



Neighborhood
Parents Network

SPECIAL BABY ISSUE

PARENT TO PARENT

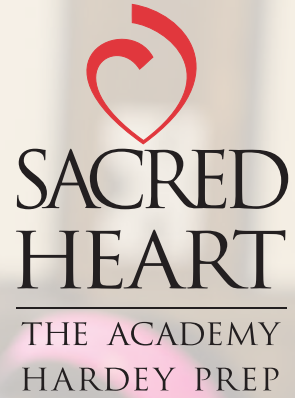


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Through Sign Language*PAGE 7

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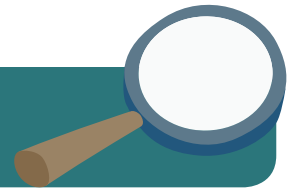
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OUR MISSION

Connecting a diverse community of families with the resources they need to navigate parenting in the city

PARENT TO PARENT

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Parent to Parent contains articles and information straight from our NPN member community. For information about editorial submissions, email newsletter@nnpnparents.org; for advertising, email ellie@nnpnparents.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Members Speak..... Back Cover

From the Executive Director

I remember that day, a little over eight years ago, like it was yesterday. We gleefully checked out of the brand-new Prentice Hospital after a relatively smooth delivery. My husband cautiously drove home along Lake Shore Drive, clenched fists on the steering wheel, while I sat protecting the car seat in the back. We joyfully introduced our baby to the dog before crossing the threshold as a legitimate family of three.

Once we were inside, we realized we had absolutely no idea what to do next. It took my milk several days to come in, and since I was sure I was going to exclusively breastfeed, we didn’t have a single bottle or ounce of formula in the house besides the one single serving of Enfamil the nurses had slipped in our bag before we left the hospital. Not only was our newborn starving (causing him to be up all night screaming), my parents, who had come in from Cleveland poised to “help,” sat wondering out loud when lunch was going to be served. Seriously?!

Of course we figured it out. Not only did we live to tell about it, we made the conscious decision to experience parenthood all over again a mere year and a half later. Whether you are hoping to start a family in the future or you’re an old pro, nothing beats the support and stories of parents who have been through it all. So pack this issue along in your hospital bag and gear up for what is sure to be an adventurous ride!



Photo courtesy Melanie Schlachter.

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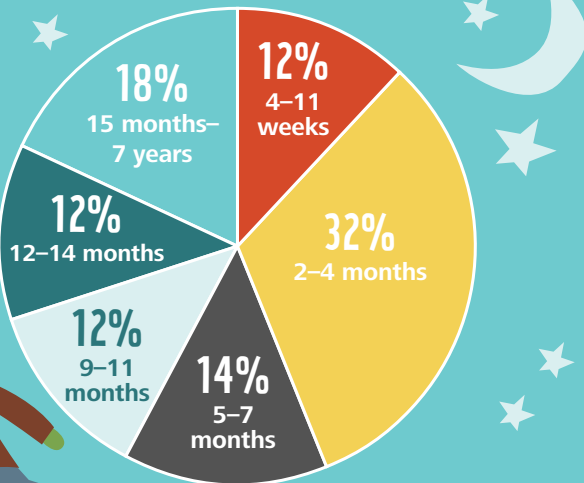
Bennett Day School is an independent, progressive PreK to 8th grade school where children and teachers construct learning together.

Bennett Day's child-centered program is based on the Reggio Emilia approach which emphasizes learning by doing and place-based education.

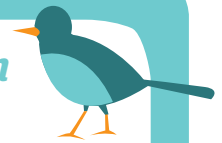
Bennett Day has two campuses in Chicago: an Early Childhood Campus in the West Loop at 657 West Fulton Street, and an Elementary and Middle School Campus in West Town at 955 West Grand Avenue, opening Fall 2016.

FORUM FINDINGS

On our main discussion forum we posed the question, **At what age did your baby start sleeping through the night?**, and here's how members responded. The youngest to sleep soundly: 4 weeks. The oldest: 7 years. One mom, whose child managed it by 7 weeks, wrote, "Except I still wake up at 3 a.m. in anticipation!"



Overheard on the forum



"Hormones can just be wacky."

"I don't care whether your house is messy. So is mine."

"Your baby (and other family members) need a sane, happy mom/wife more than an extra month of breast milk."

"You won't care about your view or your room. You'll care whether or not you can waddle to the bathroom and hopefully pee without feeling like your insides are giving out."

"And it's also okay to not be in the fast lane of the play date scene."

"When your kids are old enough that people think they should be 'under control,' you get the stink-eye."

"Sounds like she is a healthy pooper to me."

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Patti Boeke lives in Logan Square with her husband, two boys (ages six and four) and two dogs. She has volunteered at the School Fair, the Insider's Guide to Preschool seminar, Member Mingle, Developmental Differences Resource Fair, New Year's Eve Party, 5k and Family Fun Day and New Moms group. She is a network solution architect at CDW.

What's the best thing about being an NPN volunteer (other than the free T-shirt)?

I strongly believe in the ways NPN benefits parents. I love that I can give back by volunteering around a crazy parent schedule. Parents seem so appreciative when I help them at the School Fair. At seminars I get to hear the seminar and volunteer for a double benefit. I was even offered a free Britax double stroller and booster seat!

What's the most hilarious mistake you made when your first child was a baby?

I was always nervous that my son was too cold so I would tend to overdress him—so much that he looked like a stuffed star. His arms and legs were straight out and he looked so miserable because he couldn't move.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Visit our [Calendar](#) for more great events all over Chicago!

FEBRUARY

16

Expectant Moms Mingle

Land of Nod, 900 W. North Ave., Chicago

You're pregnant, so be pampered! Join NPN for a fabulous evening of preparing for motherhood. Festivities include manicures, massages, a BIG raffle and more.

FEBRUARY

20

Preparing for Parenthood: Workshops & Expo

Erikson Institute, 451 N. LaSalle St., Chicago

Having a baby? Consider this event your one-stop shop for registry help, CPR training, diapering and swaddling instruction, breastfeeding how-tos and, most important, sleep-training information.

MARCH

13

Developmental Differences Resource Fair

DePaul College Prep
3633 N. California Ave., Chicago

This fair is dedicated to providing families of children with developmental differences—including developmental delays, sensory-processing disorder, autism, ADD/ADHD, PDD-NOS, mixed receptive-expressive language disorder, Down Syndrome and physical disabilities—with school options, service providers and other resources.

LEARN



SANITY, SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR DAYCARE OR PRESCHOOL

By Jackie Kardesh, *Kids and Company*, NPN member since 2012

LET'S EXPLORE SOME IMPORTANT THINGS YOU SHOULD ABSOLUTELY BE DOING BEFORE SENDING YOUR CHILD TO ANY TYPE OF SCHOOL, DAYCARE, CLUB OR COMMUNITY GROUP.

Transitioning—a scary concept and yet infinite when it comes to raising our kids. Our families are in a constant state of evolution, and when it comes to our kids' care and education, you'll find it's no exception.

We often try to do our best by getting obsessive about flash cards, drilling the alphabet and playing the Baby Einstein station on our Pandora around the clock. But honestly, that's not going to make or break your family's experience in this case. Creating a platform for success in the case of educational transitioning is simpler than that.

Let's explore some important things you should absolutely be doing before sending your child to any type of school, daycare, club or community group.

Practice your morning routine and do a "dry-run" of what your first day will look like. Seems simple, I know, but if you're returning from maternity leave, or your child is going to miss the first activity of the day, timing is everything. A week or so before, set the alarm, pack the lunches, walk the dog and try to get out the door and do a mock drop-off to get your child to daycare or preschool on time. It will put your mind at ease to have one under your belt and allow you the opportunity to make adjustments as needed.

Review relevant information with involved parties. What do I mean? Does your child have allergies? Does every person who may come in contact with your child know what they are? Do you and all involved guardians of the child have the number of the daycare or school in your phone? In moments of emergency, you're certainly not in the frame of mind to start Googling phone numbers. Does your child's daycare or school have your insurance information in case they need to call 911 and beat you to the hospital? These are just a few examples but you get the idea.



Photo courtesy Jackie Kardesh.

Last but not least, be positive and enthusiastic regarding the topic of "school" or "care" in the home.

As we all know, our children are much smarter than we think, and they gravitate toward our emotions. If there's a supportive and excited attitude in the household around the idea of transitioning into daycare or preschool, it's much more likely they'll embrace the change. If you seem skeptical and dreary, guess what? They're going to be anxious and scared about the unknown.

So there you have it: a little prioritization for your sanity, safety and security relating to daycare or "school." It's an exciting rite of passage that is so important for your little one(s), whether it's you returning to work after your maternity leave or watching them head off to school.

Jackie Kardesh is an evangelist for improving parental work-life balance issues in her personal and professional life. She is the proud mother of Landon (two) and Hayden (one) and has been with her hubby for almost 15 happy years.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR BABY THROUGH SIGN LANGUAGE

By *Kate Cicchelli*, NPN member since 2015

I spend my days in school, working with children ages three to seven, and my evenings and weekends communicating with my 16-month-old daughter. While there are huge language development differences between my daughter and the 54 students in school, one thing they have in common is the challenge of communicating in moments when words don't come easily.

That happens at the breakfast table at home, when the sippy cup isn't coming quickly enough or when a new toy is just out of reach and she doesn't have the words to ask for it. I get lots of sounds that accelerate from an asking grunt to a downright weepy scream.

At school, children must express themselves in varied and ever-changing contexts. Asking a teacher for something elicits a predictable response, but asking a three-, four- or five-year-old classmate for something, particularly something the other child has, is far less predictable and likely provokes a strong reaction.

My observations at school and home came together when NPN and Chicago Pediatric Therapy and Wellness Center partnered to offer Baby Sign Language. I signed up immediately because I wanted my daughter to be able to communicate her wants, needs and experiences, and this opportunity made it easy to try.

The class was for ages six months to 18 months and consisted primarily of pre-crawlers. My 13-month-old daughter was a bit of a Godzilla, stomping across the mats, careening between

HAVING MORE THAN ONE AVENUE TO COMMUNICATE, PARTICULARLY ONE THAT REDUCES THE NEED FOR ORAL LANGUAGE, ALLOWS CHILDREN TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES MORE EASILY.

babies and jabbering her way through the story the teacher read. Chicago Pediatric's space was warm and welcoming, and we learned about 25 words in 45 minutes. Parents were seeking the same thing for babies at different stages: to enable our children to tell us when they need something.

We repeated the 25 words throughout the class, with our babies and one another. I picked up the words because it was so visual. The gestures for words like love, hungry, eat and cat are simple, make sense and are therefore easy to remember, even several months later. My daughter uses sign language with spoken language; sometimes when she's frustrated, she just signs. When we recently turned back the clocks, I'd lost track of time, and it was well into the (pre-time-change) dinner hour. My daughter was increasingly crabby. Through her grunting, grumping and general discontent, she started to sign "eat," a simple gesture bringing the hand to the mouth. She didn't say a word, but she let me know exactly what she needed. At a time when oral language wasn't available to her, this visual cue accomplished what I hoped: it allowed her to express herself.

We're not bilingual, but thanks to the class, YouTube and BabySignDictionary.com, we add words here and there. We also hope to add sign language experiences at my school. As I learned from this great opportunity, having more than one avenue to communicate, particularly one that reduces the need for oral language, allows children at different developmental stages and experiencing varied emotions to express themselves more easily.

Kate Cicchelli is a single parent living in Bucktown with her daughter and yellow Lab. Co-founder, principal and chief academic officer of Bennett Day School, she was a classroom teacher for 14 years and has consulted for local, national and international initiatives including school design, community leadership and curriculum development.



Photo courtesy Kate Cicchelli.



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FOUR APPS THAT HELP NEW PARENTS STAY PRODUCTIVE

By **Jem Bahaijoub**, NPN member since 2015

One of the toughest things about becoming a parent is the realization that your time is never your own. In fact, you may find yourself repeatedly muttering, “What *did* I used to do with all my free time?” Yoga and trips to the hairdresser have now become luxuries.

But there are essential tasks you cannot ignore, such as paying bills, grocery shopping and DIY. How can you fit these between the feeding and changing? With a little bit of strategic planning, you can get more done than you think. Just ask yourself: At what points during the day are you stuck in one place? Maybe you have a newborn who nurses for hours? Or a child who only naps in the stroller? My first child would nap only in the car. So I used to set out for “nap journeys” at the same time each day. Once he was asleep, I would park and get connected.

Here are my top four mobile apps to help you be productive and create the mental space you need to focus on your newborn.

Task Rabbit

Are you fretting about assembling the Ikea baby furniture or yard work you never get around to? Download Task Rabbit to delegate tasks to a fully vetted and community-reviewed “Tasker.” It’s a great way to get external help with the little things that take up a lot of time. Job done!

Fancy Hands

Fancy Hands is a team of U.S.-based online personal assistants. You pay a monthly fee for a set number of tasks. These could be researching gift ideas for your mother-in-law, exploring family-friendly vacation options or just paying a bill. You set tasks from your cell phone, whenever and wherever. Now delegate away!

Diapers.com

If you struggle to get out of the house, or don’t have the required three hands to carry baby and supplies while opening doors, then diapers.com is a lifesaver. Bulk-buy diapers, wipes, lotions, formula and even baby equipment. A must for any new parent!

WITH A LITTLE BIT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING, YOU CAN GET MORE DONE THAN YOU THINK.

Trello

If you are anything like me, once your first child was born, your memory was never the same again. This is where an app like Trello is invaluable. It keeps track of everything from big-picture stuff to minor details. You can make lists (baby, work, world domination), create deadlines and add images and attachments. You can even collaborate with your partner on “boards” to plan essential date nights. Visually, it looks like sticky notes on a corkboard. It’s a life management tool that is also great fun!

Needless to say, nothing can replace the help of family and friends. However, it’s comforting to know that a variety of apps are available to help you manage your time and stay productive, giving you extra cuddle time with your little ones!

.....
Jem Bahaijoub is the founder and owner of [imaginePR \(imaginepr.net\)](http://imaginePR.net), a boutique agency that offers personalized marketing services to artists, entrepreneurs and small businesses. She is a Brit proud to be living in Chicago with her husband and two gorgeous kids, Jasper (five) and Ruby (two).



WHY WE CHOSE A NANNY

By *Katie Wilson*, NPN member since 2012

POINT

THE ADDITIONAL HELP AT HOME AND SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY MEANT WE WERE ABLE TO BE "PRESENT" DURING OUR DAUGHTER'S WAKEFUL HOURS.

With our first child, we agonized over most decisions, but deciding what to do about child care was the hardest. It gave me constant anxiety and frequently kept me up at night. It was one of those BIG scary decisions we procrastinated making.

My husband and I grew up with stay-at-home moms, and while I knew I would go back to work, it took me a while to realize what that meant. Would we still be raising our daughter if she spent more wakeful hours in child care than with us? What type of child care would be best for her and our lifestyle? Would we feel more "in control" of our daughter's schedule if we went with a nanny or would socializing her early be best for her development? Many questions ran through our minds.



Photo courtesy Katie Wilson.

Because of my slow emergence from the hazy, sleepless bliss of maternity leave, selecting a nanny became more realistic than getting into a respected daycare center. Our demanding jobs, our travel schedules, my volunteer commitments and my husband's grad school program also factored heavily into this decision. We were strapped for quality family time and wanted to preserve as much of it as we could. With a nanny, we hoped we would be able to keep our daughter in her own environment, maintain her routine, have help with laundry and cleaning around the house and, most of all, find someone who would care for her with almost as much love as we would.

The process of finding a nanny can be daunting. I looked at the NPN forums and on Care.com and researched agencies. Because I grew up in a smaller town where everyone knows everyone, one of my major issues with the process was the desire to find someone connected to someone we knew. A background check is helpful (and a good idea) but a referral gave us peace of mind. Luckily, due to timing, we found a nanny through a referral with a long list of glowing recommendations, which made the transition easier.

The additional help at home and schedule flexibility meant we were able to be "present" during our daughter's wakeful hours. However, this also meant that we could be more "present" at work. The daily photos from our nanny helped me to know our daughter was enjoying her day just as much as they helped me to relax and focus on work.

Our decision worked best for our family, but not every family has the same needs. The one important lesson I've learned is that your child care needs will change as your child grows or siblings come along. The only constant thing in life is change, and child care is no exception, so don't beat yourself up if your initial nanny isn't a good fit or if you decide to go the daycare route after having a nanny for your infant. The only person who knows what works best for your family is you.

.....
 Katie Wilson, an 11-year Chicagoan, works part time. She spends her days at home chasing her children and enjoying walking to parks, her daughter's school and the grocery store. She lives in Ravenswood with her husband and two children, cared for by their daughter's original nanny three days a week.

WHY WE CHOSE DAYCARE

By **Lidia Varesco Racoma**, NPN member since 2011

COUNTER-POINT

Truth be told, I'm the last person who wanted to put her child in daycare. When my son was born, we had a full-time nanny. When he was 18 months old, we found ourselves needing a new child care arrangement, and my husband suggested daycare so our son would have more socialization and learning activities.

I started researching daycares (on NPN's forum, of course), and we chose a referral. My son's first few weeks in daycare were a transition—more for me than him—but he quickly became comfortable in his new classroom. Some days, he didn't even want to go home.

As months went by, I noticed daycare was having a positive effect on him—and us. Here are seven ways daycare has changed our lives for the better.

Socialization

My son didn't have a sibling when he started, so daycare has been an opportunity for him to experience socialization and concepts such as sharing and being respectful.

Routine

Daycare has given him structure. He's learning how to stick to a daily routine and follow along with others. And though I find it hard to believe, his teachers say he's the best napper in his class!

Learning

Soon after he started, I was amazed to hear my son mentioning words and concepts I knew I didn't teach him—I realized just how much he was learning at daycare.

MY SON'S FIRST FEW WEEKS IN DAYCARE WERE A TRANSITION, BUT HE QUICKLY BECAME COMFORTABLE IN HIS NEW CLASSROOM. SOME DAYS, HE DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO GO HOME.

Throughout the years, his teachers have also been instrumental in helping us understand how he learns best.

Manners and habits

I was pleasantly surprised one day when my toddler shook my hand and said, "How do you do?" He's also learned good habits such as clearing the dinner table and looking both ways before crossing the street (which of course has a fun song to go along with it).

Potty training

A friend once told me the best benefit of daycare was potty training. Boy, was she right. After struggling at home for months, my son's teachers potty-trained him in a matter of weeks. Being in an environment with peers who were also potty training made the transition much easier for him.

Friendships

It's been a joy watching my son develop friendships with his classmates, and I too enjoy the camaraderie with parents. When one of his classmates transfers to a new school, I don't know who takes it harder, him or me!

And now the best for last: babysitters

I know daycares have different policies but ours allows teachers to babysit, which has been a godsend for us. What can be better than a babysitter you know and trust and your child looks forward to spending time with?

Now that my son is nearing kindergarten, I've been thinking about all his kind and loving teachers, the classmates that cheerfully greet me each morning (Hi, CJ's mommy!) and the daily routine I've grown to look forward to. Knowing this is his last year there makes me a little sad. Daycare was definitely the right decision for us.

Lidia Varesco Racoma is a mom of two—kids and businesses. She's an art director and designer who helps education-focused organizations share their message through branding and marketing, and she outfits kids in good design with her line of children's apparel, typebaby. She blogs about balancing motherhood and small business.



Photos courtesy Lidia Varesco Racoma.



POST-BABY AB SEPARATION: FAQS ABOUT DIASTASIS

By **Cassandra Hawkinson**, NPN member since 2008

**BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE ON THE
CONDITION AND KNOW YOUR OWN BODY;
THEN YOU CAN MAKE AN INFORMED
DECISION ABOUT WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU.**

As a fitness professional who works with moms, I can say the majority of my clients have never heard of an abdominal wall separation—or don't know if they have one post baby. To help educate you about the condition and how to mend your post-baby body, here are a few of my favorite FAQs.

What is it? An abdominal wall separation, also known as diastasis recti, is the separation of the rectus abdominis muscle. Diastasis is a common feature during pregnancy or after birth; approximately 66 percent of women have an abdominal muscle separation immediately following delivery. During pregnancy, your muscles need to expand to accommodate the growing uterus. During this expansion, in some cases, the connective tissue (linea alba) holding the muscles together thins and weakens. It doesn't hurt, and you may not even be aware that it exists.

A separation reduces the integrity and functional strength of the abdominal wall and thereby can affect the back and pelvic stability—think low back pain and/or urinary incontinence. A separation also can cause the “baby pooch” appearance.

What causes a separation? A separation can happen to any pregnant woman. It doesn't discriminate between fit, strong mamas or mamas who may not have the option to exercise during pregnancy. Health professionals agree that women carrying multiples, age, joint elasticity and number of births can be strong factors for a separation to occur.

How do I know if I have it? Ask your health care provider to assess you after having your baby. You can self-assess, but wait 14 days after birth before you do.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet on floor.
- Put your fingers at the midline of your tummy.
- Lift your head slightly with your abs relaxed.
- As you rise and lower slightly in this position, you may feel your fingers sink in slightly and the ridge of muscle on either side as you rise.



Photo courtesy Cassandra Hawkinson.

- If you rise up in a full sit-up-type movement, and see your tummy rise in a ridge or cone shape, this is also a sign of diastasis.
- If you feel a painful bulge in the diastasis, consult your doctor.

A women's health specialist can help with an assessment if you're concerned and would like an assessment and treatment plan.

What can I do to help heal it? An important step to repair this condition is to avoid exercises and daily movements that can provoke a separation. With dedication to basic abdominal rehabilitation exercises, you can begin to reconnect the muscles. The corrective exercises teach you to isolate the contraction of your deepest layer of muscle that runs horizontally around your torso. For every woman wishing to return to exercise, these rehab exercises should be your starting point.

Become knowledgeable on the condition and know your own body; then you can make an informed decision about what is best for you.

Cassandra Hawkinson has been a fitness trainer specializing in prenatal and postnatal fitness for more than 12 years, mom of four-year-old twins, triathlete, blogger and founder of the Active Moms' Club. Find more information on AMC's blog or check out its fitness programs. There's a program for every mom's schedule.

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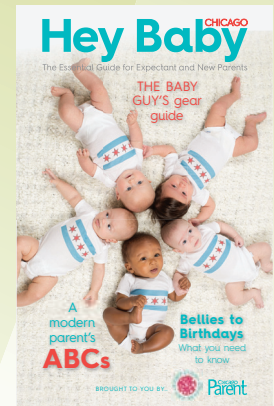
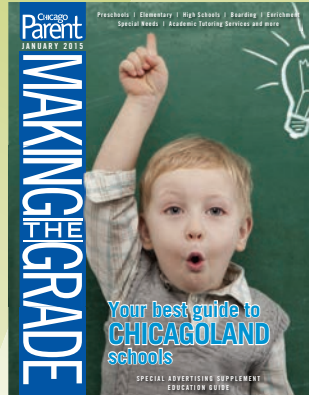
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BEYOND THE TEARS: A JOURNEY THROUGH COLIC

By **Molly McGowan**, NPN member since 2014

Before my daughter was born, I was confident that I was prepared. I had completed childbirth classes, organized a nursery, read the pile of baby books on my nightstand and cleaned every corner. I was ready.

But then the crying began. My husband had returned to work, the visitors were gone, and this screaming baby and I were all alone. As a first-time parent, it's hard to know what is normal and what is cause for concern. My daughter required so much attention. If she wasn't being held or moving in the car or stroller, she was crying. All the time. And, quite often, I was crying, too.

Colic is a mystery. According to the American Pregnancy Association, "There is no proven cure for colic, since there is no definitive cause." Those closest to me, who were certainly well-intentioned, were quick to give me advice: Put her down. Let her cry. Hire a babysitter. The list went on and on. However, over time, I learned to navigate my own path through the world of colic. Here are a few things I learned.

Contact the Fussy Baby Network. Sponsored by Erikson Institute, the Fussy Baby Network is run by infant specialists who offer phone consultations, home visits and support groups for families with fussy babies. I contacted this network when my daughter was five months old and wished I had reached out sooner. The infant specialist who spoke with me and visited our home was warm and reassuring. She gave us valuable advice that helped calm our baby and let us know we were not alone.



Photo courtesy Molly McGowan.

ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN PREGNANCY ASSOCIATION, "THERE IS NO PROVEN CURE FOR COLIC, SINCE THERE IS NO DEFINITIVE CAUSE."

Join a new parent group. Being a new parent—especially the parent of a colicky baby—can be an isolating experience. A new parent group offers connection, socialization and the motivation to shower and get out of the house! Neighborhood Parents Network (NPN) strives to connect families with the resources they need, including a New Moms group and New Moms Mingles. These groups lead to lasting friendships and connections—for the children and the moms.

Make time for yourself. As difficult as this is to do, it is important to take time for yourself so you can rest and recharge. It took me months to figure out that I, alone, could not make the crying stop. And I found that when I took some breaks—a trip to Target by myself, a movie night with my husband, a dinner date with friends—I was able to rediscover a personal sense of calm that carried over to my baby.

As I think back to those early months, I realize we are never fully prepared for what lies ahead of us on the parenting journey. It is an unknown road that often presents us with obstacles along the way. I think the best we can do is reach out to others, share what we've learned and blaze the trail as we go.

.....
Before parenthood, Molly McGowan taught junior high and high school students. She is now navigating the world of early childhood education as a mother to her three-year-old daughter. Molly has found great support through NPN and loves to connect with other families in the city.



INSIDE TIPS FROM AN OB NURSE

By Kim Wilschek, *Safety Squad/Chicago CPR*, NPN member since 2011

LABOR IS NOT AN EXACT SCIENCE. HOWEVER, MOST COUPLES TELL ME IT WAS A NICER EXPERIENCE THAN THEY EXPECTED.

If you're expecting, no doubt you're receiving unsolicited advice and hearing horror stories. I've spent more than 20 years working in OB at three of Chicago's leading maternity centers. Here is my perspective as a nurse.

- 1. There is no crystal ball.** Labor is not an exact science. However, the majority of the time, mom and baby are fine, and most couples tell me it was a nicer experience than they expected.
- 2. The nurses aren't mind readers.** Tell your labor nurse the top three things about this experience that matter most to you. Or tell her what you absolutely don't want. Keep it to things within your control.
- 3. If you want an unmediated, low-interventional birth, hire a doula.** None of the leading maternity centers have doulas on staff. There is evidence to support that using a doula lowers the risk of a C-section. The nurses are there to support you, but we have many things to monitor.
- 4. You can always say NO.** Medical interventions are often suggested to avoid a C-section. However, there is frequently more than one viable option. Speak up if something doesn't sound right.
- 5. Have a ball with labor.** The exercise ball is the closest thing to a magic bullet—really. The labor and delivery unit will have balls available, but have your own so you can use it at home during early labor.
- 6. You can move around more than you think, with an epidural.** You will have to stay in bed once you have an epidural. But remember, movement keeps labor progressing; move from your left side, right side, semi-sitting, kneeling over the top of the bed. Ask your labor nurse about using the peanut-shaped ball; studies show that using this ball to open your pelvis may decrease your risk of a C-section.
- 7. Eat before you come to the hospital.** Many hospitals still limit eating once you arrive. Be sure to eat at home and stay hydrated.

- 8. Amniotic fluid leaks.** The bag of water can break any time during labor. But after it breaks, you will continue to leak fluid throughout labor. Not all the fluid escapes during the initial "break," and the baby is always making more fluid.
- 9. Keep calm and breathe.** Slow, conscious breathing will keep you focused and relaxed and serve as a distraction.
- 10. You will not recognize your perineum, but it's OK.** Most women have a lot of swelling in their perineum after delivery—more than you can imagine. Use the ice packs and the witch hazel pads that the hospital supplies. It gets better quickly, I promise!
- 11. You will be freaked out about pooping after delivery.** You will not want to push anything else out of your bottom after delivery. However, constipation makes things worse. Take the stool softener the hospital offers to you.
- 12. Delayed cord clamping is not routine at most institutions.** In healthy, full-term deliveries, delayed cord clamping may not be routine; you will have to request it.

Kim Wilschek, RN, CCE, is a nurse, educator and owner of Safety Squad and Chicago Pregnancy.



Photo courtesy Kim Wilschek.

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THE SEVEN TOUGHEST THINGS ABOUT BEING A NEW MOM

By Annamarie Rodney, Chicago Family Doula, NPN member since 2015

Sleep deprivation! Your new baby sleeps 18 hours a day, which leaves you plenty of time to sleep, right? You hear “sleep when your baby sleeps,” which is good advice, but doesn’t seem to help with this overwhelming feeling of exhaustion. Waking up every one to two hours to feed the baby is quite the adjustment, and by the time you fall back to sleep, it’s time to feed the baby again. Ask for help. Have Dad do a feeding and hire a postpartum doula.

The number of diapers used in a day. It may seem unbelievable, but your new baby will go through roughly 10 diapers a day. Many new moms find it helpful to change the baby’s diaper before a feeding. Baby will be comfortable and will eat and sleep better.

Overwhelming amounts of contradicting information! You want to know which stroller is best for city streets and find 4,000 blogs and the same number of opinions and options. How can there be so many choices, options and decisions to make? Although overwhelming, it is best to trust your gut, do what you are comfortable with and stick to it.

Your single friends just don’t understand! This one is hard to digest for many new moms and dads. It seems as though having a child has changed relationships with friends and everyone. It has! You are in a new world that is exciting, overwhelming, exhausting and amazing all at

IT IS BEST TO TRUST YOUR GUT, DO WHAT YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH AND STICK TO IT.

the same time. You want to sit at home in your pajamas and hold your baby. Enjoy your baby and, again, go with your gut. Your real friends will eventually understand and accept the new you.

You will never be bored again! Days of watching TV and letting a day slip by are long gone. You will find yourself constantly busy and have an endless to-do list. Make some calm moments for yourself and build them into each day.

Pregnancy and birth is a process and so is your recovery. Whether you had a C-section or a vaginal delivery, you will still have to recover. Follow your body’s lead and the advice of your doctor or midwife. Take it easy! Recovery usually takes six weeks. You should rest and stay well-nourished. Ask for help and hire help.

Intense emotions! You were on an emotional roller coaster for nine months of pregnancy and the roller coaster continues. Many women experience postpartum blues due to the adjustments and the large drop in hormones. Ask for help, share your feelings and consider placenta encapsulation. You are not alone in your feelings.

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Annamarie Rodney grew up in Brookfield, moved to California, then returned after having her first daughter. She has two girls with another coming soon. She is a teacher and the owner of Chicago Family Doula, a small agency that offers birth and postpartum support to families in the Chicago area.

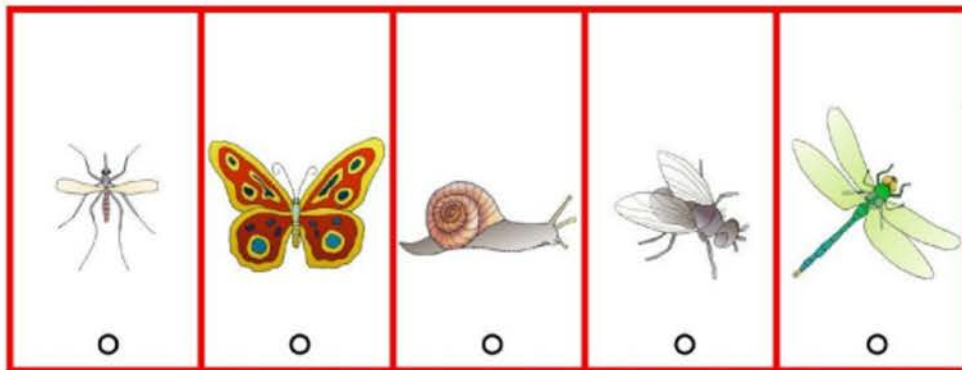


Photo courtesy Chicago Family Doula.

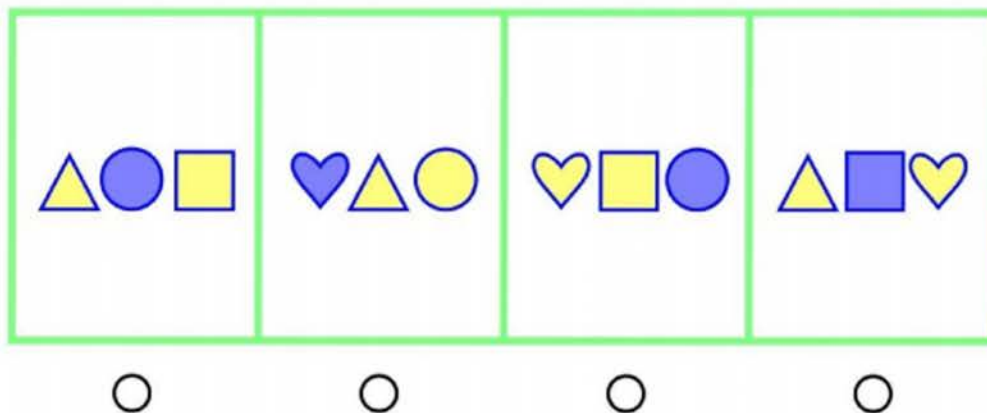
Are you smarter than a 4-year-old?

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Answers | 1) Box #3 (snail does not have wings) | 2) Box #4

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A PEDIATRICIAN'S ADVICE ON NEWBORN CARE

ASK AN EXPERT

By Dr. Allison Foster, NPN member since 2013

Having a newborn come home, whether it's your first time or fourth time, is a period when it's normal for parents to have lots of questions about whether or not they are doing the right things for their baby. Lots of conflicting information from baby books, mommy blogs and well wishers often leaves parents confused and doubting their parental instincts. Here are the three most common questions parents of newborns ask me.

How do I know that my baby is getting enough breast milk? It can be frustrating not knowing exactly how much breast milk your baby is taking in each day. Most mothers' milk will come in around day four of life. At this point, most babies begin to gain proper weight after experiencing an expected period of newborn weight loss. By two weeks, your baby should be back to his/her birth weight. A clear sign that your baby is getting enough breast milk is weight gain of four to seven ounces per week. Your baby's wet diapers will reassure you he/she is adequately hydrated. After four days of age, your baby should urinate more than four times daily. Most breastfed babies will want to nurse eight to 10 times daily, which usually means that they will be hungry every two to three hours.

Do I have to stay in the house with my newborn for the first two months? Absolutely not! Staying in the house for two months ensures you and your baby will have a good case of cabin fever. Keep in mind that your baby's immune system is relatively immature at this point, especially since it's too soon for vaccines against germs that cause whooping cough, meningitis and pneumonia, to name a few. This means staying away from visiting people who are obviously sick and avoiding congested areas during peak times. Make sure visitors are well and wash their hands with soap and water before holding your baby. Going for a short walk around the neighborhood, to a coffee shop in the middle of the afternoon or to the park during the late morning is perfectly fine. I suggest keeping a lightweight receiving blanket draped over the stroller when walking through high traffic areas to guard against the sneezing and coughing passerby.

LOTS OF CONFLICTING INFORMATION FROM BABY BOOKS, MOMMY BLOGS AND WELL WISHERS OFTEN LEAVES PARENTS CONFUSED AND DOUBTING THEIR PARENTAL INSTINCTS.

When is a baby's fever high enough for me to call the pediatrician? A fever in a baby younger than three months of age is 100.4 degrees. For a baby this age, take temperatures using only a rectal thermometer. For infants younger than three months, you should call your pediatrician any time your child's temperature is 100.4 degrees or higher. Since young infants don't show the same signs of illness as older infants and children, it's important to look for subtle hints, such as your baby seeming sleepier or fussier than usual, feeling floppy or showing change in skin color.

Dr. Allison Foster is a pediatrician at Child & Adolescent Health Associates. She has been in practice since 2009. The best part of her job is forming relationships with families. She enjoys traveling with her husband and kids. She is an avid runner, having recently completed her first Chicago Marathon.



Photo courtesy Dr. Allison Foster.

BABY PHOTO TIPS

By Patricia Anderson, NPN member since 2015



Photo courtesy Patricia Anderson.

Having a professional photographer follow you around every day to capture those cute smiles and laughs just isn't realistic, so for those in-between times when you don't have your family photographer handy, here are some tips for great iPhone photography.

Natural light. Ever wonder why all your baby photos are out of focus or grainy? It's 100 percent due to poor lighting. Photos outdoors and near windows will most likely eliminate motion blur and grain from your photos.

Snapping the photo. Often, we as parents just grab our camera and snap from where we are standing. Get down on your baby's level for a better-balanced photo. Also, if your baby isn't sitting up yet, getting a simple, textured blanket (I prefer knit throws), laying baby on his/her back and photographing baby from above can make for some great, simplistic photos.

Symmetry. Balance your photos using your child's surroundings to create a more interesting result. While keeping baby in the center of the photo is fine, try getting

creative and place your baby in different areas of the photo. This takes some experimenting, but soon you'll learn that sometimes using negative space can create some awesome photos!

Shadows. It's a common misconception that you want your child to be directly facing your light source straight on. Put your child on an angle from the light source you're using. This allows depth and shadows that will define baby's expressions and details on his/her face, giving your photos more emotion.

Get CREATIVE! If you are thinking, "Man, that would be a great picture," it probably is. Practice—see what you like and what you don't like. And above all, enjoy your little custom-made work of art!

Patricia Anderson (patriciaandersonphotography.com) is a Chicago photographer specializing in newborn and baby photography.



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YOUR FUNNY BABY PHOTOS



Photo courtesy Laura Baginski.



Photo courtesy Lilly Wieber.



Photo courtesy Michelle DiGiacomo.



Photo courtesy Michelle Tyler.



Photo courtesy Meredith Carey.



Photo courtesy Dana Wurzbarger.

ONE AND DONE OR GO FOR TWO?

By **Laura Baginski**, NPN Marketing and Outreach Manager, NPN member since 2013

THE BIG DECISION

It came in the mail again, the letter asking us if we'd like to pay an astronomical fee to keep our three children alive.

I should clarify: the letter is from a company that stores frozen embryos from women who undergo in vitro fertilization (IVF). I went through the IVF process in 2012, and, luckily, the embryo that became our beautiful son, Owen, was so strong we didn't need to use the other three that survived; we could store them in case we wanted more children down the line.

The first time my husband and I got the letter asking us to pay for the continuation of cold storage, Owen was still a newborn—meaning we were sleep-deprived zombies who barely could decide what to eat for breakfast, so we paid the fee to put off the decision.

The second time the letter arrived was the summer Owen turned one. That stark white sheet of paper sat on our kitchen counter for weeks. My husband and I occasionally would glance at it, mumble something about needing to decide what to do, then promptly distract ourselves with an errand. One day I quietly paid the fee, and we never talked about it again.

That's not to say my husband and I never talked about having another kid. We did and do. In an ideal world of limitless money and time, having another child would be wonderful. We're sure Owen would love to have a sibling to boss around and, later, to connect with in a way only siblings can. But I don't need to tell parents how expensive and exhausting (physically and emotionally) children are, and, as older working parents, we're not sure we have the stamina to go through it all again.

And there are darker thoughts. What if the child has issues we aren't equipped to deal with? What would happen to our marriage, and to Owen, if most of our energies went to a child who needed extra care? Or what if we tried to have a baby and it didn't work? How could we handle the heartbreak? But the most prevalent thought we have is this: Owen is a smart, loving, adorable little boy. We hit the jackpot—why rock the boat?

IT'S SOMETHING WE CAN'T COME TO A CONCLUSION ABOUT WITHIN A FIVE-MINUTE CONVERSATION.

When the letter arrived for the third time a few weeks ago, we couldn't ignore it. It was time to make a decision: try for another or be content with our three-person family.

This is when I should reveal what we decided. But the truth is, we're still in negotiations. It's something we're taking seriously, something we can't come to a conclusion about within a five-minute conversation. It'll take some candid discussions, probably in front of a licensed professional.

But I will say this: I paid the fee again, and our three frozen babies live on.

.....
 Laura Baginski lives in Old Irving Park with her husband, Patrick, and their son, Owen.



Photo courtesy Laura Baginski.

SHARE 

HOW TO TALK TO ME ABOUT OUR MISCARRIAGE

By **Mike Salazar**, NPN Technology Project Manager, NPN member since 2012

THE BEST THING YOU CAN SAY IS, "I'M SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS. WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?" THEN JUST LISTEN.

We were on vacation when it happened. We were having a great time on our "babymoon" 11 weeks into the pregnancy until she saw just a few drops of blood.

"Something's wrong, I know it," she said.

Neither of us wanted to believe it, but we already knew what had happened. During the next few days, walking long distances no longer left her winded. That was our next clue. I kept saying all was OK, but a black cloud loomed over the rest of that weekend.

At our 12-week checkup, the technician fired up the ultrasound and said nothing while she looked around, then grimaced and excused herself to get the doctor. I felt cold as ice, and my wife was quietly crying on the exam table. The technician's silence told us everything.

Without mincing words, the doctor told us there was no heartbeat. What could I do? Other than to try and console my wife, it was one of those situations over which I had utterly no control. It hurt. It hurt a lot.

The drive back home was the worst, trying to sort out our options. The week before we were on top of the world picking out baby furniture.

I'm now the proud father of a three-year-old. That awful period of limbo between miscarriage and new pregnancy seems like a dream. At the time, it was the worst thing anyone can go through. But we got through it.

What helped me most was talking with family and friends. If someone tells you they just had a miscarriage, I would say:

1. It's not your fault. In most cases, no one knows the cause. It wasn't because you did prenatal yoga or ate a certain food or were too stressed. It happens to people from all walks of life.



Photo courtesy Mike Salazar.

2. You are not alone. According to national estimates, 15 to 20 percent of all U.S. pregnancies end in miscarriage, defined as the loss of a fetus before the 20th week. The majority occur within the first seven weeks of pregnancy.

3. Talk about it with each other and family or friends. You may feel as if you are the only two people in the world going through this. The more you talk to people—even online—you'll find many who've had similar experiences. Processing it together and coming up with a plan to move forward got us through it.

4. Give yourselves permission to remember. Or forget. It's OK to keep that first ultrasound picture for years. I did, and I still think about "what if." If that's too hard, give yourself permission to move on when you're ready. There's no right answer.

Don't say, "Oh you'll get pregnant again easily, don't worry." That may or may not be the case. But it's the last thing a woman wants to hear. She's in limbo.

The best thing you can say is, "I'm sorry for your loss. What can I do to help?" Then just listen.

.....
Mike Salazar, a former Marine infantry officer, technologist and digital media enthusiast, is now a stay-at-home dad concentrating on running the household, sewing outfits for his daughter, shooting professional pictures and directing technology strategy for NPN.

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IT'S YOUR THING. DO WHAT YOU WANNA DO.

By **Katie Hardy**, NPN member since 2013

A PARENTING STYLE THAT WORKS FOR ONE FAMILY MAY WORK FOR ANOTHER, OR IT MAY NOT. LET'S ALL RESPECT ONE ANOTHER'S CHOICES.

My husband and I have a simple saying if we find ourselves questioning a parenting style: "No judging." It's our way of saying, it may not be our thing, but it's working for someone else. It started after our second son, Mack, was born. Our first son, Beau, graciously followed all the rules the baby books advised. He started sleeping through the night at five weeks, had no issues switching from breast to bottle and let anyone and their brother hold him. But with Mack, we finally got our deserved dose of reality, learning that not everything goes so smoothly.

We all read baby books and parenting books. We read the websites. We read the websites based on the books. We have apps based on the websites based on the books. We're up at 3:24 a.m. for the third feeding, Googling things like "how to lay my newborn down without waking him up" or "is it safe for my newborn to sleep in the swing overnight—and for all naps?"

Whether you're searching for it or not, you're going to get a lot of advice on parenting when you become or are about to become parents. So, since you're here, perhaps you're searching for it. My advice, when it comes to how you choose to parent, is to live by the words of the Isley Brothers tune: "It's Your Thing. Do What You Wanna Do."

Sleeping

You tell every sitter the only way your five-month-old will fall asleep (and stay asleep) is if you sway-bop-bop (NOT bop-sway-sway) 100 times (left to right equals one repetition)? It's your thing. You swaddle your infant in the rocker for all naps and bedtime until the very last day your pediatrician recommends (and maybe a little longer)? Do what you wanna do.



Photo courtesy Katie Hardy.

Feeding

You're planning to nurse until your child is three years old? It's your thing. Your four-month-old still won't take a bottle, and after you spent \$30 on one bottle that resembles a boob, he'll still take it only if the person who's going to feed him entertains him first for at least 20 minutes? Do what you wanna do.

Working

You can't imagine someone other than you raising your children and choose not to work? It's your thing. Not working isn't even a question to you—you're either making ends meet or make too much to pass it up? Do what you wanna do.

I've encountered many walks of life though NPN: moms and dads going through all the parenting stages, many asking the same questions. A parenting style that works for one family may work for another, or it may not. Let's all respect one another's choices. If we consider others' situations before we judge, we may feel a little more at ease. We all have our things, so wherever you may be in your parenting stage, keep calm and do what you wanna do.

Katie Hardy recently left her corporate job to be with her sons, Beau (three) and Mack (16 months). She lives in Lincoln Park with her husband, Andy, and their two boys. As NPN's Lincoln Park Co-Chair, Katie hopes to help moms connect, share and make the most of city living!

GOOD JOB, WORKING MOM!

By **Hinna Rizvi**, NPN member since 2014

I hope you have carefully rationed your time to sit down and read this. Ha! Who am I kidding? You are probably reading this in the bathroom as you see your little one's fingers creep underneath the door or while you nurse and try to eat your "lactation enhancing" oatmeal without spilling it on your baby.

While it may seem like all you do is wash bottles, make lunches and do laundry, you are a multitasking machine, girlfriend! You don't need a calendar or an app to tell you what to do and when. The fact that you can show up to work with matching socks and a stain-free shirt on less than five hours of sleep makes you a winner in my book. Just restrain yourself from strangling anyone at work who says they are tired because they slept for only seven hours. The only time you've used the word "seven" in a sentence lately is when you probably say, "I got to sleep in over the weekend...until 7 a.m.!"

Your baby isn't the only one learning new skills. Why isn't there a monthly mommy newsletter that discusses the new skills you learn every month? For instance, you're learning how to carry a car seat, pump bag, lunch, purse and diaper bag down the stairs or that pureed carrots can double as baby food and an adult dinner side the same night.



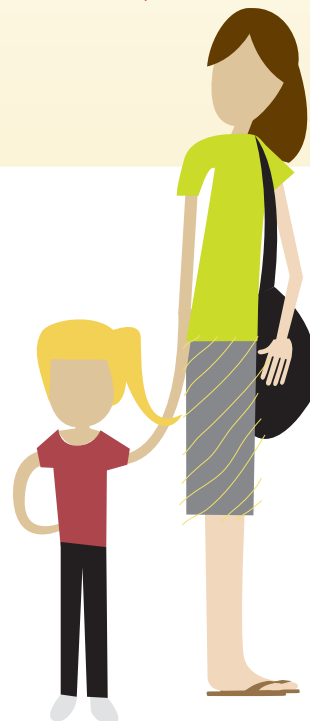
Photo courtesy Hinna Rizvi.

THE FACT THAT YOU CAN SHOW UP TO WORK WITH MATCHING SOCKS AND A STAIN-FREE SHIRT ON LESS THAN FIVE HOURS OF SLEEP MAKES YOU A WINNER IN MY BOOK.

Personally, I'd be all about sharing my own list, titled, "No shame, no guilt," as in no shame, no guilt in washing your hair every four days or no shame, no guilt in becoming a human jungle gym because you don't have time to take your kid to the park. Don't let that guilt eat you up. Instead, use some dry shampoo for your hair and make a fort out of your couch pillows. It won't matter how clean your hair is or where you are when you hear your child's sweet laughter. It'll be just as memorable and melodious.

So what if you can see dust bunnies under the couch? Your baby is probably the only one who will notice those, and he ain't smart enough to tell dust bunnies apart from "fuzzy thing I can put in my mouth." So put your feet up, turn on the TV, and eat that old chip you just found buried in between your couch cushions. You are doing an amazing job, mama!

Hinna Rizvi is a first-time mom to a 10-month-old boy. She lives with her husband and baby in West Town. She works full time as a physical therapist at Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital.



BABY IAN'S HOMECOMING DAY

By Teresa Polancic Hjerpe, NPN member since 2011

AS THE CO-CHAIR OF NPN'S ADOPTION GROUP, I'VE HEARD MANY BEAUTIFUL HOMECOMING STORIES, BUT MY FAVORITE IS THE ONE THAT BROUGHT HOME OUR CHILD.

The adoption agency gave us a due date but no contact with the birth mom. She was sure she wanted to go through with adoption, but as waiting parents know, there was always the chance she'd change her mind. Two weeks prior to the due date, my husband and I decided to start looking at baby gear and consider names in case we got the call.

On Monday after work, my phone rang. It was the agency: "A baby was born this morning." I was dumbfounded. "Is it a girl or boy?" I asked. It's a boy! The baby would be transferred to The Cradle (the agency) on Wednesday. I was excited but didn't want to get attached since the birth mom could still change her mind.



Photo courtesy Teresa Polancic Hjerpe.

After I hung up, my husband came home. He's a pilot and was about to fly to Germany. "I have good news for you," I said. "It's a boy." At first, he didn't know what I was talking about. Then came the joy and crazy feeling of what do we do now?! Thirty minutes later, with both of us still excited and scared, my husband headed to the airport.

On Tuesday, he and I talked on the phone. "What do you think about the name Ian?" he asked. I couldn't believe it: that was the name I was thinking of. It means "Gracious Gift from God." And Ian has undoubtedly been that and more!

On Wednesday, Ian arrived at his temporary quarters in Evanston while I got the necessities to bring him home. Standing in Target, I tried to figure out how I could buy the bare minimum since we still didn't know if Ian would be ours.

On Thursday, I picked up my husband at the airport, and we went to meet our son. We arrived at The Cradle to cuddle the most beautiful baby we had ever seen! It was an incomprehensible experience. The agency told us the papers would be signed around noon on Friday.

Friday morning was the longest of our lives as we waited for the call. At noon, after confirmation that the birth mom signed the papers, I breathed a sigh of relief. We went to The Cradle to bring home our son.

In the discharge room, our beautiful boy and a mountain of paperwork greeted us! After waiting nearly five years to become a family, it was finally happening. By 4 p.m. we put Ian Michael Hjerpe into his new car seat and went home. Were they really letting us leave with this small precious life? We had lots of classes but none prepared us for this breathtaking moment.

From that point forward, we jumped into the roles of parents, sharing the good news with friends who happily came to visit our beautiful little boy for whom there is no shortage of love.

After joining NPN, Teresa Polancic Hjerpe participated in six months of events before meeting her best friends/lifeline of moms through New Moms Over 40. Becoming co-chair of the Adoption group in 2012 has enriched her family's life. She lives in Old Town with her family.

DEAR ME, SIX YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS A FIRST-TIME MOM

By **Ellie Ander**, NPN Advertising Director, NPN member since 2009

In June 2015, we welcomed our third child to the family. Now I've got something to say to me, six years ago, when I had baby number one.

I gave birth to Tycen in 2009. After two years of heart-wrenching trying, a miscarriage and fertility help, the much-anticipated first-born child, first-born grandchild, first-born nephew (you get the picture) was born. My husband and I were overjoyed and completely prepared to have the easiest child-rearing experience of all our friends, who by now had temper tantrum-riddled toddlers. As "the most" patient and laid-back parents, we said, "We got this!"

Tycen, even as an infant, was filled with curiosity and laughter but could go from 0 to 10 in one breath. He was considered a "spirited" baby, which is PC-speak for "challenging." We entertained him and engaged him constantly. By the time he was five months old, he was in a music class, a movement class and a few play groups. When we weren't coming and going from those events, we read to him, played music (yep, classical) and even tried teaching him the alphabet. To say I would do things differently today is an understatement.

Today, Tycen is six, our daughter, Brielle, is four, and we are blessed with baby Levi, a joyful and laid-back five-month-old boy. Yes, every single baby is different, but if I, now mom of three, could time-travel back to baby number one, here are the words of encouragement and advice I would give myself:

Don't take the advice "you can't spoil baby" too literally. It's OK to put that baby down. Let him chill on a play mat and observe how content he is just looking at the shadows and colors all around. Try it while you tackle that growing pile of dishes, laundry and email.

Your baby is constantly learning even if it doesn't seem like it. Try to let this happen naturally so you don't stress yourself out with a book and song routine. You do not have to constantly entertain him.

Try to follow the golden sleep rule of putting baby to sleep while drowsy, not fully asleep. This will make any necessary sleep training much easier later!

And speaking of sleep training, when it's approved by the pediatrician to tackle the dreaded sleep training, no one told you but it might actually take five-plus weeks, not just three lucky days. Hang in there, I promise it gets easier.

IF I, NOW MOM OF THREE, COULD TIME-TRAVEL BACK TO BABY NUMBER ONE, HERE ARE THE WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND ADVICE I WOULD GIVE MYSELF.

You know your baby best so follow your instincts.

If you're ever feeling concerned about development, sleep, illness, etc., in lieu of asking strangers on Facebook or your mother-in-law, go straight to the experts: call your pediatrician. He/she has truly seen it all, including that perplexing rash your baby is covered in.

Most of all, the advice and words of encouragement I offer me is simply to be nice to me. Take a few deep breaths, collect your thoughts, take a nap! Being a parent truly is the most difficult job in the world.

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 Ellie Ander first became involved with NPN as a parent in 2009 with the birth of her son, finding comfort in a New Moms group. Six years later, her son, four-year-old daughter and baby boy keep her on her toes! She has been NPN's advertising director for six years.



Photo courtesy Ellie Ander.

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MEMBERS SPEAK

Why Join NPN?

- I joined for the **childcare classifieds section**. Found two nanny share families and a nanny through the board over the years.
- Breastfeeding **reassurance**, nanny relationship clarification, learning that what we were experiencing as first-time parents was **what everyone experiences**. Later: info on camps, school options, restaurants, vacation options. When we no longer needed our nanny, I was able to find her new employment through the Board.
- Creating **two special interest groups** (Miracle Moms for first-time moms over 35 and Elementary School Parents and Beyond), learning how to select restaurants for Miracle Moms, hosting and promoting an event, recruiting speakers who spoke to the needs of the Elementary School Parents age group (private school admissions, study skills, bullying, selective enrollment), becoming more comfortable with public speaking in a low stress way.
- Joining the **New Moms group** was such a great opportunity, and, as a result, my daughter and I have made friends with people we would have otherwise never met. I am so thankful for NPN and the organization of the New Moms group.
- This was by far **one of the best things I did for myself** after having my baby. I am so sad that I don't live close enough to see the other moms in my group on a regular basis anymore.
- I'm so glad I found NPN. Such a **great resource for those first years**. I tell all FTMs that they need to join and get in a New Moms group.
- **It is one of the best things I've done!**

