



**N**ational Poison Prevention Week happens every year in Canada. It helps people learn how poisonings happen and how to stop them. Children are at a higher risk of poisoning because their bodies are small. Things that may not cause harm to adults can be very dangerous for kids. Cannabis and nicotine are especially harmful to children.

## CANNABIS POISONING

In recent years, more children, typically under the age of five, have been accidentally poisoned by cannabis. Some illegal cannabis edibles look like candy or chocolate and may be packaged to look like the original, cannabis-free product, but they can have very high levels of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in cannabis. Children may eat them thinking they are candy and become very sick. In rare cases, cannabis poisoning in children can cause coma or even death.

## NICOTINE POISONING

Nicotine can also be very dangerous for children. Products like nicotine pouches and vape liquids often come in sweet flavours and smell like candy or fruit. The vape devices are also attractive to children as they are designed to look like toys, candy dispensers,

school supplies (e.g., markers, highlighters, etc.) and phone accessories. Even a small amount of nicotine can harm a child if it is swallowed or is absorbed through their skin.

## HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK

- Keep cannabis and nicotine products locked away and out of reach.
- Store these products away from food and drinks.
- Talk to babysitters, grandparents and others who care for your child about the risks.
- Buy products only from licensed stores. Legal cannabis products must have child-resistant packaging and have lower levels of THC to reduce harms.

## SIGNS OF NICOTINE POISONING

- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting
- Agitation, restlessness, excitement
- Confusion
- Breathing may be difficult, rapid, or stopped
- Burning in the mouth
- Drooling
- Headache
- Fainting
- Seizures (rare)

## SIGNS OF CANNABIS POISONING

- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Extreme sleepiness or trouble waking
- Slurred speech
- Trouble walking or standing
- Slow breathing
- Seizures (rare)

## WHERE TO GET HELP

If you think a child has eaten a cannabis or nicotine product, call 9-1-1 right away. Looking for help reducing your substance use?

- Call Reachout 24/7: 1-866-933-2023
- Visit [www.dontquitquitting.ca](http://www.dontquitquitting.ca)

## SOURCES:

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/drugs-health-products/brochure-help-prevent-cannabis-poisoning-children.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/vaping/risks.html>
- <https://parachute.ca/en/program/poison-prevention-week/>

Submitted by the Middlesex-London Health Unit

# SPRING SKIN CLEAN-UP AND STRONG SUMMER BODIES

March is the season of renewal—and for moms and caregivers, it's the perfect moment to reset after a long winter. Cold weather, indoor heating and nonstop responsibilities can leave skin looking dull and dehydrated, while busy schedules often make it hard to focus on strength and body goals. Spring is your opportunity to refresh, rebuild and prepare for summer—without extreme measures.

A spring skin clean-up starts with restoring hydration, clarity and tone. Professional treatments can help reverse winter damage and set your skin up for brighter months ahead. HydraFacial® is an ideal seasonal reset, deeply cleansing, exfoliating and infusing the skin with hydrating and antioxidant-rich serums—all with no downtime. It's gentle, effective and perfect for tired, stressed skin.

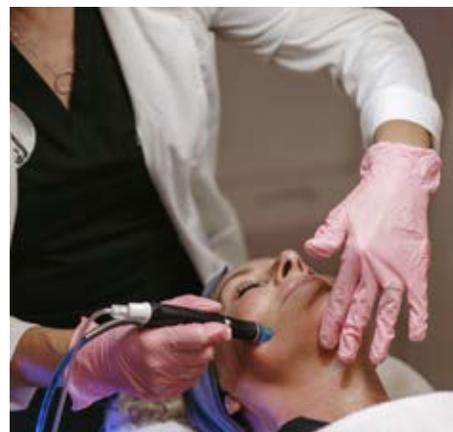
For those looking to improve texture, tone and early signs of aging, MOXI® laser treatments are a popular spring option.

MOXI uses gentle fractional laser energy to stimulate collagen, improve pigmentation and refine pores, making it an excellent choice for refreshing skin before summer sun exposure increases. Treatments are quick, with minimal downtime, and safe for busy lifestyles.

Spring is also when many women shift their focus toward feeling stronger and more confident in their bodies—not just smaller. A strong, sculpted summer body is about muscle tone, core strength and balance, especially after pregnancy, hormonal changes or long periods of stress.

**Emsculpt Neo®** supports this goal by building muscle while reducing fat using a combination of radiofrequency and high-intensity electromagnetic energy. In just 30 minutes, it stimulates powerful muscle contractions that go far beyond a traditional workout. Popular treatment areas include the abdomen, buttocks, arms, thighs and calves.

What moms and caregivers love most?



There's no downtime, no surgery, and treatments fit easily into packed schedules. You may feel muscle soreness afterward—similar to a workout—but can return to daily activities right away.

Spring self-care isn't about perfection. It's about choosing smart, supportive treatments that help you feel energized, strong and confident heading into summer—because taking care of yourself makes it easier to care for everyone else.

*London Plastic Surgery & Advanced Aesthetics (519)850-5435 [booking@londonplasticsurgery.ca](mailto:booking@londonplasticsurgery.ca)*

**London Plastic Surgery & Advanced Aesthetics**

**IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU**

# HAVE RADON ON YOUR RADAR

A recent update of the Greig health record that guides preventive care for children reminded us to be aware of radon exposure. Radon is a radioactive gas that results from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. It has no odour or taste. It can find its way into homes and accumulate over time. Uranium is a common element found in the earth's crust.

Radon exposure has health effects. It is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. 16% of lung cancers are thought to be from radon exposure.

Testing for radon is easy and inexpensive. Kits are easily available to measure levels in your home. The tests need to be done over a five-month period in the fall or winter. The kits are certified by the Canadian National Radon Proficiency Program (C-NRPP). You can go to [TakeActionRadon.ca](http://TakeActionRadon.ca) to find a test kit for your home.

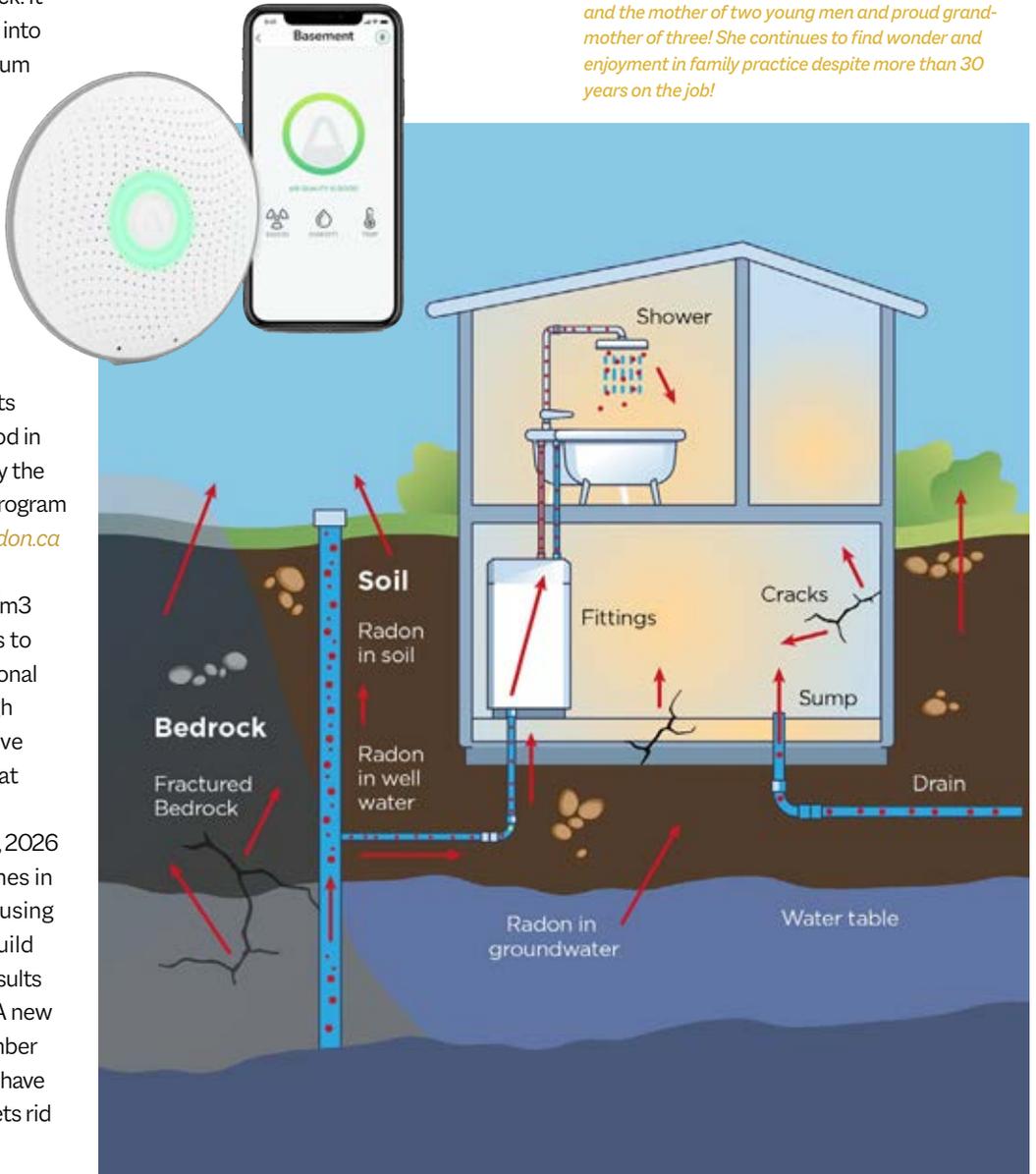
If your home tests above the 200 Bq/m3 limit, there are safe and effective ways to reduce radon levels. A certified professional to mitigate levels can be found through [c-nrpp.ca](http://c-nrpp.ca). It is estimated that one in five homes in Canada have radon levels that are high enough to impact health.

An article in CBC news from January 28, 2026 highlights the fact that millions of homes in Canada have high levels of cancer-causing radon. Our cold climate leads us to build homes that keep heat inside, but this results in us also keeping radon levels indoors. A new building code that was passed in December 2025 ruled that newly built homes must have a radon stack - a kind of chimney that gets rid of radon.

For the rest of us, it is important to test our homes. Kits may be available through libraries and public health units. The home warranty program in Ontario covers radon mitigation

testing and treatment for seven years after a home is built. Protect your health and the health of your family!

*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!*



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# THE TALE OF BETTY LOO

When Betty Loo bought her new home, she expected a learning curve. What caught her off guard was how quickly that learning became urgent once the house started running.

*The furnace cycled on.*

*The water heater followed.*

*The thermostat lit up with unfamiliar symbols.*

Betty's situation is common. Homeowners inherit complex mechanical systems with little guidance on how they work or how to care for them. That gap in understanding often leads to stress, costly emergency calls, and shortened equipment life.

Instead of reacting to problems, we gave Betty some practical guidance she could actually use.

First, we taught her what "normal" looks like. How often her furnace should run. What sounds were expected. Which alerts on the thermostat mattered and which did not. This alone removed a lot of unnecessary worry.

Second, we showed her how to do simple homeowner checks. Changing filters on a

schedule. Keeping vents and exhaust pipes clear. Watching for small warning signs like inconsistent temperatures, unusual noises, or rising energy bills. None of these require technical expertise, just awareness.

Third, we advised her to document her equipment. Model numbers. Installation dates. Warranty information. Having this information on hand makes service faster and avoids rushed decisions during breakdowns.

Finally, we encouraged Betty to think preventatively. Routine professional inspections catch issues early, keep systems running efficiently, and reduce the likelihood of mid winter failures. Maintenance is not about perfection.

is about extending the life of what you already own.

The biggest shift for Betty was confidence. She no longer felt like her home was a mystery waiting to fail. She understood her systems, knew what to watch for, and had a plan if something changed.

Homeownership gets easier when you replace uncertainty with knowledge.

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JOURNAL ENTRY #26

# ARE YOU A PETTY PERSON?

Yes, I am talking to you! LOL. Let's find out if you are a petty person. The Webster's Dictionary defines petty when using it in how you behave as, "something that is small, minor, or of little importance. In the context of behavior, petty behavior is characterized by actions that are often disproportionate to the issue at hand, such as reacting strongly to trivial matters or engaging in small-scale conflicts over minor grievances. This behavior can manifest as disproportionate responses, deliberate intent, and a focus on tiny issues that may provoke a person's ego or pride."

So, are you petty according to the definition, or are you of the mind that engaging with people who are deliberately causing you harm are just not worth interacting with to prove your point? This one is a hard one to admit. As I say to my husband, "I don't need to win this fight. Over and out!" He is known for saying,

"Do you really want to die on this hill?" Both reactions go along with the idea that being right is highly overrated.

This past week our family suddenly lost a family member, and it made me think about the dumb stuff that we so intensely focus on that doesn't truly matter. My husband leaves his socks on the floor every single day right next to the hamper. It drives me nuts! I used to get so annoyed, but after losing our family member, it made me think. My husband is my primary caregiver and protector in helping me manage my bipolar disorder. If my husband suddenly passed, I would wish so much to see his socks on the floor. I could put them on a plate and give them to him for breakfast to prove my point (which would be very petty of me), or I could be grateful for all the things he does to keep

me healthy, shut my mouth and just pick up the socks. I hope that my story has helped you to have a new perspective on how you behave in your day-to-day life.

I want to challenge you to evaluate where you are being petty in your life because in the end, you're not hurting anyone but you. It's a lot less energy to just let things go. See you next month!

.....  
*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](http://www.tiktok.com/@bipolaronthebrain) and [www.facebook.com/bipolaronthebrain](http://www.facebook.com/bipolaronthebrain).*





# SPRINGING INTO GROWTH

**How have you grown since last year?**

**Adi** - I am taller and smarter.

**Lander** - I am taller and more hungry.

**Why do you think it's important for kids to get dirty sometimes?**

**Adi** - It's important to help them on adventures!

**Lander** - It's just fun!

**How do you make boring days more fun?**

**Adi** - Puzzles and games with my family.

**Lander** - I like fitness and earning money.

**What is something you wish an adult would ask you about?**

**Adi** - I don't know...

**Lander** - What I want for Christmas. lol



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.

# THE SCIENCE BEHIND A TANTRUM

Have you ever wondered about the science behind a tantrum? It's easy to understand AND then easy to minimize by understanding "The Window of Tolerance."

## WHAT IS THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE?

This concept was developed by Dr. Dan Siegel to describe the ideal zone of "arousal" for a child or adult to function in everyday life. When they are within this zone, they can manage and cope with their emotions, small and big. They are fed, have good sleep, a stable home environment and are healthy. They can easily cope with life stressors, one missed nap, or one big blow out with siblings. But when the stressors continue to occur day after day, we leave the widow of tolerance and move to either hyperarousal or hypoarousal.

## WHAT IS HYPERAROUSAL?

Hyperarousal is a heightened state of activity and energy driven by a release of stress hormones (adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol). The nervous system is kicked into high alert even if danger is not present. The result is fight, flight or freeze, which then causes angry outbursts, fear, anxiety, overwhelm of emotions, panic, hypervigilance and tight muscles, also known as the tantrum.

## WHAT IS HYPOAROUSAL?

Hypoarousal is when a child or adult feels threatened, recounting a traumatic memory. When this occurs, a child or adult feels low, with a blank stare and inability to speak. This affects sleep and eating habits, causes withdrawal from peers, and difficulty expressing themselves.

## HOW TO GET BACK INTO THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE?

When we are calm, we can co-regulate the emotions of our child. Connect with physical touch. Hug/hold them tightly and consider:

*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.*

**1** Grounding Exercises like 5-4-3-2-1 - Ask your child to identify 5 things they see, 4 things they can touch, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell and 1 they can taste.

**2** Sensory Regulation for Hyperarousal - Ask your child to scream into a pillow, jump up and down, or dance to release the energy created by stress hormone release.

**3** Breathing Exercises like Belly Breathing - Ask your child to breath in and out by raising their belly like a balloon.

Tantrums are a result of a dysregulated nervous system, normal and difficult at times, but also manageable with the above techniques.



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# CHILDREN'S HEALTH FOUNDATION

## WOMEN CARE

### Supporting Children And Their Families Across Our Region

This March, add your voice and show Women Care.

This initiative asks all women to use their collective voice, leadership abilities, and community connections to support critically ill and injured children receiving care at Children's Hospital in London. If not us, who? If not now, when?

Give \$10, \$100, or \$1000 to ensure Hope Lives at Children's Hospital.



HOPE LIVES HERE



*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. *

Women play a powerful role in strengthening families, businesses and communities. They are leaders, collaborators and connectors – bringing people together around causes that matter. From the home to the workplace, women's voices and influence help drive meaningful, lasting change.

That's why, throughout the month of March in recognition of International Women's Day, Children's Health Foundation is inviting female business owners, managers, community leaders and decision-makers to come together in support of critically ill and injured children across our region – helping advance vital pediatric care where it's needed most.

Through the generosity of donors and corporate partners, Children's Health Foundation funds nearly all of the life-saving equipment and many of the programs at Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre, support that would otherwise go unfunded.

Children's Hospital provides state-of-the-art, wraparound care to more than 60 000 children each year, serving families from across Southwestern and Northern Ontario – including communities such as Windsor, Cambridge and Thunder Bay. Children come to receive highly specialized treatment, complex surgeries, pediatric oncology care, rare disease support and mental health services. Each year, our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) offers hope to more than 1000 families welcoming premature and micro-premature babies, some weighing just a few hundred grams. Thanks to the generosity of donors, these babies receive the advanced, life-saving care they need to grow, heal and thrive. This March, show you care by donating \$1, \$10, \$100 or \$1000 (or more) to our Women Care campaign. Let's harness the power of the female voice, highlight our corporate strength, creativity and passion, while advocating for critically ill and injured children, keeping them safe and providing hope for their future.

Visit <https://giving.childhealth.ca/page/womencare> today to make a donation or inquire as to how your company can launch an employee payroll deduction campaign, an 'ask at the till' campaign or donate a portion of proceeds from the sale of a key product.

During the month of March – and all year long – let's show that Women Care. If not us, who? If not now, when? It's because of YOU and women like you, Hope Lives at Children's.

SCAN TO GIVE ONLINE



# WHAT IS PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPY?

At Eir Centre, we believe healing happens when the mind, body and spirit are supported together. Many individuals living with chronic stress, depression, anxiety, trauma or existential distress have tried counselling, medication or both, yet continue to feel stuck or overwhelmed. Psychedelic-assisted therapy is an emerging, evidence-informed approach that offers new possibilities for healing, especially when traditional treatments have not provided enough relief.

Psychedelic-assisted therapy is not about escape or “getting high.” Instead, it is a carefully guided therapeutic process that combines psychotherapy with the medically supervised use of specific medicines in a safe, supportive and structured environment. At Eir Centre, this approach is rooted in compassion, clinical expertise and a deep respect for each individual’s unique healing journey.

These medicines can temporarily help the brain become more open and adaptable,

allowing individuals to gently explore difficult emotions, unresolved experiences or long-standing patterns that may be contributing to suffering. With the support of trained therapists and medical professionals, many people experience meaningful insights, emotional release and a renewed sense of connection to themselves and their lives.

Psychedelic-assisted therapy at Eir Centre unfolds in three carefully supported phases. The process begins with preparation, where clients meet with their care team to review their health history, clarify goals and ensure this treatment is safe and appropriate. The medicine session takes place in a calm, comfortable setting with continuous medical monitoring and therapeutic support. The final and essential phase is integration, where clients reflect on their experience and learn how to apply new insights to everyday life. Integration helps transform moments of insight into lasting, meaningful change.

Aligned with our vision to transform conventional models of care, Eir Centre

offers psychedelic-assisted therapy as part of our whole-person, evidence-informed approach to wellness. By combining medical care, psychotherapy and compassionate support, we strive to empower individuals to reconnect with their inner strength, foster resilience and move toward a more fulfilling and balanced life.

If you are curious about whether psychedelic-assisted therapy may be right for you, our team is here to provide guidance, education and supportive care every step of the way.



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



**Care. Compassion. Healing.**

**At Eir Centre our vision is to transform the conventional model of care by embracing a holistic approach that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit. We aim to empower every individual facing health challenges with the knowledge, skills, support, and courage to discover their strength and live fully.**



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# TAX TIME OPPORTUNITIES

Tax season often comes with mixed emotions as you think about paperwork, deadlines and even the hopeful anticipation of a refund. Instead of letting that refund disappear into everyday expenses, tax time can be a valuable opportunity to strengthen your family's long-term financial stability. With thoughtful planning, your refund can create benefits that last well beyond this year.

For parents working toward homeownership, a tax refund can provide meaningful momentum toward a down payment. Even a modest refund can help you reach minimum requirements sooner or reduce the total amount you need to borrow. This can lead to lower monthly payments and more flexibility in your household budget, freeing up funds for childcare, extracurricular activities or future savings. Homeownership also brings stability for children, offering consistency in schools, neighbourhoods and community connections.

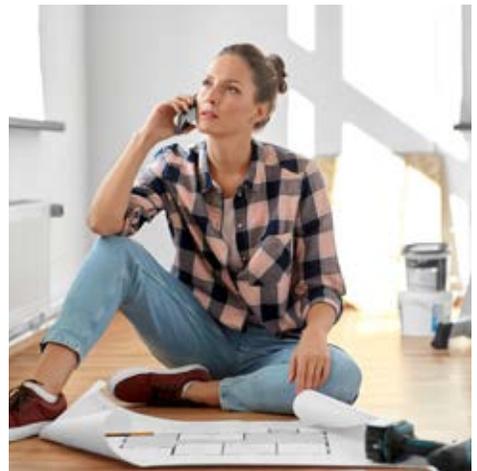
If you already own a home, applying your tax refund as a mortgage prepayment can be a smart, low-effort strategy. For busy parents balancing careers, family and rising costs, this is a simple way to make meaningful financial progress without changing your lifestyle. Over the long term, mortgage prepayments can shorten your amortization, reduce your interest over time, and increase your overall net worth.

Using your refund for home improvements can also deliver long-term value. Renovations such as finishing a basement or improving energy efficiency can enhance daily family life while increasing your home's resale value. For growing families, these upgrades can provide more space and improved comfort — often eliminating the need for a costly move.

**Not everyone receives a refund, and owing income taxes can be stressful.** If you have an upcoming mortgage renewal or available equity in your home, there may be

solutions. An equity take-out or home equity line of credit (HELOC) can be used to pay tax debt at a lower interest rate than many payment plans or high-interest credit cards. This approach can help reduce financial pressure, consolidate debt and keep your family's finances moving forward.

With the right strategy, tax time can be more than a once-a-year obligation - it can be a powerful opportunity to invest in and strengthen your family's financial future.



*Rhonda Stark, Mortgage Agent, Level 2, Mortgage Intelligence, (519)868-6794, [www.rhondastark.ca](http://www.rhondastark.ca), [www.facebook.com/YourMortgageResourceConnection/](https://www.facebook.com/YourMortgageResourceConnection/)*

## Turn Tax Time Into Family Time.

**Your tax refund can do more than cover everyday expenses,**

it can help build stability for your family's future. From buying your first home to paying down your mortgage faster, **the right strategy today can create more breathing room tomorrow.**



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# TEACHING OUR KIDS TO BE A GOOD FRIEND, EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD

My childhood was one ongoing lesson from ABC, the WB or TBS. My earliest understanding of friendship came from Bart Simpson manipulating Milhouse into helping him buy Radioactive Man Issue #1. Emotional intelligence and boundaries were not taught by my parents.

High school friendship lessons involved Zack and Slater competing for girls, or Dawson and Joey endlessly circling the truth that he was madly in love with her, all while maintaining truly elite 90s hair.

Sports were my ultimate tutor. Real friendships formed on cramped road trips to tournaments, wedged into the back of a Chevy Astro Van, sharing Game Boy and Panasonic Shockwave CD players while learning about teamwork, competition and forgiveness.

With 2026's fifteen-second attention spans and network TV replaced by TikTok and YouTube Shorts, our kids don't get the same slow-burn social lessons. No more Saturday mornings running downstairs, pouring a bowl of Trix, and immersing yourself in Hollywood's class trips to Hawaii. On behalf of our kids, we have to step up.

Kids model what they see. If you'd prefer they don't believe friendship looks like handing out briefcases of cash to strangers like Mr. Beast does, then become their Mr. Feeney. Teach your kids to "go first." At the playground, encourage them to introduce themselves to the kid playing alone. In school, be mindful with birthday invitations, either invite the whole class or hand them out outside school hours. Exclusion hurts.

Build relationships with other parents.

Invite families over. Once someone confirms you're not running a Breaking Bad-style RV operation in the driveway, they're usually thrilled to drop off and enjoy a few unencumbered hours.

Teach forgiveness. Friends will mess up. Feelings will get hurt. Toys will break. Learning to own mistakes and forgive others is how kids build friendships that last. Friendships will come in seasons. What will last is helping our kids become adaptable, confident and kind - able to walk into unfamiliar spaces and form genuine connections.

No one is born knowing how to do this. It's our job to teach them, even when it's hard, and Zack Morris isn't around to pause time and explain his newest zany hijinks.

*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 DAY THE MUSIC (VIDEOS) DIED

It happened quietly, but it hit me loud — MTV is no longer playing music videos. Like... at all.

For Gen Xers, MTV wasn't just a channel. It was the soundtrack of our adolescence, the mood board of our identity, and the only reason we learned to program a VCR. Before TikTok, before YouTube — there was MTV. And if you were lucky enough to have a satellite dish in the '80s or '90s, as I did, your house was the hangout. After school and every weekend, kids crowded around our TV, wide-eyed as we absorbed the latest videos, hits and moves.

We didn't stream; we waited. We didn't scroll; we recorded. And we'd rewatch the same VHS tapes for hours, mastering the choreography to "Hammer Time," "Vogue"

and "The Running Man."

MTV wasn't just about music — it was a lifestyle. It gave us our first taste of rebellion, freedom of expression and visual storytelling. We saw what fashion could be, from acid-washed jeans and scrunchies to pleather bustiers and plaid-flannel rebellion. It taught us that music wasn't just to be heard; it was meant to be felt.

And while our kids may not gather to catch the top 10 list on TRL or a world-premiere video, the spirit of MTV still lives on in dance challenges, social feeds, and their shared language and fashion of pop culture. We joke about their phones and earbuds, but let's not forget that we invented the mixtape. They just digitized it.

Sure, they'll never know the thrill of waiting all day to catch a glimpse of the new Janet Jackson video or the delicate art of recording the perfect VHS mix — but they're building their own communal moments as I watch their dancing Tik Toks. And whether they realize it or not, they're dancing in the digital footprints we left behind.

So, RIP MTV. Its presence may be gone — but its legacy lives on. In every trend, every remix and every kid who dares to stand out. ***You didn't just play the hits, MTV. You choreographed our youth.***

*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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# MARCH IS FOR AWARENESS AND MOBILITY

March is a meaningful month for families across Southwestern Ontario. It brings several awareness initiatives that highlight mobility, inclusion and developmental support, topics many local parents and caregivers know firsthand. March is recognized as Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month, drawing attention to one of the most common motor conditions affecting children. Many families in our community rely on orthotic care to help their child move more safely and comfortably. Braces can support alignment, improve balance and reduce the effort it takes to walk or stand. For parents, even small improvements can mean easier mornings, safer play and greater independence at school or in the community.

March is also Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, which encourages understanding and inclusion for individuals with a wide range of developmental challenges. In our clinic, we work with families whose children have delays that

affect coordination, strength or endurance. Custom orthotics, like Ankle Foot Orthoses (AFOs), are often part of a broader care plan, helping to support growing bodies while working alongside physiotherapy, occupational therapy and other local healthcare services. Early support can make a lasting difference, especially during periods of rapid growth.

On March 21, World Down Syndrome Day, we celebrate individuals with Down syndrome and the families who support them. Many children and adults with Down syndrome experience low muscle tone and joint laxity, which can affect posture and walking. Orthotic support can help improve comfort and stability, allowing children to keep up with friends on the playground and adults to stay active in daily life.

March 1 marks International Wheelchair Day, a reminder that mobility needs are unique. Some people use wheelchairs, others use braces, and many use a combination of supports at different stages

of life. What matters most is access to the right tools and care close to home.

At our orthotics clinic, we are proud to support families throughout Southwestern Ontario. We know that every child, teen and adult has different needs, and we value the relationships we build with caregivers along the way. This March, we recognize the resilience of our community and the small, meaningful steps that help people move forward with confidence.

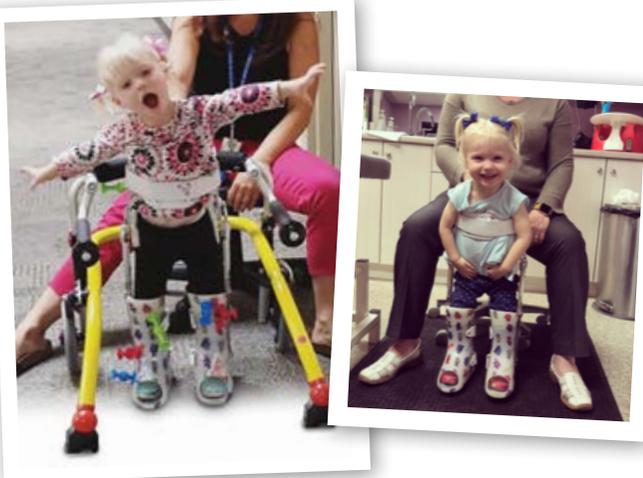


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# A GENTLE SPRING RESET

There's something about March that makes many of us feel like we should be doing more. There's a pressure to reset or undo whatever we think we did "wrong" over the winter.

But here's the truth: you don't need a dramatic reset. You don't need a detox, cleanse or total overhaul of how you eat. Winter is a season of hibernation - movement looks different and comfort foods tend to take centre stage. That's not failure, that's being human. Spring doesn't need to be about "starting over." It can simply be about checking in.

A spring reset doesn't have to be all-or-nothing. In fact, the smaller the change, the more likely it is to stick. Here are a few places to begin:

## 1 Add before you subtract.

Try more colour on your plate, an extra serving of vegetables at lunch or dinner, a protein-rich breakfast to steady energy and cravings, or a fibre boost from beans, lentils, berries or whole grains.



## 2 Revisit hydration.

As the weather shifts, hydration often slips through the cracks. You don't need to force excessive amounts of water, but checking in can make a big difference. If you're feeling sluggish, headachy or foggy, try sipping water before caffeine or sugar.

## 3 Let movement feel lighter again.

Spring movement doesn't need to mean intense workouts or rigid routines. This is a great time to walk outside, stretch in the morning or evening, or reconnect with movement that feels enjoyable, not punishing.

If you're in perimenopause or menopause, you may feel that spring resets feel harder than they used to. More fatigue, stubborn weight changes or frustration when old strategies stop working. This isn't a lack of discipline. Hormonal shifts can affect metabolism, sleep, appetite and recovery, which means the body often needs more support, not more restriction.

A spring reset doesn't have to be loud, strict or extreme. It can look like:

- Eating regularly
- Prioritizing healthier foods and habits over rules
- Moving your body in ways that feel good
- Letting go of winter guilt
- Choosing habits that support your real life

Think of this season as an invitation to care for yourself a little more intentionally. And that kind of reset works year-round.

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

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