

Parenting in the Age of Digital Technology

by Erica Webber

It has taken us many fits and starts to arrive at the delicate, imperfect balance that is our family's rules around the use of technology.

Our earliest strategy was holding off on purchasing personal electronics for Amani until long past the time when most of her classmates had them. This strategy had the disadvantage of us being known (by Amani) as the meanest parents in town, but it did delay her descent into juvenile PDA addiction by at least three glorious years! She played outside, participated in household conversations, cured her boredom with drawing, reading, room-rearranging, some TV, bike-riding, and time with friends and family.

Amani received her first iPod from a doting aunt when she was 10 years old. We were delighted to see her so happy, but failed to appreciate the rabbit hole we were all about to dive into. We did not set enough limits at first and within a year, every waking hour was spent on the iPod—listening to music, playing games, and being distracted from schoolwork, family interactions, and chores. We finally had to take the



iPod away to reassess what exactly would be our rules and limits. When we gave it back, we allowed no more than two hours per day of total screen time from Monday through Friday, which included use of the iPod, TV, computer and video. There was also no screen time while there was homework to be done. We decided to be (a bit) more flexible during the weekends. We did not realize how tempting it would be for our daughter to goof off on the computer. We also didn't consider the clever ways she would discover to disguise

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Preteen Advice to Parents

by Talia Appel-Bernstein



Social networking websites are very important to the everyday life of preteens, like me, living in modern day society. In my opinion, these sites can be good or bad. At my school, everybody has an Instagram account because it's the "in" thing to do and lets us communicate quickly with our friends. If one of my friends is going shopping or getting something new, I might tell them to post pictures on Instagram so that I can see their buys. I might

comment something like "cute!" on a picture of their new shirt or "ur so pretty :)" on a picture of their new hairstyle. Comments like these reassure the person who's posting that they can feel confident in that shirt the next day, or that the hairstyle looks good.

On the other hand, when preteens and teens don't get enough likes on a photo or don't have enough people following them, it can make them feel unpopular or unliked, and may make them lose confidence. I think this can lead the confident people to be mean to the less confident people because they feel cooler and more popular. Also, there is the issue of cyberbullying. When you are on a website there is a possibility that someone can call you names or say

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Invest!

by Judy Appel, Executive Director

You have probably noticed that this newsletter has a fresh look. This is part of an exciting new chapter for Our Family Coalition that represents more than a new face. It represents our growth as *your* LGBTQ family organization. Why now? It is in part because we are growing up. We are working with and reaching more families, more educators, more of the public than ever before. It was time that our brand reflected this maturity.

Our board and staff have worked collectively over the past six months to help guide the future of OFC. We have adopted a new mission statement, along with a vision and theory of change, and have unveiled our new “look” or brand, which you can see in our new website (www.ourfamily.org), our enewsletter and this newsletter. All of this helps us better share our vision with you, our closest partners, and with the world that is waiting for the change we seek.

I have talked before about how LGBTQ families are the next frontier of recognition and acceptance. The majority of Californians, especially here in the Bay Area, seem to support our right to marry. While many of us find that we are living our lives without having to think about being queer families for many among us that is not true. And our kids still experience the dual realities of living in queer families in a heteronormative world. Most people, when they look to their lives, see an arc from childhood to dating to marriage to children and then to old age. For years the LGBTQ community has fought to be free to date who we want, and we have won that right. Now, those who choose to, have the right to marry here in California and in 15 other states. Yet our families are still seen as anomalies. We need to be seen as equal in having and raising kids alongside our straight counterparts. (So those kids can eventually take care of us in our old age!)

We ask you to invest with us. Invest your energy in making your school more LGBTQ welcoming and inclusive. Invest your time getting your kids together with other LGBTQ families so that they see themselves reflected in the world around them. Invest your reputation by having the courage to talk openly with those you know about your family, your relationship if you have one, and your kids if you have them. And invest your resources by donating to Our Family Coalition. When you do, you are investing in a future of full equity for all families. ↻

Check Our Family Coalition's New Mission

MISSION Our Family Coalition advances equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) families with children through support, education, and advocacy.

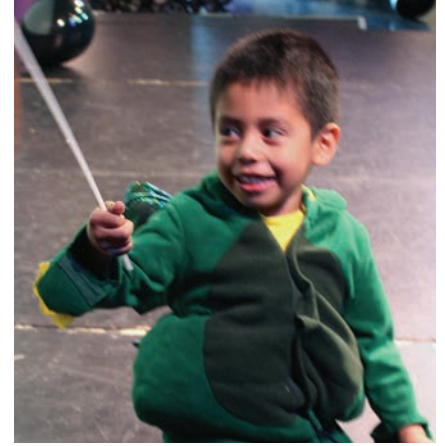
VISION We seek to create an inclusive and just world where all LGBTQ families with children have visibility and opportunities to thrive as valued participants in our schools, institutions, and communities.

THEORY OF CHANGE Our Family Coalition brings a unique and progressive voice of families to the LGBTQ movement. We cultivate community-based leadership among LGBTQ families and strong partnerships with our allies in California, to advance social justice and make our nation a more respectful and inclusive place for all.

Halloween Monster Mash

OCT
26

We had a blast doing the Monster Mash at OFC's Annual LGBTQ Family Halloween Bash. We made creepy cups of gummy worm dirt, painted balloon pumpkins, and strutted our stuff down the Halloween costume runway. New and old families met at our biggest Halloween yet!



Our Family Coalition's New Website www.ourfamily.org

Find upcoming events, workshop registrations, blog posts, forums, up-to-date resources, a sponsor spotlight and more!

CONNECT WITH OUR FAMILIES TODAY!

- Join the community: [register online](http://www.ourfamily.org/register)
- Read our new blog: www.ourfamily.org/blog
- Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ourfamilycoalition



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Letter from Karl Fleischman

Many of you have heard by now, while 18-year-old Sasha Fleischman slept while riding a bus through Oakland on Nov 4, 2013, a 16-year-old high school student set fire to their skirt. Sasha awoke to flames consuming their legs that caused second and third-degree burns. Our heart breaks for Sasha and their family as they continue to recover from this untranslatable trauma and to try to understand the motivations behind such senseless attack: Was Sasha targeted for wearing a skirt? If so, was the young attacker solely motivated to hurt another youth simply because they expressed themselves in non-traditional ways? What is our role, as parents and community members, to educate our own children to celebrate a rich variety of gender/human expression? As a community, can we find ways to turn heartbreak into hopefulness?



Amidst such suffering, the family experienced an outpouring of support, monetary and moral, from every corner of the nation. The incident and the community support have been picked up by media outlets around the world, and the mainstream press has covered Sasha's agender identity and chosen use of the "they" pronoun, raising awareness around the need to expand limiting concepts of gender. Many of us have been deeply touched by this case, so close to home, both geographically and in the potential for violence against agender/transgender/gender queer youth. The biggest lesson, though, came in the form of a compassionate open letter from Sasha's dad. In it, he reminds us all that we, too, can perhaps prevent such attacks in the future by teaching our own kids to celebrate their unique selves. The following is an excerpt from his letter:

... I wanted to take this time to send thanks to everyone who has offered words of support and love ... I can't tell you how moved we have all been by the outpouring of loving kindness, and how helpful that has been.

I also wanted to address how to talk to your kids about this incident... [An] aspect of this story that has gotten a lot of attention is the fact that Sasha was wearing a skirt, "even though" Sasha appears to be a boy. The fact is, Sasha self-identifies as "agender" and prefers the pronouns "they," "them," and "their" when people refer to Sasha in the third person. (English doesn't have commonly used gender-neutral third-person singular pronouns yet.) Being agender simply means that the person doesn't feel they are "either a boy or a girl." I realize this is a concept that even adults have difficulty wrapping their heads around. (My wife and I frequently slip up in our pronoun usage, much to Sasha's chagrin!) So I can't pretend that it's an issue that all young children will grasp. But what they certainly can and should understand is that different people like different things. Different people dress or behave or look differently. And that's a GOOD thing. Sasha feels comfortable wearing a skirt. It's part of their style. They also frequently sport a necktie and vest. Sasha likes the look, and frankly, so do I. It makes me smile to see Sasha being Sasha.

...[N]one of us can know the mind of the kid who lit a flame to Sasha's skirt. But I have a feeling that if he had seen Sasha's skirt as an expression of another kid's unique, beautiful self, and had smiled and thought, "I hella love Oakland," I wouldn't be writing this now.

Again, many thanks for all of your love and kindness. Let's all take care of each other.

— Karl Fleischman

Did you know...

Opponents of the **School Success and Opportunity Act—Assembly Bill 1266**—are trying to block students' chances to succeed? Visit www.supportallstudents.org to take action to support students and families across the state!

NEW STAFF

Mitali Purkayastha Family Engagement Associate



Mitali Purkayastha has been working internally and externally on queer liberation since 2004. They came into Our Family

Coalition through the Public Allies Program. Continuing a training in social justice leadership, Mitali connects their educational background of Child Psychology and Child Development with their political education process and strives to create a world that is inclusive of all families. As a young queer person of color whose ancestors descend from India and Bangladesh, Mitali is a community builder striving to create safe and intentional spaces for their community around the world.

George Waskey Administrative Assistant

George was born and raised in Alaska. He attended high school at a boarding school in Oregon. After graduation, George attended college in Kansas for a couple of years, majoring in Computer Information Systems with an emphasis in Business. George has played piano since childhood and currently enjoys creating eletronica-techno music. ↻



CALENDAR

THU Jan 9 5:30–9	Gay Surrogacy Mini-Conference SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER, 1800 MARKET ST., SAN FRANCISCO An overview of the various surrogacy options available for gay men will be discussed as well as a presentation by Men Having Babies about their Gay Parenting Assistance Program.	SF
SAT Jan 11 2–3:30	Everyone's Story: Town Hall Conversation Part 2 OAKLAND MAIN LIBRARY, 125 14TH ST., OAKLAND Learn how to make your school more welcoming and inclusive. Watch a Welcoming School lesson plan in action! Children highly encouraged to attend.	EB
THU Jan 16 & Jan 23 6–8	SF Adoption Workshops SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER, 1800 MARKET ST., SAN FRANCISCO Jan 16: A facilitated discussion on how to deal with adoption and attachment. Jan 23: A discussion about LGBTQ families who choose to adopt kids who are medically fragile/differently abled.	SF
SUN Jan 26 2	Gay Future Dads SF Discussion and Social Event Dads and future dads are invited to start the year in the right frame of mind to consider all the ways to become a parent. RSVP for location at www.gayfuturedads.org	SF
WED Jan 29 THU Feb 6 6–8	Understanding the Affordable Care Act JAN 29: BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE, OAKLAND FEB 6: SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER, 1800 MARKET ST., SAN FRANCISCO Get your questions answered about your health care options and Covered California.	EB SF
SAT Feb 8 TBA	Pups at Play! Año Nuevo Elephant Seal Walk AÑO NUEVO STATE RESERVE, NEW YEARS CREEK RD., PESCADERO A guided tour of the largest mainland breeding colony in the world for the northern elephant seal. Pack a picnic lunch for after the tour. RSVP REQUIRED.	
MON Feb 10 6–8	Separating with Hearts and Smarts BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE., OAKLAND This workshop is appropriate for people with or without kids who are in any stage of separation. Facilitated by local attorneys: Heba Nimr, Charles Spiegel, and Dylan Miles.	EB
WED Feb 12 6:30–8	Prospective Parent Potluck BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE, OAKLAND Network with other LGBTQ adults on the road to parenthood. This is a potluck, so please bring a dish to share!	EB
THU Feb 20 MON Feb 24 6–8	2014 Taxes after DOMA FEB 20: SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER, 1800 MARKET ST. FEB 24: BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE, OAKLAND Did you become a domestic partner or get married before June 2013? Facilitated by Alma Soongi Beck, Esq., of The Beck Law Group, P.C. and Chris Kollaja, CPA, of A.L. Nella & Co.	SF EB

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COLORS OF OUR FAMILY: Transracial Adoption Series

African-American Hair I

SUN Feb 16 • 12–2

SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER
1800 MARKET ST., SF

Explore the cultural and historical relevance of Black hair as it relates to your child's self-esteem.

Examining White Privilege

TUE Feb 25 • 6–8

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
685 14TH ST., OAKLAND

A positive learning environment for challenging conversations around cultural understanding and racial justice.

African-American Hair II

SUN Mar 2 • 12–2

SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER
1800 MARKET ST., SF

Get hands-on instruction and tips from trained professionals on how to care for your child's hair.

Panel Presentation

TUE Mar 4 • 6–8

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
685 14TH ST., OAKLAND

Hear from transracially adopted adults about their experiences.

Creating Community

TUE Mar 11 • 6–8

SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER
1800 MARKET ST., SF

Lisa Marie Rollins facilitates how to create a supportive community for your child to thrive.

Parents of Transracial Adoptees Speak Out

TUE Mar 18 • 6–8

SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER
1800 MARKET ST. SF

A panel of white parents talking about race and adoption.

ONGOING GROUPS

1st
SAT

Jan 4
Feb 1
Mar 1
10–12

Shake, Rattle and Roll (ages 0-5)

LOTUS BLOOM FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
2008 PARK BLVD., OAKLAND

An interactive movement and music playgroup.

four
SAT

Jan 4, 11, 18, 25
10–12

Born from the Heart

SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER
1800 MARKET ST., SF

Four-week support group for those in the adoption process or considering adoption

NEW

every
TUE

Jan 7, 14, 21, 28
Feb 4, 11, 18, 25
Mar 4, 11, 18, 25
10–11:30

Parent-Child Playgroup (ages 0-5)

LOTUS BLOOM FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
2008 PARK BLVD., OAKLAND

Interactive play and circle time.

eight
WED

Jan 8–Feb 26
6–8

1–2–3 Magic: Surviving Your Adolescent!

OFC OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE #340, SF

LGBTQ-focused eight-week parenting class for parents/caregivers of youth ages 11–18. **RSVP REQUIRED.**

NEW

2nd
+4th
MON

Jan 13 & 27
Feb 10 & 24
Mar 10 & 24
10–11:30

Parent-Child Playgroup (ages 0-5)

JAMAROO KIDS, 2001 PINE ST., SF

Interactive play and circle time.

NEW

3rd
WED

Jan 15
Feb 19
Mar 19
5:30–7:30

Queer Family Night (ages 0-12)

CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY MUSEUM, 221 4TH ST., SF

Connect with other families while your kids enjoy age appropriate activities.

3rd
SAT

Jan 18
Feb 15
Mar 15
10–12

Transgender Parent Support Group

SF LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER, 1800 MARKET ST., SF

For transgender parents or those considering parenthood and their partners

1st
WED

Feb 5
Mar 5
5:30–7:30

Mamas & Papas East Bay (ages 0-5)

HABITOT CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY MUSEUM
2065 KITTREDGE ST., BERKELEY

Your kids will play in the museum while adults chat.

twelve
WED

Mar 5–
May 21
6–8

Positive Parenting Program

OFC OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE. #340, SF

LGBTQ-focused 12-week parenting class for parents/caregivers of children ages 0–10. **RSVP REQUIRED.**

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Parenting in the Age ...

(continued from page 1)

playing videos or going on YouTube as “looking up homework on School Loop” or “just listening to music.” Ultimately, we had to create additional ways to hold Amani accountable for following our family technology rules, such as leaving the door open to her room when she was studying and turning the computer off during chores.

When she was a little over 13, we finally relented and purchased her a cell phone. The phone, iPod, and social media (initially Facebook and texting, and later Instagram, SnapChat, Twitter, FaceTime, Tumblr, etc.) turned out to be a potent combination. If playing on the computer used to be tempting, then this new cyber combination was downright irresistible.

Two years later, the family inventory now includes multiple laptops, iPods, and PDA cell phones. We are still struggling to find a balance between offering a reasonable amount of freedom to our teen and not having our daughter constantly hooked up to electronics and social media. For now, we have settled on the following:

- No electronics until all schoolwork and basic household chores are done.
- No electronics after 9 pm, except the computer. The devices are handed in to us for safekeeping at that time. The computer can be used after 9 pm exclusively for school work and then only until 10 pm. We put parental controls on our family laptop that causes it to lock at that time.
- A daily limit on “screen time” during the school week.

Of course, every child is different. For our teen, we have found that she still has a hard time balancing priorities and setting limits on social media, gaming, and TV—which is now available on her iPod (Thanks, Netflix!). As we begin to grant her more freedom, we still find ourselves ping-ponging between controls that may be too confining for her age and controls that are too lax for Amani’s decision-making and self-regulation capabilities.

When it comes to social media, for example, our family agreed to limit what was publicly viewable about Amani

“Our teen still has a hard time balancing priorities and setting limits on social media and TV—which is now available on her iPod (Thanks, Netflix!).”

on Facebook. She was also required to “friend” both of her moms and provide us the login and password for her account. We discussed:

- What to do and how to handle any incidences of cyber-bullying
- Appropriate cyber etiquette, e.g., posting anonymous and/or negative comments about other people is just wrong and will not be tolerated
- Rules and limits for participating in chat rooms, which were not allowed at all for Amani as a preteen and early teen
- Being on the lookout for ill-intended cyber-correspondents, who could be any age or gender in real life versus their cyber-personas.

The good news is that our family has not yet experienced any safety or bullying issues involving our daughter’s use of the Internet and social media. The bad news is that the danger remains real; we—especially Amani—must remain vigilant. Her ability to navigate social media and the Internet, has in many cases outstripped our capabilities as parents to monitor her usage. We are glad to have been preparing for this reality since her preteen years.

With a lot of luck and a little parental foresight, Amani has already spent enough years practicing safe use of social media, the Internet, and personal digital devices to build a strong foundation for using devices responsibly without supervision. I hope that, supported by our transparency as parents about the “whys and wherefores” of our family’s technology use and limits, Amani has the information she needs to make good decisions about her own technology use, now and into her future. ↻

Preteen Advice ...

(continued from page 1)

rude things to you online. I think that in most cases it is not as big of a problem as the press plays it up to be.

Adults, like my moms, really worry about social media. They know that there is a chance that their kids might see a rude or inappropriate message and that is why they decide what age we should access certain social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Personally, I think that kids should be allowed

to get social networking profiles when they are eleven or twelve, but it may be a bit much for kids ten and under. Most preteens quickly learn when to block somebody, who is safe to talk to, and what language to use online once we create our profiles. I understand parents want to keep us safe, so they keep an eye on what we do, but it is a violation of our privacy when they monitor us all the time. When a kid wants to get a social media account, I think the best thing is for the parents and kid to have a conversation and for the parents to weigh what the kid thinks. That’s what my moms did, and it worked out. ↻

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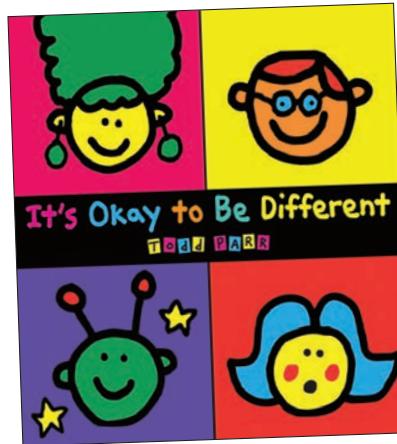
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BOOK CORNER

It's Okay To Be Different/ Esta Bien Ser Diferente (SPANISH VERSION)

“With his signature artistic style, featuring brightly colored, childlike figures outlined in heavy black, Parr shows readers over and over that just about anything goes. From the sensitive to the downright silly, kids of every shape, size, color, family makeup, and background will feel included in this gentle, witty book. In this simple, playful celebration of diversity and same-sex families, Parr doesn’t need to hammer readers over the head with his message.” (Ages 3 to 6)
—Emilie Coulter

Todd Parr is a New York Times Bestselling author and illustrator of over 40 children’s books. You can visit him online at www.toddparr.com.



Our Family Coalition advances equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) families with children through support, education, and advocacy.

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Y. Day Designs *Graphic Designer*

“Our Family, Our Voices” Screening

We hosted a screening of “Our Families, Our Voices” which was followed by an inspiring Q&A with project participants, and an interactive round table at the Rhino Theater in the Mission. The bilingual event was attended by 82 community members and was a collaboration with El/La Para TransLatinas, Out4Immigration, Undocuworkforce SF, API Equality, and LYRIC. Questions were addressed regarding LGBTQ and immigrant family inclusion, as well as racial justice, and our collective struggle for human liberation. The feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, pointing to the need for community spaces that allow for connection among organizations working to promote social justice causes. Participants also expressed gratitude and an interest in attending future round table discussions to generate next steps and solutions around immigrant and LGBTQ acceptance.

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