

A FREE
MAGAZINE

THE MOM & CAREGIVER™

SEPTEMBER 2026
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School!

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PREGNANCY - BABY - TODDLER



PRESCHOOL - SCHOOL AGE - FAMILY

Back to School, Back to Confidence



September is a season of fresh starts. New teachers, new classrooms, new routines, and new opportunities all arrive at once. While many children are excited about heading back to school, the transition can also bring uncertainty. New environments, changing friendships, and higher expectations can leave children feeling a little overwhelmed.

One of the best ways to support children during this transition is by giving them a consistent activity outside of school where they can simply be themselves. Dance provides that balance.

Dance offers children something many other activities don't. It combines physical movement, creativity, music, social connection, and self-expression in one welcoming environment. As children learn new steps, they're also learning perseverance, teamwork, responsibility, and confidence. Every class becomes an opportunity to try something new, overcome a challenge, and celebrate progress.

The start of a new dance season also gives children something familiar to look forward to each week. That consistency can be incredibly reassuring during a month filled with change. Dance classes create

friendships, establish routines, and provide a positive outlet for the energy and emotions that often accompany the beginning of a new school year.

Parents are often surprised to discover that the greatest lessons learned in dance have very little to do with choreography. Children learn how to listen, solve problems, support their classmates, and believe in themselves. They discover that mistakes are part of learning and that growth comes from effort, not perfection.

Whether a child dreams of performing on stage or simply wants a fun way to stay active, dance offers benefits that extend far beyond the studio. It helps children develop skills they'll carry into the classroom, onto the playground, and throughout their lives.

As families settle into their fall routines, consider choosing activities that help your child grow not only in ability, but in confidence, resilience, and joy. Sometimes the most valuable lessons don't happen behind a desk, they happen one step, one smile, and one dance class at a time.

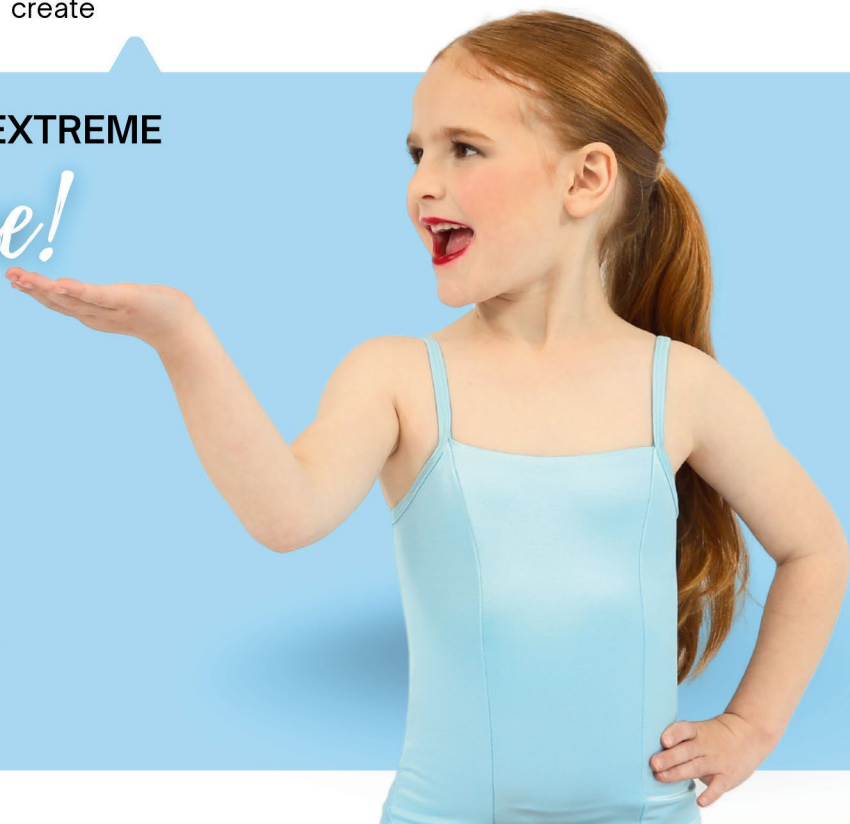
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ON THE COVER

Alayah is a wonderful listener and natural smiler, and found it hard not to grin when Ms. Cynthia, our photographer, asked for a serious face. Big thanks to mom for the gorgeous beads in her hair, and a last-minute wardrobe change that was required!



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MOM & CAREGIVER

THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL CHECKLIST THAT MATTERS MOST

September has a way of sneaking up on us. One minute we're enjoying slower mornings, family vacations and late bedtimes, and the next we're searching for backpacks, signing permission forms and packing lunches.

While it's easy to focus on the traditional back-to-school checklist—pencils, notebooks, lunch bags, indoor shoes—there's another list that's just as important. It's the one that helps our children (and ourselves) head into the new school year feeling healthy, confident and prepared for whatever lies ahead. That's exactly what you'll find in this issue.

Start with "Small Adjustments Ease Transition" (page 17), where you'll discover simple ways to help children ease back into school routines without overwhelming the whole family. A few thoughtful changes before the first bell can make those early mornings and new schedules much smoother.

Once the school year begins, busy days call for healthy eating solutions. "Back to School, Back to You" (page 5) is filled with ideas for quick packed lunches and after-school snacks that fuel everyone in the household.

A healthy school year starts with prevention, too. "Keep Your Child Healthy with Immunizations" (page 6)

explores how staying up to date on recommended vaccinations helps protect not only your child but classmates and the wider community, giving everyone a stronger start to the year.

We also take a closer look at "Signs of School Stress" (page 8). From subtle behavioural changes to more obvious signs of anxiety, knowing what to watch for can help families offer support before small worries become bigger challenges.

As you prepare for another school year, remember that the most valuable things we can send our children to school with aren't found in a backpack. Confidence. Good health. Balanced routines. Nourishing meals. Emotional support. These are the essentials that help children thrive long after the first day is over.

So, as you check off the school supply list, we hope you'll check off these articles, too. Here's to a school year filled with learning, growth, resilience, and plenty of reasons to celebrate along the way.

Happy reading, and happy back-to-school!

PUBLISHER/CHIEF EDITOR

Sabina



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EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2026

Chess for Tweens (ages 10-14),
Cherryhill Library,
www.lpl.ca

04TH

Happy
LONG WEEKEND!

07TH

Beetlejuice,
Canada Life Place,
www.canadalifeplace.com

11TH

Rock the Runway,
London International Airport,
www.rocktherunwaylondon.ca

17TH

IT'S THE *First*
DAY OF *Fall*

22ND

London Knights vs. Owen Sound
Attack, Canada Life Place,
www.airshowlondon.com

25TH

National Day
FOR TRUTH &
RECONCILIATION

30TH

Afro Fiesta Festival,
Dundas Place,
www.afrofiestafestival.ca

05TH

IT'S *Back to*
School TIME!

08TH

Lucky Lion Night Market,
Victoria Park,
www.luckylionnightmarket.ca

13TH

Terry Fox Run,
Springbank Gardens,
www.run.terryfox.ca

20TH

School of Rock,
Grand Theatre,
www.grandtheatre.com

24TH

Raffi,
Centennial Hall,
www.centennialhall.london.ca

27TH



BACK TO SCHOOL, BACK TO YOU

September arrives like a starting gun. New schedules. Packed lunches. After school pickups. Work deadlines returning at full force. The chaos is real — but so is the opportunity hiding inside it.

A reset in their routine is a reset in yours too. This year, build yourself into the schedule.

After school snacks — have these ready:

- Apple slices with almond butter
- Greek yogurt with granola and berries
- Cheese and whole grain crackers
- Veggies and hummus with a handful of nuts

Simple. Real food. No prep required when it's already in the fridge.

Quick packed lunches that work for everyone:

- Turkey or chicken wrap with vegetables and hummus
- Boiled eggs, fruit, and whole grain crackers
- Leftover protein from dinner with rice and cut vegetables

And always remember — the most important person in that lunchbox lineup is you.

Caregivers who move well sleep well — and when you sleep well, everything else gets easier. Email me at coachkcope@thecopeeffect.com and I'll send you my free 10-minute nightly mobility routine, yours absolutely free.

The schedule resets every September. This year it includes you.

Kevin Cope |
Founder, The Cope Effect | @thecopeeffect

“If we want our children to move mountains,
we first have to let them get out of our laps.”

Nicolette Sowder

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MOM & CAREGIVER

STAY STRONG: KEEP YOUR CHILD HEALTHY WITH IMMUNIZATIONS

Every new school year is an exciting time filled with new friends, teachers and routines! As you pack backpacks and prepare lunches, do not forget one of the most important ways to help your child stay healthy – make sure their immunizations and their immunization records are up-to-date.

WHY IMMUNIZATIONS MATTER

Immunization protects your child from serious diseases and keeps everyone around them safe, especially classmates, teachers and family members who may be more vulnerable. When more children are up-to-date with their immunizations:

- fewer kids and staff get sick and miss school
- parents can stay at work
- classrooms stay open for learning

Declining or delaying immunizations for your child puts them at increased risk of serious illness. Measles can spread to the brain, causing brain damage and even death. Mumps can cause inflammation of the brain and heart muscle, hearing loss and sometimes permanent deafness. For many of the diseases that we immunize against, there is no cure; therefore, immunizations are the best way to prevent the disease and reduce community spread.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

It is natural to have questions about immunizations and the diseases they prevent. Take your questions to your healthcare provider. If your child is missing any routine immunizations:

1 Book an appointment with your healthcare provider, a walk-in clinic or the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

2 Report your child's updated immunizations directly to the Health Unit. The easiest way to keep your child's immunization record up to date is online, using the ICON tool. It is quick, secure, and available in French too! www.mlhu.icon.ehealthontario.ca/#!/welcome

TIP: Make it a habit—every time your child gets a vaccine, update their record using ICON.

Have Questions?

- Visit www.healthunit.com/ or call 519-663-5317.
- Speak with a registered nurse through the SickKids Immunization InfoLine if you have questions or concerns www.sickkids.ca/immunizationinfo.

Let us work together to give every child a safe, strong start to school!



Submitted for the Middlesex-London Health Unit by
Sarah Hill RN PHN and Heather Bywaters RN PHN



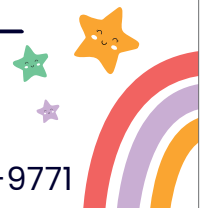
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WHERE THERE IS FIRE THERE IS SMOKE

The hazardous smoky conditions that we endured in southwestern Ontario made us acutely aware of the disastrous effects of climate change on human health. Those living in the areas in northern Ontario dealing with the fires faced incredible loss and health consequences.

Sadly, this is not likely going to be an isolated one-time occurrence. As wildfires in B.C. and Europe have shown us, this is likely to occur again.

How can we protect our health in the future when this occurs?

The three areas of preventive management can loosely be classified as avoidance of smoke, optimizing indoor air quality and medication management for those with respiratory conditions.

1 Keep an eye on the air quality index (AQI). When it is elevated or when there are warnings on the news, pivot outdoor activities to be indoors. Avoidance of the smoke is the key to avoiding poor health outcomes. If you have to be outdoors, use an N95 mask. These remove 95 percent of particles while surgical masks only remove 20 percent.

2 Smoke can filter indoors as well. Keeping windows closed can help but also using HEPA filters and placing AC on circulate mode can lessen the number of particles in indoor air.

3 People with COPD or asthma may need to increase their inhaler use and seek medical guidance to prevent exacerbations.

Children and the elderly are particularly at risk of respiratory difficulty. Eye irritation and corneal abrasions can also occur with particle exposure so watch for symptoms of eye pain or foreign body sensation.

Wildfire smoke particularly is more worrisome than poor air quality from urban smoke due to the particle size in the smoke. An AQI due to wildfire smoke has greater health risk than a comparable one due to urban smoke. Stay safe and stay healthy as this summer's crisis is not likely to be the last.

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!



SIGNS OF SCHOOL STRESS

The change in routine at back to school time can be a struggle for our little ones. Identifying the following signs is half the battle to support our kids so that transitions are easier for them and the whole family.

Physical signs of school stress include:

- stomach aches
- headaches
- wetting the bed
- new fatigue

Psychological signs of school stress include:

- irritability
- crying
- clinginess
- sadness
- anxiety

Behavioral signs of school stress include:

- avoiding school
- withdrawn from friends
- trouble sleeping
- change in appetite
- change in hygiene (less showering, wearing dirty clothes)

Once you have identified where your child is struggling, consider trying the following to help them better ease into transition.

- Meet your children's teacher early in the school year to discuss how your child is struggling to determine the root cause (bullying, separation anxiety, academic stress) and then problem solve together.
- Routinely check in with your child's feelings. Listen to their feelings, which usually include fear (fear of failure, bullying, being alone) without trying to fix it immediately. Returning to school might not evoke anxiety for you but it might feel overwhelming for your little one. When we actively listen to our children's concerns, we can identify the root cause and address it. Keep your voice soft and low, and your body relaxed so that you can co-regulate your child's nervous system. When you're calm, they can become calm.
- Encourage extracurricular activities that interest your child. This will help them meet people and gain confidence.
- Set up playdates early in the school

year with classmates. This will help your child feel more comfortable in their social group and allow them to get used to the amount of interactions they will be encountering.

- Educate yourself about the resources (mental and physical) available to your child such as academic programs (tutors, reading programs teacher assistants), school counselors and play therapists.

Each of us reacts differently with transitions. Identifying and naming the change in your child as they process big feelings allows you to figure out the cause and problem solve with your child, your family and community supports.

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.



21ST ANNUAL CAPTURED Moments PHOTO CONTEST

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BACK TO SCHOOL = BACK TO HOME!

The lunches are packed. The backpacks are zipped. The house is finally quiet. You know what that means? It's officially back-to-school season!

After surviving two months of hearing "Mom, I'm hungry!" approximately 473 times a day, breaking up sibling arguments over who looked at who, and spending more money on summer activities than you care to admit, you've made it. Congratulations—you deserve a medal (and maybe an uninterrupted cup of coffee).

For parents and caregivers, September isn't just about getting the kids back into a routine—it's about getting your routine back, too. Suddenly, you have time to fold laundry without tiny hands helping, enjoy a peaceful trip to the grocery store, or simply sit in silence for five glorious minutes.

With school supplies, new clothes, sports registrations, and enough permission forms to make your hand cramp, the last thing you need to worry about is whether your furnace is

Jayden's Mechanical, (519) 273-HEAT (4328),
www.jaydensmechanical.com, @jaydensmechanical

ready for fall. Let's face it—home maintenance isn't exactly at the top of anyone's "fun things to do in September" list.

That's where **Jayden's Mechanical** comes in.

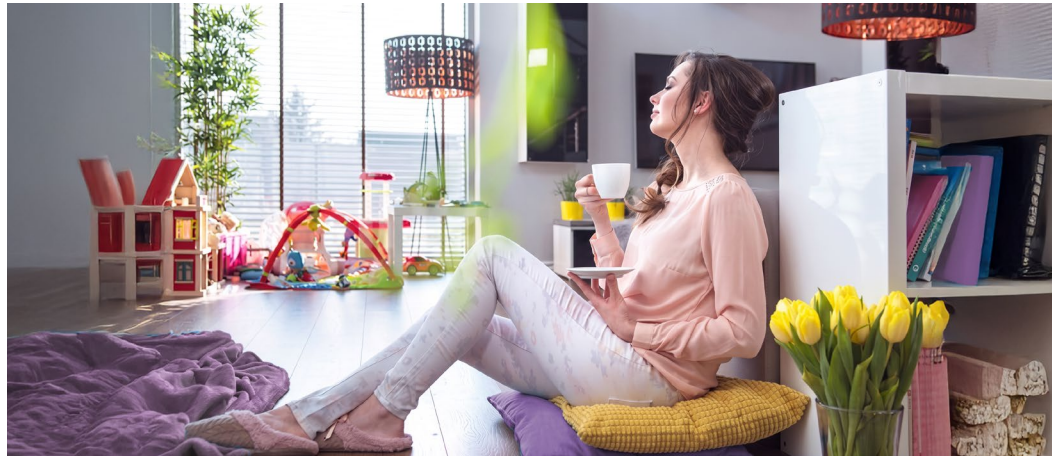
We believe back-to-school season should be about settling into your family's routine—not dealing with unexpected heating repairs or remembering to schedule your annual maintenance appointment. Our preventative maintenance plans are designed to keep your home's comfort systems running smoothly,

giving you one less thing to think about.

Because you've already got enough on your plate (and probably someone else's half-eaten grilled cheese crusts, too).

So, while the kids are busy learning their ABCs and multiplication tables, let us take care of the HVAC. You focus on enjoying a quiet house, a hot coffee and that well-earned little bit of "me time."

You've conquered summer. Let Jayden's Mechanical help make fall a breeze.



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JOURNAL
ENTRY #32YOU CAN ONLY GROW
ONCE YOU KNOW!

Is your life the best it has ever been for you, or the most difficult time that you can remember? No matter who you are, *"We all have a story."*

The way we can help each other is to acknowledge that it is human to go through similar adversities. I know what I have been through, and I have come out the other side. These times in my life have made me who I am. I started out with our title today because personal growth comes from overcoming what we thought might take us down. However, if you are the type of person that always decides that you will never give up, your life will be fulfilling.

No one said life is fair or easy. It never will be. The least helpful question you can ask

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.

yourself is, "Why me?" That question will only take you down a road of self pity. It leads to emotionally being stuck in a cycle you may not be able to get out of on your own if it is your go-to way of coping. It isn't coping at all. Reach out to someone you trust to help you start the process of standing tall again. The best thing you can do is take time limits off of your healing process. It takes as long as it takes.

I have severe bipolar depression, ADHD and PTSD. I've created a life where I don't allow myself to ask the "why me" question anymore. I used to feel bad about myself. I've been hospitalized three times. One stay for a month was only two years ago because my meds stopped working. I needed all new meds. I now accept that being admitted isn't a failure. It's where I get well again. This is just part of my story.



To be human is to experience similar challenges which are:

- 1 Grief and loss
- 2 Self- doubt
- 3 Mental health struggles
- 4 Loneliness and isolation
- 5 Heartbreak and rejection
- 6 Conflict with family
- 7 Financial insecurities
- 8 Physical health issues

I am inspired as we head into fall to go in depth into these topics. *Happy September!*



KID ZONE

LIFE AS A CHILD SEES IT

MENTAL HEALTH FOR
BACK TO SCHOOL

My rules for recess are...

Adi - Have fun!

Lander - Play manhunt with my friends

One thing I want my teacher to know about my brain is...

Adi - I am super smart!

Lander - It's full of jokes.

Talk about a time you felt really left out, and what helped?

Adi - I don't have one

Lander - I don't either

How do you calm down when you're about to explode?

Adi - Writing

Lander - Music



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.





YOUR TEENAGER DOESN'T NEED A 10-STEP ROUTINE

As the school year begins, many teens are focused on more than just new classes and reconnecting with friends—they're also becoming increasingly aware of their skin. Acne is a normal part of adolescence, with hormonal changes causing increased oil production that can lead to breakouts. While it can be frustrating and sometimes affect a teen's confidence, caring for acne doesn't have to involve expensive products or complicated routines. In most cases, a simple, consistent approach is all that's needed to support healthy skin.

Today's social media trends often encourage elaborate skincare routines and luxury products, leaving many teens (and preteens!) believing they need to shop at Sephora to achieve healthy skin. In

fact, many of the active ingredients aimed at adults (think retinol, vitamin C and hyaluronic acid) are too harsh for young skin. In reality, most teenagers benefit from a simple, consistent routine rather than a cabinet full of products.

Start with the basics: a gentle cleanser morning and night, a fragrance-free moisturizer and a broad-spectrum sunscreen every day. If mild breakouts are present, a product containing benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid can help, but stronger isn't always better. Using multiple acne treatments at once or choosing highly medicated products can dry and irritate the skin, making it more difficult to maintain a healthy skin barrier.

As parents, it's also important to recognize when acne needs more than

over-the-counter care. If your teen's acne is painful, widespread, causing scars or affecting their self-esteem, it may be time to seek professional guidance. Medical professionals can recommend evidence-based treatments that are tailored to your teen's skin and can often achieve better results than months of trial and error.

How can the team at Yazdani Aesthetics assist? We offer facials focused on teen skin that won't break your budget, along with products with a higher concentration of active ingredients. Consultations with our skin therapists or nurses are complimentary. If an appointment with our family physician is needed, she can guide you and your teen on other options that may include prescription products.



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NEIGHBOURS LOOKING OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER

Hi everyone! Thank you for welcoming me back into the pages of The Mom & Caregiver magazine.

It's been another special summer, with neighbours gathering in parks, community celebrations and evenings outdoors. We celebrated new playgrounds, trails, gathering places and accessible amenities through our Neighbourhood Parks Improvement Fund, another reminder that the best investments are in places that bring us together.

As we head into a new school year, one question I hear often is about homelessness. Families want to know they're raising their children in a city that's responding with compassion while keeping neighbourhoods safe. I believe those goals go hand in hand.

London's approach focuses on helping people move indoors, stabilize their health and rebuild their lives. We've found proven

partners like Indwell, recently credited for some of St Thomas' success, to expand supportive housing with health care, mental health and addiction supports. Today, communities like SoHo and Coves Landing are bringing stability while reducing pressure on hospitals and emergency services.

This year also marked the opening of London's micro-modular shelter community, offering safe shelter, health care, mental health and employment supports. Early results show fewer people living in encampments, more moving toward permanent housing, and a strong community forming.

None of this replaces the need for more homes, so we're building across the spectrum, from market-rate to supportive. Every new home creates opportunity, larger housing supply helps moderate costs, and we've added or are building more than 3300 affordable

homes across London.

Municipalities can't solve this alone, but we're responding to immediate needs while pressing other governments for long-term solutions. We've provided stopgap funding to keep programs like House of Hope and Ark Aid operating while advocating for more treatment, recovery and supportive services. We're also preparing for winter with warming centres and connecting people with care before a crisis becomes an emergency.

My vision is a London where neighbours look out for one another, everyone can find hope and a place to call home, and families can build a safe life together. I know we can find that balance, and it's something worth fighting for.

Do you have questions for the mayor? Email them to us at info@themomandcaregiver.com.

.....
*Josh Moran,
Mayor, City of London*





THE HIDDEN COST OF ALWAYS PUTTING YOURSELF LAST



For many of us, caring for others becomes second nature. Whether you're supporting children, a partner, aging parents, patients, coworkers or friends, it's easy to spend so much time meeting everyone else's needs that you forget to ask yourself one important question:

WHAT DO I NEED?

I learned this deeply while caring for my parents during their palliative journey, supporting their wish to remain at home. During that time, I put much of my own life on hold. Looking back, I wouldn't change the love or care I gave them. But the experience also taught me how easy it is to lose yourself while caring for others.

Many of us were taught that putting ourselves last is a sign of love, strength or responsibility. Over time, however, the cost

can appear as exhaustion, resentment, overwhelm or feeling disconnected from who we truly are.

Meaningful transformation rarely begins with a dramatic life change. It begins with awareness—with the moment we pause and recognize that we matter too.

Putting yourself on your own to-do list isn't selfish—it's essential. Like the oxygen mask on an airplane, we must care for ourselves first so we have the capacity to care for others.

Today, ask yourself one simple question:

If I put myself on my own to-do list tomorrow, what is one small thing I could do for myself?

Maybe it's a walk, a few quiet moments, saying no to something that drains you or simply giving yourself permission to rest.

You don't have to earn your place on your own to-do list. You belonged there all along.

Alicia Nolan is the founder of Alicia Nolan Life Coaching, where she helps individuals build confidence, reconnect with themselves and create lives they truly love. A certified life coach, speaker and registered dental hygienist, Alicia believes meaningful change begins with small, intentional steps. Visit her at anolanlifecoaching.ca or on Instagram @an.lifecoaching.

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Dance Extreme

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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. 

When parents enroll their child in their very first dance class, they often hope their little one will learn to skip, twirl and make new friends. At Dance Extreme, those milestones are certainly part of the journey, but they're only the beginning.

For nearly three decades, Dance Extreme has believed that dance can be a powerful tool for developing the whole child. Their mission is simple: Awaken the greatness in every child. That means every class is designed not only to teach dance, but to nurture confidence, resilience, creativity, kindness and emotional well-being.

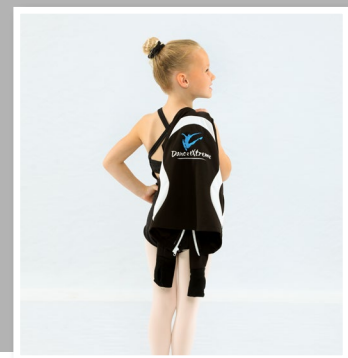
Their preschool program was created with this philosophy at its core. They know that young children learn best when movement is paired with imagination, play and meaningful experiences. That's why their classes go far beyond learning steps and preparing for a recital.

Throughout the season, their youngest dancers explore important life skills through age-appropriate activities woven naturally into each class. They learn how to take turns, solve problems, encourage their classmates and celebrate their own progress. They practice listening, following directions, expressing emotions in healthy ways and believing in themselves when something feels challenging.

Mindfulness is also an important part of the experience. Through breathing exercises, storytelling, movement games and moments of reflection, children begin developing self-awareness and emotional regulation in ways that feel fun and engaging. These simple practices help children build skills that support them not only in dance, but at home, at school and throughout their lives.

"Parents often tell us they're amazed by the changes they see. Children who were once shy begin volunteering answers. Those who struggled with separation walk confidently into class. Friendships blossom, confidence grows and children discover they are capable of far more than they imagined."

Because while they're proud to teach children how to dance, Dance Extreme is even more proud to help them discover the greatness that already exists within themselves.





FINDING PEACE AT THE END OF LIFE: THE CAREGIVER'S ROLE

In modern culture, we don't talk about death. We celebrate youth, pursue treatments promising to prolong life, and treat death as a failure rather than a natural part of living. As a result, conversations about dying may happen late, or not at all. Yet when they do, the end of life can become an opportunity for connection, meaning and peace.

In *Death Is But a Dream: Finding Hope and Meaning at Life's End*, physician Christopher Kerr says "End of life experiences testify to our greatest needs: to love and be loved, to be nurtured and feel connected, to be remembered and forgiven."

Caregivers can play an important role in creating the conditions for this peace.

Listen more than you speak. Give your loved one space to share fears, memories, hopes, regrets, dreams. You do not need to fix or explain everything. Sometimes simply saying, "Tell me more," can be enough.

Invite meaningful conversations. Ask gentle questions such as: What are you most

proud of? Is there anything you want to say to someone? What would bring you comfort right now? These conversations can help people reconnect with what has mattered most in their lives.

Respect their way of making meaning. Spiritual beliefs, relationships, music, nature, rituals, memories and familiar surroundings can all provide comfort. Ask what helps them feel safe and at peace, rather than assuming what they need.

Pay attention to dreams and visions. If your loved one describes a meaningful dream or experience, listen without judgment. You don't need to determine its significance. What matters is what the experience means to them.

Be present. Peace does not always require profound words. A hand held, a familiar voice, quiet music or simply sitting together can communicate, "You are not alone."

One of the greatest gifts we can offer someone at the end of life is permission to

talk about death without fear. A peaceful death is not about controlling the final moments or answering every question, it's about accompanying someone with compassion, dignity and love.

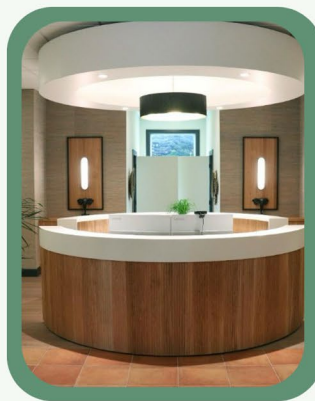


Dr. Kylea Potvin, Medical Oncologist and Founder, Eir Centre, 226-289-6644, Info@eirhealing.ca



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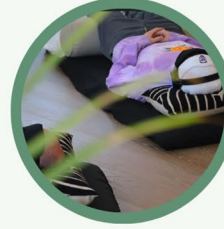
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PROUD TO JOIN THE FAMILY

For twenty-eight years, The Mom & Caregiver has run on one simple belief: that community is everything. It's a belief we share — so we couldn't be more excited to partner with this magazine, and to become part of a publication that has looked after London-area families for so long. We're Randy Sheffield, Nathan Myers, and the team at Sheffield & Associates, an IG Private Wealth Management practice proudly serving London and the surrounding areas.

Yes, we help business owners and families build and protect their wealth. But what drew us to these pages isn't the financial planning — it's the chance to show up for the people around us, the way this magazine always has.

Take Alzheimer's. As a Senior IG Private Wealth Management practice, we're proud that IG is the national title sponsor of the IG Wealth Management

Walk for Alzheimer's — Canada's largest fundraiser for dementia care, which has raised more than \$60 million with the Alzheimer Society since 2015. For the many caregivers among these readers, this one hits close to home — and you'll find us lacing up alongside our neighbours each spring.

We bring that same energy to keeping us active and connected. As the new national partner of Pickleball Canada — and title partner of the national championship— IG is helping grow a sport that gets families of every age off the couch and onto the court together.

And giving back is simply part of how we work. A founding member of Imagine Canada's Caring Company program, IG has dedicated one per cent of its pre-tax profits to charities and communities every year since 1988. Through the IG Charitable Giving Program and initiatives

We don't just plan for this community — we're part of it. Partnering with The Mom & Caregiver is our way of showing up for it.

like IG Empower Your Tomorrow — building financial confidence for seniors, youth and newcomers —good intentions become real, local impact.

That's the kind of partner we want to be — one that cares less about the spotlight and more about the neighbours beside us. You'll be seeing more of us in the months ahead — at community events, on these pages, and wherever London-area families gather. To The Mom & Caregiver, and to its readers: we're glad to be part of the family.



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SMALL ADJUSTMENTS EASE TRANSITION

As summer gives way to fall, many of us experience mixed emotions. While some welcome the return of routine, others notice they feel more overwhelmed, impatient or unlike themselves as schedules become busier again. Whether it is back to school, work, caregiving responsibilities or simply a full calendar, transitions ask our minds and bodies to adapt, and that adjustment can take time.

It is not uncommon during periods of change for adults and children alike to become more irritable or emotionally reactive. Our nervous systems naturally prefer predictability, so even

positive changes require extra mental and emotional energy. Children often express this through their behaviour, and a reminder I often come back to is that kids are not giving adults a hard time, they are having a hard time. Understanding that everyone adjusts differently allows us to respond with a little more patience and compassion, including toward ourselves.

Rather than changing everything at once, small adjustments can help ease the transition. For younger children, that might mean moving bedtime a little earlier before school begins. For adults, it may be finding one simple habit that brings consistency, such as reading before bed or stretching after waking up. Small routines help signal safety and stability when life feels more demanding.

Personally, I always feel a little sadness when summer begins to wind down. I miss the slower pace and spontaneous beach days, yet every year our family finds its rhythm again.

I have learned that welcoming routine does not mean leaving summer behind. We can still enjoy evening BBQs, weekend beach days and sometimes squeeze in a short camping trip in September! Just as the seasons change gradually, we can give ourselves permission to adjust gradually too.

Disclaimer: this information is for educational purposes only and does not constitute psychotherapy or a therapeutic relationship.

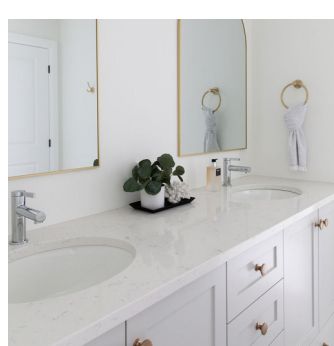
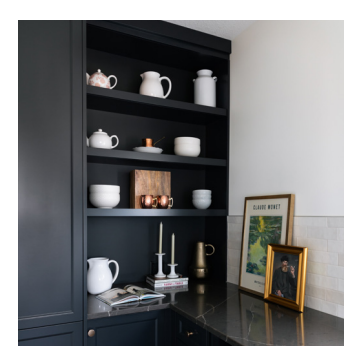
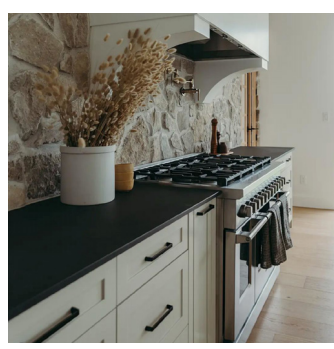


Jen Wall is a Registered Psychotherapist with Talk With Jen Counselling and Psychotherapy, a virtual practice based in London, Ontario, supporting caregivers and professionals in high-stress roles experiencing burnout and emotional overload. Learn more at TalkWithJen.ca.

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NEURODIVERGENT: UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD BEHIND THE WORD

Words matter. They shape how we understand people, tell our stories, and sometimes even how we see the world.

One word that's become more common in recent years is **neurodivergent**. You may have heard it at a school meeting, seen it online or had someone describe their child that way. But what does it actually mean?

Simply put, neurodivergent is an umbrella term used to describe people whose brains work differently from what is considered typical. It includes children with autism, ADHD, anxiety, oppositional defiance disorder, dyslexia, sensory processing challenges, Tourette syndrome and many other neurological differences. It isn't a diagnosis itself. Instead, it recognizes that there isn't just one "right" way for a brain to learn, communicate or experience the world.

Understanding the word is only the beginning. What matters most is understanding the child, knowing the "why" behind the behaviour.

A neurodivergent child may become overwhelmed by noise, struggle with transitions, experience intense emotions or need extra support with communication, attention or daily routines. Some challenges are easy to see, while others remain hidden. The more we understand a child's perspective, the more likely we are to respond with calm, empathy and support instead of frustration.

For many families, this understanding also brings relief. Parents often discover that the strategies they've been using simply weren't designed for the way their child learns, communicates and regulates emotions. When we recognize those differences, we create opportunities for stronger connection, greater confidence and meaningful growth.

Understanding that a child is neurodivergent isn't about putting them into a box. It's about opening a door—to better communication, better support and greater understanding. Because when we better understand the child, we don't just help them thrive—we strengthen the families, educators and communities who support them.



Melanie Wallis
COACHING



Melanie Wallis is a Certified Parent Coach, Autism/ADHD Mom, and founder of Melanie Wallis Coaching. She helps parents of neurodivergent and higher-needs children create calmer, more connected homes through practical parenting strategies and personalized support. Visit melaniewalliscoaching.com to learn more.



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**Together, we can make London the greatest mid-sized city in Canada.
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Scan here to learn more about Josh's track record and see his vision for the future

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THE WEIGHT WE NEVER PUT DOWN

There is a quiet burden that almost every mother carries, no matter her age or the age of her children. *It's called guilt.*

It begins the moment we become mothers. We wonder if we're doing enough, loving enough, teaching enough. Stay-at-home moms worry they aren't contributing financially. Working moms worry they're missing moments they can never get back. Mothers raising children with extra needs often carry the impossible weight of wondering if they are enough while trying to meet demands few people truly understand.

Then come the milestones. The first day of kindergarten arrives, and we question whether they're ready. We second-guess every lunch packed, every hug given at the classroom door. Years later, it's high school

graduation, college move-in day, or the moment they leave home for a career of their own. Did we teach them kindness?

Resilience? Will they know how deeply they are loved when life becomes difficult?

The truth is motherhood never really becomes easier. It simply changes shape.

Somewhere along the way, many of us started believing we had to be everything.

We compare ourselves to carefully edited snapshots of other families. We expect ourselves to work as though we don't have children, parent as though we don't have jobs, maintain a perfect home, nurture relationships, volunteer in our community, remember every birthday, attend every event, and somehow still find time to care for ourselves.

Perhaps it's time we offered ourselves the same grace we so freely give our children.

Because our children won't remember whether the laundry was folded on time or dinner was homemade every night. They'll remember feeling safe. They'll remember being loved after a hard day, cheering from the sidelines, bedtime conversations, and knowing someone believed in them.

Motherhood was never meant to be measured by perfection. It is measured in thousands of ordinary moments of showing up, loving fiercely and trying again tomorrow. And maybe that's enough.



Meda Riley is a Mother, Palliative Complex Caregiver and Founder of Country Girl Body Products and Country Girl Catering and Preserves.



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5 SIGNS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SCOLIOSIS

September is *Scoliosis Awareness Month*, making it a great time for parents and caregivers to learn about the signs of scoliosis and when to seek an assessment. Scoliosis is a sideways curvature of the spine that most commonly develops during periods of rapid growth, particularly around puberty. Many children with scoliosis do not experience pain, so parents may be the first to notice changes in their child's posture or appearance.

Here are five signs to look out for:

1 UNEVEN SHOULDERS

Does one shoulder appear higher than the other? You may notice that your child's backpack straps sit unevenly. While some asymmetry can be normal, a noticeable or persistent difference may warrant further assessment.

2 ONE SHOULDER BLADE IS MORE PROMINENT

When looking at your child's back, one shoulder blade may appear to stick out more

than the other. This difference can sometimes become more noticeable when your child bends forward.

3 UNEVEN HIPS OR WAIST

Look at your child's waist and hips from behind. Does one hip appear higher? Is there more space between one arm and the waist on one side?

4 CLOTHING HANGS UNEVENLY

Sometimes the first clue is simply the way clothing fits. A shirt may consistently twist to one side, a dress may hang unevenly, or pant legs may appear to be different lengths.

5 YOUR CHILD LEANS TO ONE SIDE

A child with scoliosis may appear to lean slightly to one side when standing. Their head may also appear off-center relative to their hips or pelvis.

What Should You Do If You Notice These Signs?

Seeing one of these signs does not necessarily mean your child has scoliosis. Children naturally have differences in posture and

body symmetry. However, if you notice persistent changes, it's worth discussing them with your child's healthcare provider. They can perform a physical examination and further assessment or imaging if needed. If scoliosis is diagnosed and bracing is recommended, an orthotist can work with your child's healthcare team to design and fit a custom brace.

Early detection allows scoliosis to be monitored and, when appropriate, treated during growth. If you have concerns about your child's posture or spinal alignment, don't hesitate to ask their healthcare provider for an assessment.



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WORK AND HOME: KEEPING TWO WORLDS APART

Being a dad comes with a lot of hats: partner, provider, friend, employee, coach, toque, Blue Jays, neighbour, son. Other than that one dad who toured with Ringling Brothers, most of us find juggling that many balls difficult.

The economy is doing us zero favours. AI raises questions about the environment and our kids' future jobs, while layoffs loom over our own. Our control is limited. But the feelings created by that lack of control can trickle into our homes, draining the energy from the household.

When Dad has a bad day, everyone feels it. It's not your kid's fault you forgot to staple a cover sheet to your TPS report. It's not your partner's fault Jan from accounting brought sardines for lunch. And the players you're teaching to bunt have no idea what a sales quota is—or that

"parking-lotting something" could mean anything besides meeting at the minivan for Gatorades.

Since 2022, Ontario workplaces with 25 or more employees have needed a disconnecting-from-work policy. Turn off the notifications. Put up the out-of-office response. Sit in the parking lot, crank the dad rock and scream until the tension leaves your shoulders. Leaving work at work helps us become the dads our kids need. Emotional spillover is real, and healthy boundaries teach emotional regulation by example.

Extra shifts can help the household budget. Night classes can model motivation and growth. But coming home to stew over your phone—and doom-scroll because your VP took credit for your slide deck—doesn't make a happier family.

If stress follows you home, name it: "I had a rough day, and I was short with you. That wasn't your fault. I'm sorry." Repair conversations show kids that mistakes aren't permanent to them.

Be the partner who makes their person feel supported, the neighbour who lends a hand, or the coach who teaches forecheck, backcheck and paycheck—by living healthy work-home boundaries. Those 18 years go quickly. Your employer doesn't deserve to steal minutes from the people who will have your back, whether you work in the mailroom or run the corporation.



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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