



PITTSBURGH MOMS CHAT

December 1, 2006

Volume 1 Issue 3

Not a member yet?

Join in on the fun!

Always accepting new members. See our website for more information or email us: membership@pittsburghmotherscenter.org

We're Growing!

The PMC has a great new meeting space! Dave and Melissa Sokulski of the Birch Center for Health have been so amazingly kind and generous in allowing us to use their meeting room for our general meetings over the past years - but over the past few meetings it became clear that we had finally reached the point where we needed a bigger space.

General meetings are now taking place at the 2nd United Presbyterian Church of Wilkinsburg. It is minutes from the parkway and is convenient to many bus lines. It is just blocks from the Edgewood library, Frick Park, the East End Food Coop, and it is very near the Center for Creative Play and Squirrel Hill. We hope that this central location

is convenient for the majority of families. The church building has a wonderful, toy-stocked play nook where children will have supervised play time during meetings. The building also has wireless internet access.

Many thanks to Reverend Deborah K. Warren for making this amazing space possible for us to use. She has been so patient and kind in working out the details with us, and we really appreciate it a lot! We would like to encourage PMC members to take advantage of some of the children's programming going on at the church. Check page 6 of this newsletter for details about baby sign language classes, holiday childcare, and more!

Another major change for our group is the launching of our fantastic new website!

<http://www.pittsburghmotherscenter.org> has had a major overhaul by the Communication Committee's website team, and they have done a wonderful job. The new site is stylish, interactive, and full of great information. Make sure you check it out, and remember that the committee forums are now located on the website as well - click on "Member Corner" to get to them.

Wishing a happy holiday season to you and your family.

The PMC Steering Committee

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Support Services Available to PMC Members

Kelley Martin is a registered nurse at Children's Hospital in the Intensive Care Unit. She is a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, and is currently a women's health/midwifery student. Kelley is happy to provide volunteer services in the following areas: breastfeeding support/education, infant massage, infant care and birthing support.

Kelley can be reached at:

kelly2@nursing.upenn.edu. She makes house calls!

Movie Reviews

by *Brigid Ferkett*

One of my favorite things to do when the weather turns cold is to snuggle on the couch with the family, and watch movies while the snow falls outside. Finding movies that are appropriate for adults and children can be hard. I love nature, so I am recommending four movies that can be interesting for any age. All of these films are available from the Carnegie Library System.

The March of the Penguins was very successful in theaters and on DVD and received an Oscar for Best Documentary. On the surface this movie seems strictly educational, but I looking closer would reveal it to be a heartfelt drama. You will be inspired by the penguins' dangerous journey that they take every year to raise their young. There are some moments in this film that I found hard to watch because of the challenges that the animals face, but the narration helps the viewer to understand the balance of nature. Rated G. <http://www.marchofthepenguins.com>

If you are feeling chilly after watching this movie, I suggest you also rent Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill. This movie takes place in much warmer San Francisco. It is more than just a story about a flock of parrots who have learned to survive. It is also about a homeless man's journey to survive in society and to find meaning in his life. I found this movie to be very uplifting, entertaining, and

educational as well. Rated G. <http://www.wildparrotsfilm.com/>

Winged Migration is one of my favorite movies of all time. The filmmakers did an amazing job filming seemingly impossible shots of birds in flight. There is virtually no narration in this movie, but the birds do a good job of telling their story. The DVD has some great insight into how this movie was made, which makes the special features worth watching.

http://www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/index_flash.html

So are you tired of birds yet? Well, this last movie is all about the tiny world in our own backyards. Microcosmos is the first installment from the same filmmakers as Winged Migration. This is a documentary of insect life, using incredible close-ups, slow motion, and time-lapse photography. There is definitely drama in this movie, and a little romance, and lots of action and adventure. Rated G.

Brigid Ferkett is an amateur movie critic and accomplished naturalist. She enjoys watching films of all kinds. During the warmer months when the weather is nice, she spend most of their time outside gardening with her husband Ross, and playing with her daughter, Leila.

The Ghost in the House: Motherhood, Raising Children, and Struggling with Depression

by *Tracy Thompson: review by Susan Mellinger*

In C.S. Lewis's fifth book in his famous Chronicles of Narnia series, "The Voyage of the Dawn Treader," a young boy named Eustace had been changed into a dragon by a bracelet he wrongfully stole out of greed. Aslan, the powerful talking Lion who ruled over the world of Narnia, helped Eustace to become a boy again by a long, painful process of peeling off layer after layer of dragon skin to get to the boy underneath. After a while Aslan declared that going a layer at a time was too slow. So the lion took one of his gigantic claws and sliced through the skin and flesh of the dragon to peel it away and bring out Eustace's true self at last. Eustace, when telling the story later, said the pain was unimaginable, but at the same time the relief was immense.

This story is a pretty apt analogy for my recent inner journey as I am coming to grips with depression. When the concept first dawned on me that I might be suffering from this illness, I was slow and tentative about researching symptoms and treatments; I think I was (and am) reluctant to admit even to myself that I have it. But I kept coming across things that would keep the idea, if not on the front burner, at least on the stove. So, to return to the story of Eustace, the past several months have been like the slow peeling of single layers to get to the truth underneath. Or perhaps to uncover the magical cure that I was still hoping would exist.

Then I found out about this book. And reading it has quickly (and painfully) sliced through many of my notions and procrastinations, to get me to



Ghost in the House (continued)

where I need to be to take action. No longer can I just hope it will go away; no longer can I hope that those I love and those who love me won't notice or be affected by my struggle. If I want my child (and any future children) to have the best opportunity for growing up to be mentally healthy adults, if I want my marriage and friendships to grow and mature, much less survive intact, I have to start **now**.

Tracy Thompson has interviewed literally hundreds of women who are dealing with what she calls "maternal depression," which she defines as a depression that is directly related to the stresses and stimuli of being a mother and raising children (my paraphrase here). She spends a large part of the book describing what it is like for all of these mothers who are dealing with depression during different stages of their children's lives, how a mother of an infant will show different symptoms or have different "triggers" than the mother of a toddler or a grade-schooler or a teenager, but these are still all part of the same spectrum. There is also discussion of the genetics of depression and the nature/nurture debate; two chapters on coping skills employed by these mothers (and their children); and a final chapter on "How the Struggle with Depression Can Make You a Better Mother."

The organization and writing style are very readable; however, I still had a very hard time with the book. A large part of my difficulty was dealing with the pain of recognition. But I also believe that in her efforts to have maternal depression be recognized as a true disease and not "just the baby blues" or ordinary stress, Thompson tends to overwhelm with her descriptions of the bleakness of these women's lives. For someone who is just beginning the journey, I (and possibly other readers) could have used the messages of hope we see in the coping chapters a little earlier in the book.

Overall, however, "The Ghost in the House" was extremely valuable to me as a mother, and as someone coming to terms with depression. Every time I read an account (online, in a magazine, in a book) about another mother who is dealing with it, I get that little jolt of relief that says "I am not alone; I am not making this up." For that alone, the book is worth reading. But the value of this book goes beyond the affirmation the reader gets from the testimonials in its pages. Thompson has also moved forward the issue of diagnosis, treatment, and most importantly, acceptance of maternal depression as a disease. And that makes this book an invaluable resource for all struggling mothers.

Roots and Shoots Groups Forming in 2007

The Pittsburgh Mothers' Center has agreed to sponsor a Roots and Shoots group that will start in early 2007.

The Roots & Shoots program is about making positive change happen—for our communities, for animals and for the environment. And it all starts with you! With tens of thousands of young people in almost 100 countries, the Roots & Shoots network branches out across the globe, connecting youth of all ages who share a common desire to help make our world a better place. This powerful, youth-driven network fosters a fun, flexible and supportive environment where young people and adults alike come together to share ideas and inspiration, implement successful community service projects and participate in



special events and global campaigns. Roots & Shoots is guided by the founding principles and extraordinary vision of Dr. Jane Goodall, renowned primatologist, environmentalist and humanitarian. There will be two PMC sponsored groups: one for children ages 3 to 6; and one for ages 7 and up. (Parents of 6 year olds

may opt to place their children in the older group if they feel they are capable of advanced projects.) If you and your children are interested in becoming involved in Roots and Shoots, contact Kristilee Williams at kristilee@pittsburghmotherscenter.org. You can find out more about the Roots and Shoots organization at their website: <http://www.rootsandshoots.org>

Infant Massage: Ancient Art in a Modern World

by Kelley Martin, RN, BSN

Bonding with your infant is one of the many enjoyable, natural processes of becoming a new parent. Immediately after delivery, both the mother and father instinctively caress the new baby, which begins the “dance” of learning intimately about one another. Skin stimulation is essential to babies for adequate biological and emotional development.

Infant massage is an ancient art, traditionally performed by Indian mothers. The practice continues today in America, whether by maternal instinct or learned strokes, and deeply connects parents to their baby and helps the parents learn how to understand their baby's language. To take this special bonding beyond the basic nurturing caress, parents can create a one-half hour daily massage routine. This special time allows a deeper connection to develop, as the infant develops trust for his mother or father, and an ability to relax. Likewise, the parent who massages the infant daily is able to refocus on home life and help the infant gain a sense of security and support. Infants who are massaged on a regular basis actually acquire a relaxation response that becomes part of his or her natural system response to stress during adulthood.

Performing infant massage on a baby will also help the parent to reduce stress. The father's role in nurturing his infant can be confusing to men, after watching the intimate relationship and language of the mother-infant

“dance”. Infant massage may be of particular benefit to the breastfed infant, and provides the father and baby with invaluable time together, as well as providing Dad with a sense of accomplishment.

Hospitalized and chronically ill infants may benefit the most from this ancient art. Premature infants love to feel their parents' touch, which is a source of warmth and security for them. Practicing massage of the premature infant requires more patience, tenderness, and a medical staff member who can observe the baby. Studies have shown that when premature infants are massaged every day, they cry less, have lower stress hormone levels, go to sleep faster, gain more weight, and leave the hospital earlier. Infant massage is not only extremely beneficial to the premature baby, but also to infants and children suffering from conditions such as blindness, deafness, asthma and cerebral palsy.

Infant massage eases discomfort, improves bonding, and provides new parents with a special time to enjoy the beautiful gift of a new, and noticeably calmer, baby.

Resources

McClure, V. *Infant Massage*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc. 2000.

Kelley Martin is a nurse at Children's Hospital in the intensive care unit. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, and is currently a midwifery student

Basic Infant Massage



what's coming!

Here is a brief outline for a basic infant massage, which can serve as a beginning place for you to begin to massage your own infant.

CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT

- Make sure that the room is warm enough. Young infants aren't adept yet at regulating their own body temperature, and they will be undressed. If they shiver, or their skin mottles, warm the room or cover the part of their body you're not working on.
- Try to reduce distraction. Make the space as quiet as possible, and away from busy traffic. You may want to choose a piece of mellow music to play; this can help cue to baby to

GATHER YOUR SUPPLIES

- A waterproof pad under the massage surface is a good thing, for obvious reasons.
- Use a soft surface to lay the baby on; a washable quilt, or a thick towel works.
- An oil for lubrication. Make sure that it is of food quality; your baby sucks her hands, and you don't want her taking in anything made in a petroleum base, like many baby oils are. Grape seed oil has a nice texture, or any light cooking oil. Avoid scented oils--one part of the bonding process of infant massage is the baby's identification with your unique smell; don't pollute that.
- A wet washcloth for cleaning up accidents.
- Clean diaper and clothing for after the massage.

CENTER YOURSELF

- Take a deep breath, exhale, repeat. Your touch will transmit your mood, so calm yourself as much as possible before you begin.

Basic Infant Massage (continued)

- Make yourself and your baby comfortable.
- Put a little bit of oil, about the size of a quarter in the palm of your hand and warm it (and your hands) by rubbing your palms together.

ASK PERMISSION TO BEGIN

This is extremely important. Of course, the first time, your baby won't know what is coming, but do set the pattern for asking permission to touch with that first massage. Watch her eye movement and body language as she begins to respond to this new way of touching. There may be surprise, there may be delight, there may be a slight uneasiness.

After the first massage, honor her wishes if she says no by pulling away, turning her head, or withdrawing. If she shows any of those signs during the massage time, take a cuddle break, then resume if she again seems willing.

LEGS

Massage one leg completely before you begin the other.

- Gently rub the oil on one leg. (See, isn't this easy?)
- Make circles with your thumb and fingers. Gently squeeze, alternating hands, from hip to ankle. Squeeze, release, repeat all the way down the leg.
- Using the pads of your thumbs, press gently against the sole of her foot, covering the entire surface.
- Massage her toes, giving each a very slight tug as you finish it.
- Make several (three is good) long strokes from her ankle to her hip.
- Cup her heel in the palm of your hand and gently shake.
- Repeat for other leg.

TUMMY

Use gentle pressure here; infant massage is never deep or gouging. Babies with gas or colic may tighten up if this is uncomfortable to them; however, if they will accept it with gentle encouragement from you, it is helpful for those conditions.

- Apply oil in a downward motion from ribcage to diaper line.
- Using the flat of your fingers, make clockwise circles. Begin with small ones around the navel, and enlarge them to cover her whole tummy.
- Hand over hand, using the little finger edge of your hand, make smooth movements from the rib cage down.
- Softly, with your thumbs, outline the bottom of her rib cage.
- With your fingers, both hands together, reach around to the back of her waist and pull forward.

CHEST AND ARMS

This area around the heart can hold a lot of anguish, even in the slightest ones, and massaging here may stimulate crying. Let her "tell her story," but if the crying becomes intense, cuddle her a minute, soothe her with your voice, and resume the massage. Also, some babies hold their arms quite tightly for several months; do not force them to open, but gently encourage, to the point of resistance but not beyond.

- Apply oil across the chest, then down both arms at the same time.
- With the pads of your fingers of one hand, cover her chest with little, firm, but not gouging circles.
- Make circles with your fingers and squeeze from shoulder to wrist, as you did with her legs.
- Use your thumbs to massage her palms and open her fingers.
- Rub each little finger with a soft, twisting move, as if you were removing the cap from a small container.
- Repeat for other arm.
- Finish with long strokes across the chest and down both arms at the same time.

HEAD AND FACE

- Massage oil onto her scalp as though you were giving her a shampoo.
- Tap with the fingertips of both hands, covering the top of her head like gentle raindrops
- With your thumbs, make long smooth strokes across her forehead. Use both

hands at the same time, working from the center out.

- Do the same thing on the upper lip.
- With one thumb or finger, stroke down her nose from her forehead to the tip.
- Gently, with both hands, stroke her jawline from her ear to the center.
- Massage her ears.

BACK

This can be done with her lying on her blanket or across your lap, or you can do this while holding her over your shoulder, whatever is most comfortable for both of you.

- Cover her back gently with oil.
- Using fingers, make little circles down one side of her spine, then the other. Do not put any pressure directly on the spinal bones.
- Using the flat of your fingers, make long smooth strokes from her waist to her neck, then back down again.

In our current culture of high-speed living, we may have forgotten how to calm ourselves, to get to a quiet state where living on "baby time" allows us to make the deep connections with our infants that develop in tranquil times.

Here in Pittsburgh, Melissa Sokulski of the Birch Center for Health offers 45 minute infant massage sessions for \$30, which includes instruction to the baby's parent or caregiver. For more information you can contact her at 412-381-0116, or by email at birchcenter@yahoo.com.



It's a Wrap! Seasonal Activity

Courtesy of The Mommy and Me Association

Brown paper bags make wonderful wrapping paper. They are virtually no-cost, have a great, handcrafted look, and are environmentally friendly because they are recycled. Use yarn or raffia to tie up gifts wrapped in this paper and you'll have the most talked-about wrapping this holiday season! This activity is fun for all ages.

You'll need:

Brown grocery bags

Decorating materials- use your imagination! Some ideas are:

Markers

Rubber stamps

Ink pads

Sponges cut into shapes

Potato stamps

Washable paint

Sequins

Glitter

Pom-poms

Yarn

Buttons

Felt

Glitter glue

Craft glue

What to do:

1. Cut grocery bags open to make big rectangles.
2. Let the kids decorate them (on the plain side) to their heart's content. If gluing on items, such as buttons, pom-poms etc., wrap the present in the plain paper first, then decorate.
3. Let (glue, ink, paint) dry, then start wrapping!



Upcoming Events for Parents and Children

The following classes and activities will be held at the 2nd Presbyterian Church of Wilkinsburg; 300 Hay Street on the corner of Hay Street and Biddle Avenue in Regent Square. Contact Leigh Fogle at leighafogle@yahoo.com for more information or to register for any of these events.

- **Parent's Morning Out** is held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am-11:30am and is for ages 1-4. \$12 per child. Includes stories, music, games, simple crafts, large motor toys, creative play, snacks and more!
- **Parent's Night Out** will be held on the third Saturday of every month Starting in December from 5:30pm-10:00 pm and is for children ages 3-12. There will be games, stories, snacks, movies, crafts and more! The cost is \$25 for the first child - each additional sibling is \$20.
- **Baby Sign Language Class**
Dates: December 7th, 14th, 21st, January 4th, 11th, 18th (*no class Christmas week)
Days: Thursdays
Times: 2 SESSIONS 10:45 am - 11:30 am AND 6:00pm - 6:45pm
Parents will learn about all of the amazing benefits of baby sign language and will learn over 100 signs to teach to their babies including meal time, bed time, safety, feelings, around the house signs and more!
Cost of class is:
1 adult/and child/ren \$80 for entire class including cost of materials
2 adults/child/ren \$160 for entire class including cost of materials
- **Holiday Childcare:**
December: Saturdays - 16th and 23rd. 1pm - 5pm Ages 6 wks - 12 years.
Holiday crafts, snacks stories, movie, music, etc!
Additional days may be added to this - we may add some weekdays depending on church space availability and people's interest.

All About US!

We've formed a new group and it's all about us!! Us moms, that is! We will be getting together monthly for a moms-only fun event. We welcome suggestions for things to do. Some of our ideas so far include:

- psychic party
- comedy club
- dinner
- play or concert
- bowling
- shooting pool (somewhere smoke-free)

Our first get together was in October at the Taj Mahal restaurant on McKnight Road, and a great time was had by all! We will be alternating between Mondays and Saturdays each month. Everyone is welcome to join us for a night out with no kids and where we can just be ourselves and enjoy adult company!!!

Contact Donna Tarkett (luna@gaiachild.org) or Marjorie Liese (melo518@verizon.net) for information about the next meet up!

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<http://www.pittsburghmotherscenter.org>

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Family Recipes: From One Generation to the Next

The Pittsburgh Mothers' Center Cookbook

This cookbook represents a compilation of recipes following the theme "Family Recipes: From One Generation to the Next." In many cases, these recipes were passed on to the present generation of Pittsburgh Mothers' Center members and friends from an older generation.

And in other cases, these recipes have been created more recently, but will be passed on to the next generation.

Some Recipe Titles:

- * Fresh Veggie Salsa
- * Dilly Bean Potato Salad
- * Rumblethumps
- * Spinach Pie
- * My Secret Scone Recipe
- * Overnight French Toast
- * Welsh Cakes





Mothers' Center Calendar

The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never. A mother is something absolutely new. ~Rajneesh

Where moms go to have fun

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.PITTSBURGHMOTHERSCENTER.ORG

December

Mon 11th @ 7:00 pm All About Us!! —Taco Loco, South Side

Wed 13th @ 7:00 pm General Meeting — 2nd Presbyterian Church of Regent Square

January

Sat 6th @ 2:00 pm Unwind — Affogato Coffee House, Bellevue

Wed 10th @ 7:00 pm General Meeting — 2nd Presbyterian Church of Regent Square

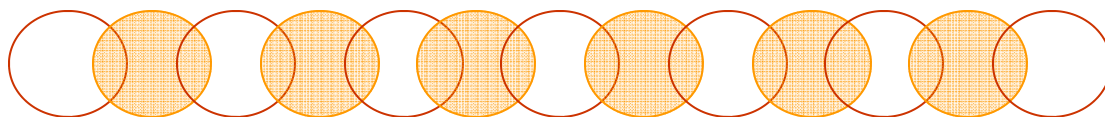


February

Sat 3rd @ 2:00 pm Unwind — Affogato Coffee House, Bellevue

Wed 14th @ 7:00 pm General Meeting — 2nd Presbyterian Church of Regent Square

Please check our calendars on our websites for more events or meetings



The Pittsburgh Mothers' Center (PMC) is a not-for-profit outreach organization where mothers can find fun, friendship, support and work together to create a more child-friendly, mother-friendly society.

Important Websites:

Pittsburgh Mothers' Center Website: <http://www.pittsburghmotherscenter.org>

Yahoo! e-mail group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pghmotherscenter>

National Association of Mothers' Centers: <http://www.motherscenter.org>

*For more information email our Membership Coordinator at:
membership@pittsburghmotherscenter.org*

*or
info@pittsburghmotherscenter.org*

*Donna Tarkett - 412-381-0322
Kristilee Williams - 412-381-085
Maggie Broderick - 412-421-9736*

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