A FREE MAGAZINE

THE MOM & CAREGIVER™

DECEMBER 2026
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LITTLE SIPS OF Holiday MAGIC!

FITTING READING INTO THE HOLIDAYS 13

HAPPY PERFECTLY IMPERFECT HOLIDAY SEASON 19

A LITTLE LESS FOOD GUILT 22

PREGNANCY - BABY - TODDLER & PRESCHOOL - SCHOOL AGE - FAMILY

A Little Holiday Magic, A Little Breathing Room

December is a magical time of year, but for parents, it can also be one of the busiest! Between holiday shopping, family gatherings, school concerts, work commitments, and everything else on our to-do lists, finding time to get it all done can feel like a challenge.

And then comes the school break!

While our children are excited about having time off, many parents are still juggling work, last-minute errands, and holiday preparations. As much as we love spending time together, sometimes we could all use a little help filling those long days.

That's where holiday day camps can be a wonderful option. Unlike week-long programs, camps that offer individual days give families the flexibility to choose what works best for their schedules. Maybe you need a day to finish shopping, have to head into work, or simply want to give your child something fun to look forward to.

For children, it's so much more than childcare. A day spent dancing, creating, playing games, and making new friends gives them an opportunity to burn off energy, explore their creativity, and enjoy some independence. It can also be a welcome break from screens and the excitement of the holidays.

And sometimes, a day apart makes the time together even sweeter!

As parents, we often put pressure on ourselves to make every moment of the holidays special. But children don't need elaborate plans every day. They need opportunities to play, connect, explore, and simply enjoy being kids.

This holiday season, remember that it's okay to find a little breathing room for yourself while giving your child a day filled with fun and new experiences.

After all, a little holiday magic for the kids and a little time for the grown-ups sounds like a pretty wonderful gift for everyone!

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL
Some Holly, Jolly Reading! 04

EVENTS CALENDAR
December 2026 05

AS THEY GROW
What Parents and Grandparents Need to Know About RSV 06

FAMILY HEALTH
Colon Cancer Screening 07

FROM SURVIVING TO TRULY LIVING
Beyond the Possible 07

OUR MENTAL HEALTH
To Visit or Not to Visit? 08

COMFORT CARE
That One Relative Who Touches the Thermostat 09

BIPOLAR ON THE BRAIN
Journal Entry #35 10

KIDZONE
Want, Need, Wear, Read 10

SUGAR BEES ACADEMY
Fitting Reading Into the Holidays 11

BIZ SHOWCASE
Kas Concepts 14

WHOLE-PERSON CARE
To Love and Be Loved 15

MAKING MONEY MAKE CENTS
A Year-End Tax Move 16

TALK WITH JEN
Finding Yourself In The Holiday Rush 17

CONFIDENCE STARTS HERE
Am I Ready for a Facelift? 18

DAD-ITUDE
Happy Perfectly Imperfect Holiday Season 19

COUNTRY GIRL, MODERN MOM
I'm Not the Woman I Was in January 20

ONE STEP AT A TIME
Winter Boots & Growing Feet 21

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
A Little Less Food Guilt, A Lot More Holiday Joy 22

THE MOM & CAREGIVER

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ON THE COVER

Happy holidays from Sandy Claus! ***Sandy*** gets his gorgeous hair from his mommy, and his big smile from getting to hold that hot cocoa prop! He loved throwing pretend snowballs at our photographer, and his jaunty Santa hat really put us in the holiday spirit!



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SOME HOLLY, JOLLY READING!

Everyone has their tried and true holiday traditions. Maybe you grew up with gingerbread, and I grew up on sugar cookies. Maybe I'm on the nice list and you're on the naughty (haha!) There's elves vs. reindeer, and hot chocolate vs. eggnog. And we can't forget the Christmas tree battle ever present in many families – real tree vs. artificial!

However you celebrate December's festivities, we're sure you'll feel jolly reading our holiday issue! We've set up some battles of our own, but who are we kidding? All of our featured articles are best enjoyed sitting around the fireplace with some Hanukkah gelt, a Christmas cookie or Kwanzaa Benne wafers.

First up, it's the kiddos! "Fitting Reading Into the Holidays" VS. "Want, Need, Wear, Read"

Keep your child learning during the holidays while having fun with activities like a Christmas Five Minute Word Hunt. Sugar Bees Academy has tips for keeping the kids reading on page 13.

Need help shopping for your littles? The Want, Need, Wear, Read plan on page 10 is just the thing to help!

Next up is FOOD – one of our holiday faves! "It's Not Hunger. It's December" VS. "A Little Less Food Guilt, A Lot More Holiday Joy"

This December, choose the treats that really matter and enjoy them fully. Planned is pleasure. Grazing is stress. Find more wise tips from The Cope Effect on page 5.

Can you enjoy holiday treats without the guilt? Christmas cookies and vegetables both have a place at the table for Jenn Giurgevich on page 22.

Last up is a toughie – dealing with holiday stress. "A Little Holiday Magic, A Little Breathing Room" VS. "Finding Yourself in the Holiday Rush"

Sometimes a day apart can make the time together even sweeter! Get a little breathing room with Dance Extreme on page 2.

Can holidays be fun AND stressful? Yes! Be sure to find time for what YOU need with Jen Wall on page 17.

We wish you and your family a month full of love, peace, family and friends. Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and Happy Kwanzaa from all of us here at The Mom & Caregiver!

PUBLISHER/CHIEF EDITOR

Sabina



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& EVENTS

DECEMBER 2026

A Christmas Carol, Grand Theatre, , www.grandtheatre.com — 01ST

Holly Jolly Holiday Market, Covent Garden Market, www.coventmarket.com — 04TH

Hanukkah Party, Jewish Community Centre, www.jewishlondon.ca — 06TH

Dogs Do Magic: A Canine Christmas, Centennial Hall, www.centennialhall.london.ca — 13TH

IT'S THE FIRST DAY OF *Winter!* — 21ST

Joyous KWANZAA! — 26TH

London Knights vs. Sarnia Sting, Canada Life Place, www.chl.ca/ohl-knights — 31ST

Happy HANUKKAH! — 04TH

Argyle Santa Claus Parade, Parsons St., www.argylebia.com/scp — 05TH

Breakfast with Saint Nick, Fanshawe Pioneer Village, www.fanshawepioneervillage.ca — 12TH

The Nutcracker, Centennial Hall, www.centennialhall.london.ca — 20TH

MERRY *Christmas!* — 25TH

Happy NEW YEAR'S EVE! — 31ST

THE COPE EFFECT
FITNESS & NUTRITION

IT'S NOT HUNGER. IT'S DECEMBER.

The gifts. The hosting. The family dynamics. The year-end deadlines. December asks more of caregivers than any other month, and when stress climbs, the cookie tin starts calling.

That's not weakness. Stress raises cortisol, and cortisol drives cravings for quick sugar and comfort food. Your body is looking for relief. Food is simply the closest exit.

The goal isn't to fight it. It's to catch it.

ASK: HUNGRY OR HEAVY? Before you grab, take one breath and ask what you actually need. If it's food, eat a real meal. If it's relief, find it elsewhere.

BUILD A TWO-MINUTE RESET. A walk to the mailbox. Five deep breaths. A glass of water. Lower the pressure without opening the pantry.

PROTECT YOUR SLEEP. Short nights drive up hunger the next day. Treat bedtime like an appointment you keep.

PLAN YOUR TREATS. Choose the ones that matter, sit down, and enjoy them fully. Planned is pleasure. Grazing is stress.

You can't remove holiday stress. You can stop letting it make your food decisions.

Email *coachkcope@thecopeeffect.com* for my free Holiday Stress Reset checklist.

Kevin Cope |
Founder, The Cope Effect | @thecopeeffect

Next Month: Start the New Year strong — no resolutions required.

"Every day comes bearing its gifts. Untie the ribbon."
Ann Ruth Schabacker

WHAT PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RSV

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) is a very common virus that affects the airways and lungs. It usually causes cold-like symptoms, but it can sometimes lead to breathing problems.

As a parent or grandparent, it can be worrying when a child gets sick. RSV is very common, and while most children recover at home, it can sometimes cause serious illness, especially in babies and young children. Older adults and people with weakened immune systems or heart and lung conditions can also become very sick.

Anyone can get RSV, and you can get it more than once. Almost all children will catch RSV by the age of two. RSV season usually runs from October to April.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF RSV?

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Cough
- Fever
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling tired or irritable

WHEN SHOULD I GET MEDICAL HELP?

Most children start to feel better within one to two weeks. Contact a healthcare provider if you are worried about your child's breathing or overall condition.

HOW DOES RSV SPREAD?

RSV spreads easily through coughs, sneezes and close contact with someone who is sick. It can also spread when people touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. The virus can live for several hours on toys, doorknobs, phones, and other commonly touched items; this is why RSV can spread quickly through families, childcare settings, schools and playgroups.

HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT MY FAMILY?

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Use hand sanitizer when needed.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve.
- Throw used tissues in the trash right away.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when ill and keep sick children home from school or childcare.

These small steps can help protect babies, children, grandparents and other family members.

RSV IMMUNIZATION

Immunization is the best protection against severe RSV illness. Ontario's RSV Prevention Program provides protection for eligible infants, some high-risk children, pregnant individuals, older adults and others at increased risk. Getting immunized during pregnancy can help protect a baby during their first months of life. Some infants may also qualify for a preventive medication that helps reduce the risk of severe RSV infection. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about RSV prevention and whether you or your family members are eligible. Protecting against RSV can help keep your family healthy and reduce the risk of serious illness during RSV season.

For more information on who is eligible to receive an RSV Vaccine:

https://www.healthunit.com/infectious-diseases/infectious-diseases-a-z-list/respiratory-syncytial-virus/#RSV-vaccine

RESOURCES:

Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health Protecting Your Child from RSV For Parents and Expectant Parents -

www.pcmch.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/pcmch-rsv-parent-fact-sheet.pdf

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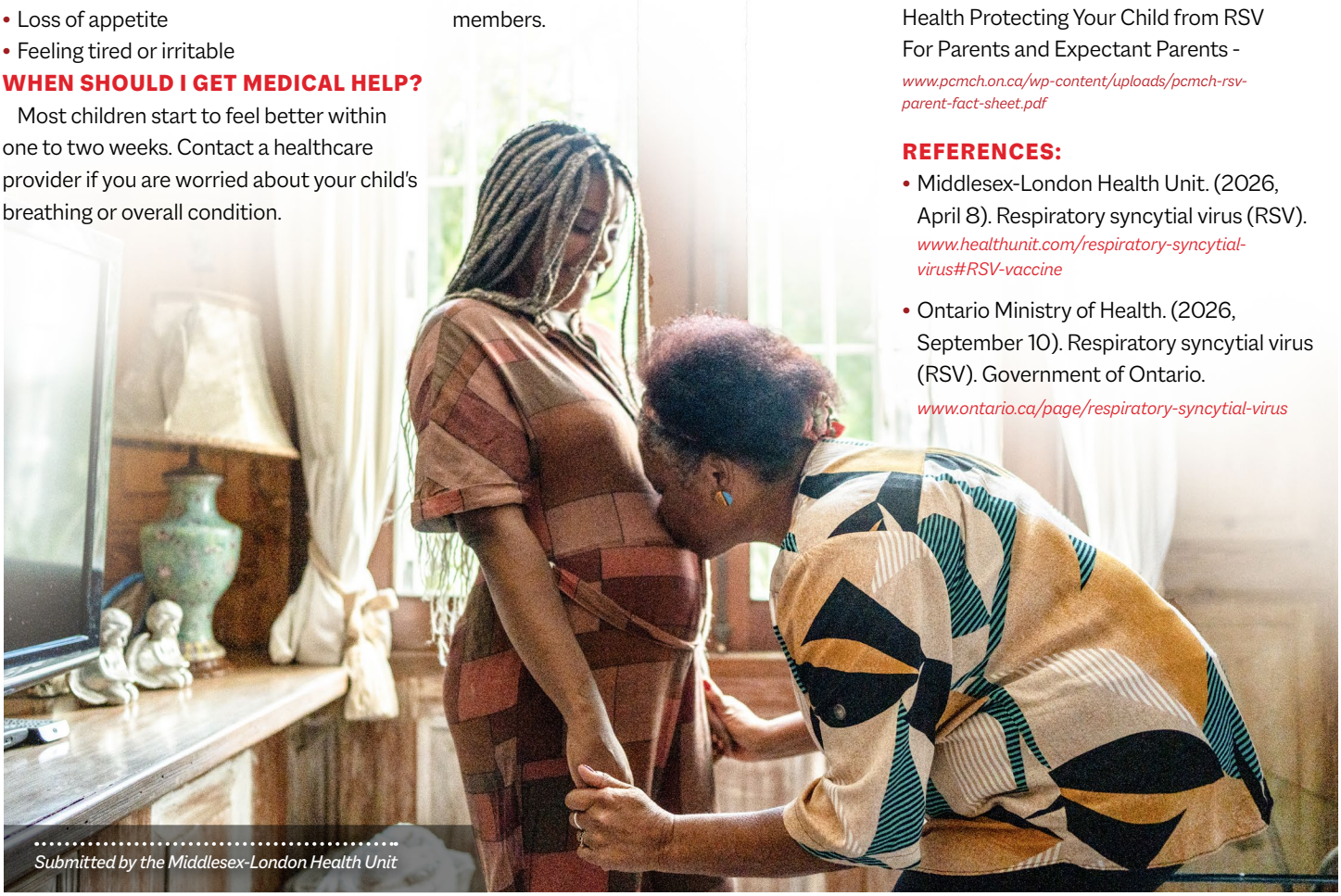

Submitted by the Middlesex-London Health Unit

COLON CANCER SCREENING

We are very fortunate in Ontario to have Cancer Care Ontario, a program that helps us to screen for several cancers. Sadly, there are no screening tests available for many cancers at this time. There are, however, excellent screening tests for three common cancers - breast, colon and cervical screening. Cancer Care Ontario sends reminders to people who may be due for testing to contact their health care provider to arrange for the testing.

The value of screening is that finding a cancer early can help to treat early and prevent more invasive treatment and death. A good screening tool must be sensitive enough to identify cancer early as well as not to have too many false positives.

In recent years, it has been noted that younger people are being diagnosed with cancers that were typically occurring at a later age. In particular, breast and colon



cancer are occurring in younger people. The reasons for this are not clear. It may be that our environment, exposure to toxins, processed foods, etc. have contributed to this rise.

Colon cancer can be diagnosed with colonoscopy but this is quite invasive with risks related to sedation and harming the colon with the camera introduced in the bowel. A test called the fecal immunoassay test involves a single stool test, is very accurate and is used for screening. Your primary care practitioner can have the kit for this sent to your home.

Recently the age of starting screening has decreased from the age of 50 to the age of 45. If there is a family history of colon cancer (two first degree relatives who were under the age of 60 at the time of diagnosis) then a colonoscopy might be the best option. This would be done at the age of 40. If there are symptoms, change in bowel habit or blood noted in the stool, a colonoscopy would be preferred.

For all others the FIT test offers a wonderful and valuable way to find colon cancer early. So, speak to your PCP and get tested!

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!

BEYOND THE POSSIBLE

ALICIA NOLAN
Life Coach

In my last article, I introduced the concept of a PowerJump — the idea that we don't always have to move through life one step at a time. Sometimes, a shift in perspective, belief or decision can take us somewhere we never imagined.

But what makes that possible? Sometimes, it starts with changing how we see ourselves. Instead of focusing only on what we need to do, we begin by considering who we want to be. When we lead with who we are becoming, our actions begin to reflect that, opening the door to new possibilities.

When we take a step into the unfamiliar, opportunities can appear that we couldn't have planned. An unexpected introduction, a door opening or even a little nudge that encourages us in a new direction.

Of course, growth isn't always comfortable. Stepping beyond what we know can bring uncertainty and pressure. But sometimes those moments help us discover strengths and possibilities we didn't realize we had.

Perhaps a PowerJump begins when we stop allowing old beliefs and familiar patterns to define what's possible. What might change if we stopped asking ourselves what we should do next and started asking who we're ready to become?



***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.*

TO VISIT *OR NOT* TO VISIT?

Bringing children to visit a sick relative in the hospital can feel like a tough decision. Generally, when a child is prepared for the visit, it is recommended, as it does more good than harm. Children benefit from seeing their loved ones in various ways:

- It can reduce their anxiety related to using magical thinking. When they are left in the dark, they often picture situations that are far worse than reality.
- It helps in processing intense emotions. Direct exposure helps children comprehend illness and start to process grief naturally, preventing them from feeling isolated, confused or left out.
- It maintains family connections. Regular contact preserves strong family bonds and protects children from feelings of abandonment or helplessness during a stressful time.



POTENTIAL RISKS TO CHILDREN VISITING SICK LOVED ONES

1 Medical environments can occasionally cause distress if a child is not prepared for the hospital visit.

2 Sensory overload can occur in certain medical environment like ICUs which are filled with flashing monitors, loud beeping machines and medical tubes. This can be quite overwhelming for a young mind.

3 An increase in anxiety can occur if a child isn't properly prepared with an age-appropriate explanation which will address any magical thinking.

BEST PRACTICES FOR A SMOOTH VISIT

To ensure the experience is healing for all, use these tips before and during your hospital trip:

- Always give them a choice: Never force a child to visit if they express fear or say they are not ready.
- Prepare them beforehand: Describe exactly what the room will look like. Explain what the machines do in simple terms and warn them if their relative looks or sounds different.
- Keep visits brief: Attention spans and emotional tolerance are short; be ready to leave the room the moment your child feels overwhelmed.
- Offer alternative connections: If an in-person visit is too overwhelming, encourage your child to connect through video calls, drawing a picture or sending a recorded voice message.

Every hospital situation is unique, and a child's reaction depends heavily on their development. Prepare the child as much as possible and learn from each visit.

Becky Morrison is a Nurse Practitioner and certified ATTCS advanced clinical trauma therapist with a specialty in grief. She is finally, after years of infertility, a doting mother to one little boy, and fur mom of her gentle giant, Stella. She is, and always will be, a strong advocate for mental wellness at all ages.









CHRISTMAS CHAOS THAT ONE RELATIVE WHO TOUCHES THE THERMOSTAT

Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year... until you've spent three hours wrapping presents, burned the turkey and your uncle explained why he could've bought the same gift for half the price online. *Welcome to the holidays!*

Between decorating the house, entertaining family and trying to convince the kids that Santa is watching, December can feel less like a holiday and more like a full-time management position with no benefits. And let's talk about Christmas dinner. Every family has that one person who insists they don't want anything to eat, then somehow consumes enough turkey to qualify as a small agricultural operation. Meanwhile, someone's arguing over the last butter tart and Grandma is asking why the house is so cold.

Speaking of cold, your furnace has been working overtime too! With guests coming and going, the thermostat being adjusted by every family member and the oven running all day, your home's heating system deserves a little holiday appreciation. Thankfully, Jayden's Mechanical is here when you need us, helping keep your home comfortable while you focus on more important things — like hiding the good chocolate from your relatives.



Then comes January, the season of big promises. We're going to exercise more, eat healthier, spend less money and finally organize that junk drawer. By January 12TH, the gym membership is collecting dust, the salad has gone bad and the junk drawer has somehow gained three new phone chargers and a mystery key.

So this Christmas, give yourself permission to laugh at the chaos, enjoy the people around you, and remember that a little preparation can go a long way. From all of us at Jayden's Mechanical, we wish you a warm, wonderful Christmas and a New Year filled with happiness, laughter and fewer things breaking at the worst possible moment.

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



JOURNAL ENTRY #35 | DREADING FAMILY CHRISTMAS

Next in our series, "The adversities we all experience," is conflict with family. As the saying goes, "We pick our friends, but we can't pick our family." Here are some tools on how to enjoy this year's family festivities:

1 Feeling obligated to attend everything? My advice? Plug all holiday events into your datebook. Next, take a look at what you actually want to go to, then let family know which celebrations you won't be attending with zero guilt. If you go to family functions where you don't want to be, nobody likes being around a Grinch!

2 Once you decide which events you won't be attending, why not make a plan to see people that you actually want to spend time with one on one? I used to get everyone together, hoping for a "Hallmark movie moment." We find that if we meet with the adult kids one on one, each child shares more about what is going on in their lives. Family doesn't always want other family members to know their business. It has created a special trust with them because they reach out to talk throughout the year more often. They know that we are there for them. You can't create that type of trust in a large group. I leave the big gathering to Mom because she loves it.

3 Have a bad taste in your mouth about who you will have to tolerate at this year's family Christmas? Here's what has been working for me for the past five years. There's often one family member that just wants to act out in order to draw attention to themselves. For years this person was just looking for my reaction. I used to fall for it every time. Sadly, it resulted in a terrible argument one year where we were yelling at each other. Because I fell for it, I left, ruining Christmas for Mom. We get along now because I have stopped reacting to this person's negative behaviour. He has been acting out less. Funny how that works!

I hope this has been helpful. Which tool will you be using? Merry Christmas!



*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**.*

WANT, NEED, WEAR, READ

It warms our hearts to hear Adi and Lander talk about the holidays. We love hearing from siblings who seem to know each others' hobbies, likes and talents so well! We wish them the happiest of holidays, chock full of gingerbread, sugar cookies and cinnamon buns, of course!

1 ***Happy holidays! What are your favourite:***
Holiday foods?
Holiday traditions?

***Lander & Adi**: Our favourite holiday foods are turkey and baked goods. Our favourtie traditions are decorating the house and spending time with family.*



2 ***There's a gift-buying idea called "Want, Need, Wear, Read." It means you buy a person one gift from each category. If you were buying your sibling one thing from each category, what would it be?***

Adi:

Something he wants: He would want a Roblox gift card.
Something he needs: He needs some new jeans.
Something to wear: He loves any jogging pants.
Something to read: He loves a Pokémon book!

Lander:

Something she wants: She loves squishies!
Something she needs: She needs a new paint set.
Something to wear: She loves Aritzia sweatsuits.
Something to read: She loves a fairy tale novel.

Meet our Kid Zone writers, 13 and 9 year old siblings, Lander and Adi! Each month, they'll be sharing perspectives on life as a child sees it.

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Week One
Fri Dec 4: 4pm-10pm
Sat Dec 5: 10am-9pm
Sun Dec 6: 10am-5pm
Week Two
Fri Dec 11: 4pm-10pm
Sat Dec 12: 10am-9pm
Sun Dec 13: 10am-5pm
Week Three
Fri Dec 18: 4pm-10pm
Sat Dec 19: 10am-9pm
Sun Dec 20: 10am-5pm
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FITTING READING INTO THE HOLIDAYS

December is exciting, busy, and full of anticipation! With the holidays approaching, schoolwork may be the last thing on your child's mind. Luckily, reading practice can fit naturally into family time. Try these three activities to keep your child learning while having fun.

1 TRY A CHRISTMAS FIVE-MINUTE WORD HUNT

Grab a holiday flyer, cereal box, magazine or favourite book. Choose one page, secretly pick three words, and write them down. Give your child five minutes to find each word as many times as possible. Have them read the words aloud afterward.

Grades 1–3: Pick simple consonant-vowel-consonant words like red or hat or familiar high-frequency words like the and said.

Grades 4–6: Choose longer words such as reusable or disagreement. Have your child read them, identify prefixes or suffixes and explain what the word parts mean.

2 BRING A STORY TO LIFE

Choose a favourite book or comic. Read a short section dramatically, then invite your child to join in.

Grades 1–3: Read a sentence first, then have your child echo it. Try different character voices and model reading unfamiliar words to help them imitate.

Grades 4–6: Assign characters and act out a scene. Discuss how punctuation, pauses and tone change its meaning.

3 READ, DISCOVER, AND ASK *the Five W's Who, What, When, Where & Why.*

Let your child choose a favourite topic, from winter animals to hockey. Read a short article or story together and explore who, what, when, where and why.

Grades 1–3: Ask, "Who is this about?" and "What happened?". Use pictures to guide their thinking.

Grades 4–6: Ask, "Why did that happen?" or "When did it happen?"

Just ten minutes together can make reading exciting. Celebrate your child's effort and enjoy the moment! Happy Holidays & Merry Christmas from the Sugar Bees Academy family!



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KAS KONCEPTS



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.

Kristen, owner of KAS KONCEPTS, Professional Home Organizing, often get asked the question, *"Why did you get into this profession? It sounds challenging and overwhelming."* That is exactly why, it is those things. She wants people to know they don't have to do it alone, so she built something where they don't have to.

Moving and starting over more times than she can count, along with navigating profound loss, ultimately let Kristen start this business. Those experiences taught her that sometimes life changes faster than we can keep up with on our own, and asking for help through some of our hardest seasons doesn't make you a failure. Sometimes help is exactly what we need.

KAS KONCEPTS is a judgement-free space where the weight of the overwhelm gets taken off your shoulders. We come in with compassionate support and a plan to guide you through the journey.

Whether you are moving, downsizing for a new season of life, navigating mental health challenges or a neurodivergent diagnosis, planning to age in place, juggling a demanding career and family, or navigating a loss, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to real life.

KAS KONCEPTS meets you where you are at in your current season. Through professional organizing, they look at the whole picture and create calm, functional spaces tailored to your individual needs, with thoughtful support and realistic solutions that work for you. The impact of a functional space can go far beyond having a tidy home. It can mean fewer decisions, easier routines and more usable spaces - giving you back time, energy and the capacity for what matters most.

With almost four years of hands-on experience and a background in hospitality, event planning, communications and project management, Kristen is living out a passion that feels natural and deeply meaningful. She is a member of Professional Organizers in Canada and a subscriber with the Institute for Challenging Disorganization, holding a Certificate of Study in Chronic Disorganization.

"KAS KONCEPTS is more than organizing spaces. We create spaces that support the life happening in these spaces."







TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

The holiday season can sweep us into buying and receiving gifts, putting up decorations, attending parties and preparing dinners. For some, these traditions bring joy. For others, distance, estrangement or being alone can make the season painful. Beneath both celebration and sadness lies a shared longing: to matter to someone.

Those approaching the end of life can help us recognize what matters most. Palliative care physician Christopher Kerr, MD, PhD, describes our deepest needs as "to love and be loved, to be nurtured and feel connected, to be remembered and forgiven." These needs belong to all of us, throughout our lives.

This wisdom echoes through beloved holiday classics. In Home Alone, Kevin's neighbour Marley carries the sorrow of estrangement from his son. Encouraged to reach out, he takes a chance on reconnection. Their Christmas reunion reminds us how fear can keep us apart, and how one courageous gesture can open a door.

In Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol, Scrooge confronts the life he has lived and the death awaiting him. His transformation unfolds through generosity, renewed relationships and participation in the lives of others. He discovers joy by allowing himself to care.

We need not wait until life's end to ask what deserves our attention. This season, consider giving presence alongside presents.



Call someone you miss. Invite a neighbour for tea. Tell a friend why they matter. Ask an older relative to share a memory and listen without rushing.

Where it feels safe, offer a sincere apology or take a gentle step toward repairing a relationship. Forgiveness cannot be demanded, and reconnection is not always possible. Sometimes peace begins with compassion for ourselves and boundaries that protect our wellbeing.

If you are alone, consider a community meal, volunteering or arranging a conversation with someone who understands. If you are grieving, make room for remembrance without requiring yourself to feel festive.

The dying remind us to express love while we have the chance. This is the ultimate gift: the joy of connection and a life rich in meaning. This is the true meaning of Christmas—and what it means to truly live.

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

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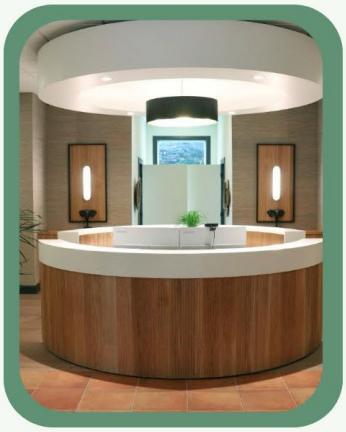

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A YEAR-END TAX MOVE

As the holidays approach and your to-do list fills up, here is one task worth a few minutes before December 31: a year-end look at your investments. For families watching every dollar, a strategy called tax-loss selling can quietly trim what you owe.

Tax-loss selling means selling non-registered investments that have dropped in value, making the loss real on paper. That loss can offset capital gains you have realized this year, lowering the tax you pay.

If your losses are larger than your gains, they are not wasted. You can carry them back up to three years to recover taxes already paid, or forward indefinitely against future gains.

The strategy applies only to non-registered accounts. Losses inside an RRSP or TFSA cannot be claimed, so it helps to know which of your accounts qualify.

One rule matters most: the CRA's "superficial loss" rule denies the loss if you rebuy the same or an identical investment within 30 days before or after the sale. A short wait, or a similar but not identical holding, keeps you invested.

You do not need to sort this out alone. A quick year-end portfolio review with Randy and his team at IG Wealth Management can show whether tax-loss selling fits your goals, and that any losses you realize can actually be used.

For a busy household, every dollar saved at tax time is a dollar back toward what your family is planning for. Give us a call.

> *A paper loss isn't only a setback. Handled well, it can lower this year's tax bill — and future ones too.*

KEEP IN MIND

- Works only in non-registered accounts — not RRSPs or TFSAs.
- Losses offset capital gains; any excess carries back or forward.
- Don't rebuy the same holding within 30 days (superficial-loss rule).
- Trades must settle in 2026 — act before December 31.
- Review the whole portfolio so losses are used where they count.



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FINDING YOURSELF IN THE HOLIDAY RUSH

TALK WITH JEN

Many things can be true at the same time. The holidays can be a time of parties, events, shopping and connection with family and friends AND a time of stress, whether mental, physical, emotional or financial. We may find ourselves trying to meet high expectations of ourselves and others, leaving little room to notice what we need. Learning to manage these expectations can help us make space for what matters most and enjoy the season in a way that feels authentic.

We may hold onto traditions or commitments because they are what we have always done, even when they no longer feel right for us. Try pausing and asking yourself, "am I doing this because I want to or because I feel I have to?" Giving ourselves permission to adjust expectations can help us focus on what feels meaningful, rather than what we think the holidays should look like.

Over the years, I have learned to say no to some events and redefine traditions. For example, I no longer send Christmas cards. Instead, I make a point of connecting with people more often throughout the year. We don't always have to do what we've always done; new traditions can start at any time. A quieter evening at home or a simpler family gathering may be exactly what we need.

If you feel stretched too thin, pause and ask yourself, "what do I need in this moment?" It might be a few deep breaths, a walk or a conversation with a friend. Making space for our own needs allows us to experience the holidays with more intention, connection and enjoyment, on our own terms.

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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AM I READY FOR A FACELIFT?

With celebrity facelifts making headlines, and conversations about surgery becoming more open, you may wonder whether a facelift is something to consider—and when. Hearing about younger patients can create the impression that there is a "right" age to start.

It's ok to be curious. Aesthetic surgery is a personal choice: there is no age at which you suddenly need a facelift, and noticing changes does not mean you have to do anything about them.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Perhaps your jawline looks less defined, your cheeks seem lower or you notice loose skin around your neck. A facelift repositions sagging facial tissues to improve contours and jawline definition. A consultation gives you the opportunity to discuss what you are noticing, the results you would like and which surgical or nonsurgical options may be appropriate.

WHERE DOES ENDOSCOPIC SURGERY FIT?

One of the newest advances in facial rejuvenation is endoscopic or minimally invasive surgery. This technique uses a small camera and specialized instruments through discreet incisions to eliminate any visible scars while still getting the benefits of a deep plane facelift. For suitable candidates, this approach can offer significant rejuvenation without the visible scars associated with traditional facelift techniques. Although relatively new, endoscopic surgery represents the future of facial surgery.

AM I READY FOR THE COMMITMENT?

The prospect of undergoing facial surgery can be daunting for many patients. Many people are concerned that they will look like a different person after surgery. The consultation process for facial surgery is very comprehensive and reviews patient goals for surgery as well as what the outcome will look like. It is important to know that the objective is to help you look like a younger, refreshed version of yourself—not someone else.

WHAT IF I AM ONLY CURIOUS?

Curiosity is reason enough for a consultation. Exploring surgery does not commit you to it. Understanding facial aging and your treatment options empowers you to make informed decisions. You may choose nonsurgical treatments, decide to wait or discover that surgery aligns with your goals. Choosing to make a change is personal.

When you're ready to explore what is possible, the team at Yazdani Aesthetics is here to guide you, at your own pace.

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HAPPY PERFECTLY IMPERFECT HOLIDAY SEASON

2026 Between food prices, gas prices, Noah Kahan ticket prices, and headlines seemingly written for Saturday Night Live, it's a year we could forget. If Google Photos would let us.

Now that the holiday season is approaching, your kids' wish lists start at the cost of a black market kidney and averages out to naming rights for a professional sports stadium. You're not alone, despite what Instagram's matching families in suspiciously clean kitchens suggest. We are all feeling it.

My wife and I are pretty Joe and Jill Average. We understand wanting the nicest and newest stuff, and wishing to give it. But, we're also honest with our kids about what we can afford.

Our Christmases can involve hand-me-down electronics, cooking together while listening to Boney M, and watching Home Alone 1 and 2, while laughing like it's the first time again. Every family has its thing. Yours might be crooked handmade decorations, an aggressively competitive board game or a cherished recipe nobody actually likes. These things still count as traditions.

For younger kids, lean into the novelty. Music. Lights. Movies. Hot chocolate. Decorate EVERYTHING, including anything unfortunate enough to remain stationary. We started traditions like opening pyjamas and a book on Christmas Eve, then preparing breakfast and dessert together. Everyone contributes. Even if that contribution is eating all the sprinkles. Their must-have toy is probably on Facebook Marketplace, courtesy of a child who has already gotten bored of it.

For the tween crowd, our kids happily inherit our phones and AirPods when we upgrade. They know how many allowances new ones cost. They also know how quickly they can break them. And please don't tell kids that Santa brings Apple products. I have thrown those parents under the bus without blinking. Everyone knows the North Pole ISN'T a sweatshop.

For older kids, leave room for time together without making every moment a gratitude seminar. Watch Four Christmases. Order their favourite takeout. Let them choose an outing, maybe a way to do something kind for someone else if they're interested.



These holidays, give yourself some grace. Keep the traditions your family enjoys. Retire the ones everybody dreads and leave the pressure for more or better at the door. Take pictures without rearranging the room first. Don't even post them online. Take your privacy back.

Put on some sweatpants, make some popcorn, and enjoy your people. 'Tis the season.

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.





DEAR DECEMBER, I'M NOT THE WOMAN I WAS IN JANUARY

Dear Santa,
This year, I'd like to officially resign from being Superwoman. I'd return the cape, but it's probably buried under laundry, business inventory and medical supplies. And if you could throw in eight uninterrupted hours of sleep and a hot coffee, that would be fantastic.
Sincerely,
One exhausted Gen X mom

But seriously, what a year. Somewhere between family, two businesses, being a wife and caring for my medically fragile adult son, another year slipped through my fingers. *And I'm not the woman I was in January.*



I've celebrated milestones while carrying worries nobody could see. I've smiled for photographs while running on fumes. I've been strong for everyone else while quietly wishing someone would notice I needed strength too.

That's the thing about being the woman who always figures it out. Eventually, everyone assumes you always will. And maybe we've taught them that. We wear exhaustion like a badge of honour. Say "I've got this" when we're barely holding on. Cry behind closed doors, wipe our faces and carry on because someone always needs us.

But this year reminded me that strength isn't measured by how much we can carry. The older I get, the less I care about perfection. I care about my husband's arms around me. Another morning with my family. The people who show up when life gets ugly, not just when it's beautiful.

So, dear December, I'm not asking for a perfect ending. I'm asking for grace. Peace. Permission to put down the damn cape.

Because underneath Superwoman is a woman who gets tired, gets scared, sometimes falls apart and loves her family fiercely. And maybe, just maybe, she's enough exactly as she is.

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



WINTER BOOTS & GROWING FEET

Winter boots can be tricky to buy for kids. We want them warm, comfortable and ideally big enough to last the whole winter—but how much growing room is too much?

A little extra room is okay, but bigger isn't always better. Boots that are too large can allow the foot to slide around, making walking more difficult and causing rubbing or blisters. On the other hand, boots that are too small can crowd the toes and become uncomfortable, especially once you add winter socks. Their toes should have some wiggle room and shouldn't be touching the end. If their heel is lifting significantly or they seem to be tripping over the boots, they may be too big.

DON'T FORGET THE SOCKS

It's tempting to pair winter boots with the thickest socks you can find but thicker doesn't always mean warmer. If a boot becomes too snug, a bulky sock can compress the foot and leave very little room for warm air.

WHAT ABOUT HAND-ME-DOWNS?

Hand-me-down boots can be a great option, especially considering how quickly children outgrow their footwear. Take a good look at their condition first. If the soles are worn unevenly, the boot has lost its shape or the lining is packed down, it may be time for a new pair.

WEARING AFOS OR SMOS?

If your child wears an AFO or SMO, bring the brace with you when shopping for boots. Look for styles that open widely and have removable insoles, which can provide some much-needed extra space. You may need to go up in size or width but avoid choosing an excessively large boot just to accommodate the brace.

Most importantly, check the fit periodically throughout the winter. Kids' feet have a habit of growing when we least expect it! Red marks, complaints of sore toes, difficulty getting the boots on, or a sudden change in how your child walks can all be signs that it's time to check the size again.

The right winter boot doesn't need to be complicated or expensive. It simply needs to fit well, keep little feet warm and let your child comfortably get outside and enjoy the snow. If you need assistance finding a pair of boots that fit with your orthoses, contact the clinic and set up an appointment.



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A LITTLE LESS FOOD GUILT, A LOT MORE HOLIDAY JOY



December is here, and with it comes the familiar whirlwind of holiday parties, family gatherings, baking and seemingly endless opportunities to indulge. While this time of year is meant to be joyful, food can quickly become another source of stress, especially for parents trying to balance healthy habits with holiday traditions.

As a dietitian, I remind families that healthy eating isn't about perfection, and the holidays are certainly no exception. In fact, some of the most meaningful food experiences have very little to do with nutrition and everything to do with connection, culture and creating memories.

Take the pressure off the plate. It's easy to get caught up in worrying about how many cookies the kids have eaten. But a few days of eating differently won't undo a year's worth of healthy habits. Consider the bigger picture. What matters most is what we do consistently over time.

Keep some familiar routines. Between late nights and changes to regular schedules, routines can quickly fall apart. Maintaining a little consistency with meals and snacks can help everyone feel their best. Offer balanced meals throughout the day, even when a big holiday dinner is planned. Skipping meals to "save room" often leaves us overly hungry.

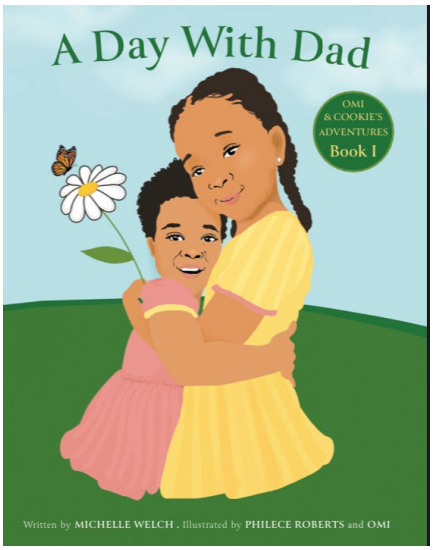
Let kids enjoy holiday foods without guilt. Children learn from how we talk about food. Labelling foods as "bad," commenting on how much someone eats, or suggesting we need to exercise to make up for dessert can shape their relationship with eating. Instead, use neutral language and allow children to enjoy festive foods alongside their usual favourites. Holiday cookies and vegetables can both have a place at the table!

Make memories beyond the menu. Invite your kids into the kitchen to help prepare a favourite family recipe, decorate cookies or choose a dish for a holiday gathering. These experiences build food skills, confidence and positive associations with food.

This December, give yourself permission to let go of the expectation that every meal needs to be perfectly balanced. Nourishing our families is about traditions, flexibility, enjoyment and the memories we create around the table. After all, the best holiday memories rarely come from what was on our plates, but from who was sitting around the table with us.

Happy Holidays to you and yours!

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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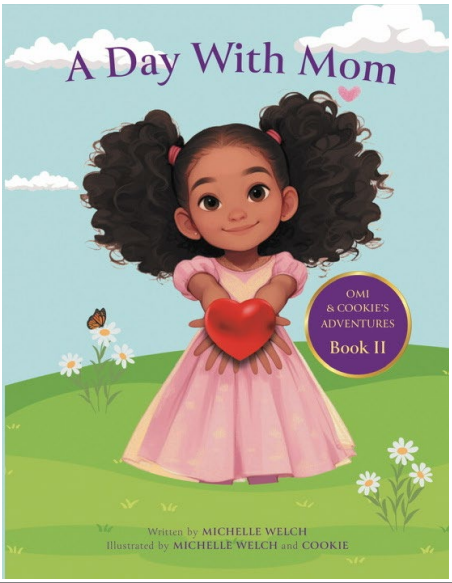

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