

# PASSAGES PRESS

## A WAYFINDER SCHOOLS STUDENT PUBLICATION

### Infant Care

Brianna Robinson, Lewiston

Having a child at a young age is hard. You're still trying to figure out who you are, all while trying to mold a tiny you into the best person they can be. Navigating parenthood is nothing short of heroic, and sometimes doing some research or simply just paying extra attention to your child helps a lot! Recently, I've learned quite a few new things about my son just from observing while he plays and such and watching some videos.

For instance, something new I have learned about my baby is that he knows how to reach his hands up when he wants someone to hold him now! He doesn't just cry, or yell, he reaches up and smiles to let me know that he wants to snuggle. I think he enjoys tummy time, getting exercise in his exersaucer, and eating lots and lots of bananas! He's going to be one big and healthy baby boy soon enough!

I think my baby finds it upsetting when he goes to bed without his blanket. It's his safety zone and he gets awfully mad at me when he doesn't have it. Something I love about my son is that randomly he will look up at me and smile. There isn't a lot in this world that makes me feel secure, wanted or needed, but he does. No matter what I do, he loves me unconditionally, and that is such a good feeling.

Something I fear for my baby is that the world is cruel, I can't do much to change it and I don't want reality to break his poor little heart. Something that is unique about my baby, is that even at only five months old he has a VERY big personality. He giggles at the silliest things, and will definitely let you know when he is unhappy. Also, he likes Fleetwood Mac, which is pretty cool. One of the hardest parts about

being a parent is that I can't fix everything for my son. Someday he is going to be upset, and I won't be able to console him. Someday, he might break a bone, and I won't be able to personally fix it. It's very scary, but it's something that every parent has to come to terms with.

Seeing as how my son is only nine months old, he's not the best in the communication department. No baby is, that is why it's important to be able to read their body language and distinguish their non-verbal cues. One that I have learned since I've been a mother and since watching a YouTube video about newborn cues, is that when he's hungry and/or feeding, his fist is clenched. Once he starts to become full, his hand slowly starts to relax and he falls asleep, indicating that he's satisfied enough to rest. Another thing that I learned is that when he wants something like a toy, he makes a grabbing motion towards the object and makes a grunting sound.



*Sleeping Baby, Canva*

The bond I share with my son is like no other. We laugh together and play together like most other moms and sons do, but we also sit and read together. We sit and listen to music and sing together. I let him hang out with me while I cook and clean, etc. Spending as much time as I have makes it so our bond is strong as nails and I honestly couldn't be happier. In a very real way, my son saved me from myself, and I will be forever grateful for the blessing that is him.

## **Bonding with Bell**

**Alison Moffett, Calais**

Bell and I keep our bond strong by spending lots of time with each other. We play with toys and I help him practice rolling over and sitting up. We also listen to music and I sing to him. Bonding with him keeps him happy and connected with me. Bonding time with Bell helps me keep my mind off of things going on in my life.

Bell is unique because of the way he smiles and laughs and loves everything. He loves playing with his toys and enjoys car rides. He makes me smile by doing just about anything, but my favorite is when he sees me first thing in the morning or when I get home from work and he gives me the biggest smile and hugs.

I think Bell is gonna be a very respectful person growing up, I hope for him to be a happy and excited person. I am excited to help him learn new things, like painting, drawing, or whatever he wants to do, I want to help him explore life and learn a bunch of new things.

## **Parenting Is a Big Responsibility**

**Arielys Diaz, Lewiston**

I became a mom at 18, and I was very scared and nervous. I've taken care of other people's kids, but it's never the same when they are yours. I had to mature very fast to be a good mom. When I didn't know something I would look it up on Google or ask friends, family, and doctors.

Something I learned from my parents about parenting is that you need to have a lot of patience with your child and always try to be understanding with them. Something I want to do differently is discipline my child differently. My mom would spank me and honestly, it never worked. Things that I think would work better are taking away stuff they like or TV or snacks.

As a mother, I will always have my kid's side, and I'll always be honest about myself with her. If she has any problems with anyone when she starts school and starts having conflicts, I will ask her what's going on and ask her to tell me the truth so we can fix the

situation. I'll teach her how to communicate with others, and if the problem continues I will reach out to the parents of the child with whom she's having trouble. It's always important for children and parents to communicate.

A big part of communicating is to be clear with your child. Am I a friend or parent? I can be a friend and a parent to my kid just like my dad was to me. We have a good bond. I can always go to him and I trust him with everything. I know that he'll also tell me when I'm wrong. I want to be able to have a relationship with my child so that she doesn't lie to me and can always come to me about anything just like me and my dad.

You can be both a friend and parent, but you have to have boundaries set up because you take care of your child, not the other way around. I used to see my mom get treated badly by her boyfriend and I would always try to get involved and try to protect my mom. I'd get in the middle and play the "hero." I don't want my child to ever experience and see what I've seen.

Boundaries are very important when you are disciplining a child. Different ways to discipline your child include modeling good behavior, distracting her, using positive language, and only using the word, "no" for important issues. The best way to discipline your child is by taking away their favorite toys or not letting them hang out with their friends. That one used to work for me as a kid, my mom used to spank my butt as discipline but it wouldn't work on me. I realized throughout the years that instead of getting spanked, taking away my toys, or not letting me go out with friends on the weekends or no candy for a week really made me listen. I'm already using the word "no" for important issues and also when she grabs something she's not supposed to grab and then I distract her and give her a toy. The two things I want to work on are modeling GOOD behavior in front of her and also using positive language.

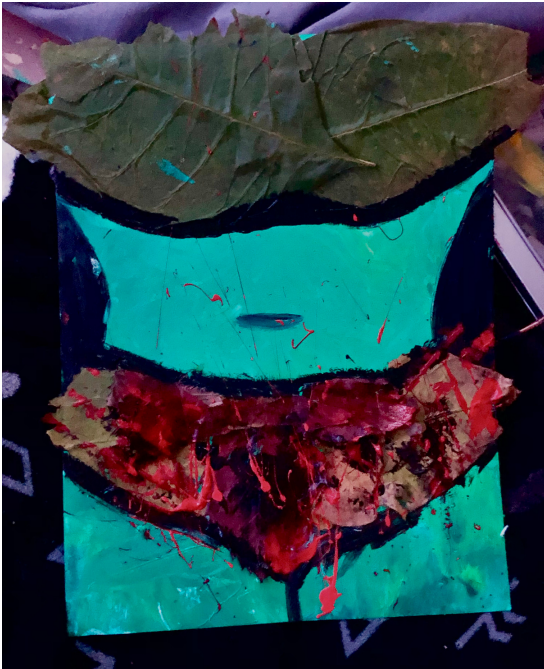
Positive language is difficult when you're dealing with tantrums. Dealing with baby tantrums is kind of hard. You have to give them extra attention, and pay attention to your child's feelings and understand why they're upset. Also, something that can help is distracting them with something that they like. If you're dealing with an eight-month-old, the most you have to do is give them what they need.

Of all the things I learned, the most important one is

to always try to have good positive behavior around your child because they will copy anything and everything you do.

## **My Uterus/ My Ovaries** Emily Alley, Calais

For about three or four years I've had chronic pains and it's so normal to me that at first I couldn't think of a way to express my pain as art. I decided to use leaves and paint. The red leaves shaped in a "T" is the uterus. Then I thought to incorporate the leaves going from green to yellow to red and then the paint splatter.



*My Uterus, by Emily Alley*

## **Body Positive** Lexus Moody, Lewiston

A healthy body image is when you are comfortable and confident in your body. Not everyone has come to terms with being happy with their size and or shape. One of the many reasons one may feel hatred towards their own body is comparing it to others. When I was younger I compared myself to women who weigh less than half my size. Growing up I was and still am on the bigger side of the scale, but the only difference is I learned to love my curves. This does not mean I feel positive about my body all the time. That does not happen overnight. The way you

look at your body may change as you go through puberty, pregnancy, or menopause.

You usually hit puberty around nine or ten years old, during this time you're truly discovering your body. At this young age, you may be concerned about the way your body is changing. During puberty, you will be growing hair in places that may not seem normal. A few years later is when you'll get your first period. Around this age is when I started to compare myself to other classmates and discovered my negative body image. As you're growing up you may end up getting pregnant. Not all people are the same, but some people continue to have a negative outlook on their body due to eating more, growing a belly, and stretch marks. While being pregnant you may have mood swings and a bit of uncomfortableness because you're carrying a little one in your stomach. Some women find this to be extremely beautiful and actually have love for their body plus all the new changes. When you are around the age of fifty you reach menopause. Menopause makes it so you can no longer get pregnant. During this part of your life you might find yourself having mood swings, irregular periods, hot flashes, and a low sex drive.

Men, just like women, go through puberty and may find themselves comparing themselves to others. This can lead to a negative body image. As they reach their teens their sex drive can become the highest it has been. Later, as they get older, just like women, their sex drive may become a lot lower. For a man, body image may not only be focused on how much they weigh, they may also compare themselves to men who have big muscles. For men and women, a more positive feeling of your body as you get older can make your sex life healthy as well.

The way you look at your body can cause your sex drive to be at its highest or lowest. You may not want to have intimacy with someone due to a lack of self-confidence. Getting undressed in front of someone can be such a scary thing. If you are keeping a healthy mindset about your body you can feel like one of the most powerful women in the world as you're getting naked.

Who you are as a person should mean a lot to you. Sometimes it may be hard to stay positive about yourself and all you can do is continue trying and knocking out all the negativity. It won't happen overnight, but that's a great long-term goal to have.

As you figure yourself out you may change genders change interests, and even hit some bumps in the road. All that matters is you are your own person and nobody can change that. Trying new things is okay but the most important thing is being safe while doing it. All of these things can help you find happiness in yourself.

## Parts of the Brain

Lily Harvey, Washington

There are three basic units in the brain: the forebrain, the midbrain, and the hindbrain.

**Occipital lobe-** The occipital lobe is found in the back of the brain. This area is responsible for our vision.

**Temporal lobe-** The temporal lobes are found on either side of the brain and just above the ears. The temporal lobes are responsible for hearing, memory, meaning, and language. They also play a role in emotion and learning.

**Parietal lobe-** The parietal lobes are found behind the frontal lobes, above the temporal lobes, and at the top back of the brain. They are responsible for senses, such as touch, pain, taste, pressure, and temperature. They also have language functions.

**Cerebellum-** The cerebellum is located at the back of the head. It coordinates voluntary movements such as posture, balance, coordination, and speech, resulting in smooth and balanced muscular activity.

**Cerebral cortex-** The cerebral cortex is the outer covering of the surfaces of the cerebral hemispheres. It controls your thinking, voluntary movements, language, reasoning, and perception.

**Amygdala-** The amygdala is located in the medial temporal lobe, just in front of the hippocampus. It is responsible for the perception of emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness, as well as the controlling of aggression; also helps store memories of events and feelings so that someone may be able to recognize similar events in the future.

**The prefrontal cortex-** The prefrontal cortex is the cerebral cortex covering the front part of the frontal lobe. This brain region has been implicated in planning complex cognitive behavior, personality expression, decision making, and moderating social behavior.

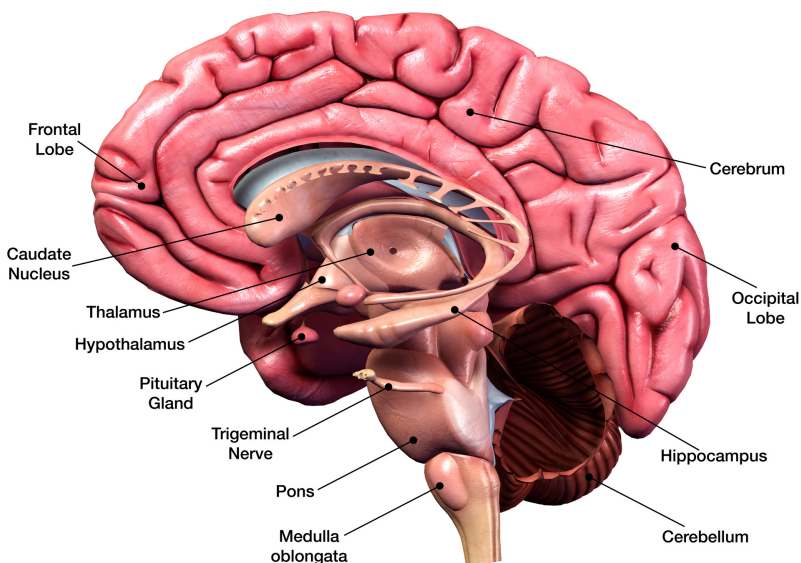
**Hypothalamus-** The hypothalamus is located on the undersurface of the brain. It controls your body temperature, emotions, hunger, thirst, appetite, digestion, and sleep. The hypothalamus is composed of several different areas and is located at the base of the brain.

**Thalamus-** The thalamus is located near the center of the brain and relays motor and sensory signals to the cerebral cortex. It also regulates sleep, alertness, and wakefulness.

**Pituitary gland-** The pituitary gland is a small, bean-shaped gland situated at the base of your brain. It controls your hormones and helps turn food into energy. Without this gland, you could eat, but you wouldn't get any point from the food.

**Pineal gland-** The pineal gland is located in the midline of the brain and controls your growth and maturing. It is activated by light, so if you were born and lived all your life in a place without a trace of light, your pineal gland would never start to work.

**Hippocampus-** The hippocampus is embedded deep into the temporal lobe. It forms and stores your memories and is involved in learning. If you didn't have it, you wouldn't be able to remember anything.



*The Human Brain, Canva*

People with Alzheimer's disease lose the functioning of their hippocampus.

**Midbrain-** The midbrain is located towards the base of your brain. This section controls your breathing, reflexes, and your swallowing reflexes. It includes the Thalamus, Hippocampus, and Amygdala. Every living thing has to have a midbrain.

**Pons-** The Pons is the largest part of the brainstem. It is located above the medulla and below the midbrain. It is involved in motor control and sensory analysis. For example, information from the ear first enters the brain in the pons. It has parts that are important for the level of consciousness and sleep. Some structures within the pons are linked to the cerebellum, thus are involved in movement and posture.

**Medulla oblongata-** This structure is the caudal-most part of the brain stem, between the pons and spinal cord. It is responsible for maintaining vital body functions, such as breathing, digestion, and heartbeat.

## Addiction

Grace DePalmer, Boothbay Harbor

According to Wikipedia, addiction is a “biopsychosocial disorder characterized by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences.” People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences. Many things can cause or be the beginning of addiction, and not everything revolves around drugs or alcoholic substances. Some causes can be family history, and drug addiction in a family can involve genetic disposition. Addiction can also stem from pressure from peers or trying one thing one time that has a highly addictive chemical.

Regardless of your upbringing, many factors can raise your risk of becoming addicted to alcohol and other drugs. Your genetics, environment, medical history, and age all play a role in substance abuse and addiction. Certain types of drugs and their methods of using them in different ways can also be more addictive than others. Addiction is something many people deal with, even though it is very bad for your health. The fact it is so common should be an eye-

opener for people to try and help more because it is hard going through addiction alone no matter what you are addicted to.

One of the most common addictions is nicotine. The very addictive chemical nicotine is in almost every common tobacco product. Nicotine is a toxic colorless or yellowish oily liquid that is the primary ingredient in tobacco products. It acts as a stimulant in small doses, but in larger amounts, it blocks the action of autonomic nerve and skeletal muscle cells. I think almost everyone knows what nicotine is and what harm it can cause to your body and brain function. From personal experience, I have seen nicotine turn people almost into “savages.” It is like a switch in their brain went from super nice to an instant monster if they could not find the device that supplies their nicotine, or if they are having a withdrawal from it. People turn into completely different versions of themselves because of their addiction to this chemical.

Nicotine isn't the only drug people are addicted to, there are many drugs that people get addicted to. The addiction starts because they try something new. Dopamine is a molecule that carries messages across the brain's reward center and solves their problems for the time they are under the influence. Many addicts use it as an escape. It can be caused by the people around you, your living conditions, your employment conditions, and other factors in people's lives like being abused as a child, and being exposed to extraordinary stress—all of these social factors can contribute to the risk of alcohol addiction or drug abuse. Drug addiction damages your physical health such as your brain tissue and it is also associated with cardiovascular, kidney, and liver disease. It can also damage your psychological state of being as well. Drug abuse can affect several aspects of a person's physical and psychological health. Certain drugs like Klonopin, Restoril, Tranxene, Versed, Xanax and other drugs can lead to drowsiness and slow breathing, while the psychological factor involves insomnia, paranoia, or hallucinations. This is where the psychological effects of drugs come in along with the physical.

Addiction is a very serious thing and unfortunately, many people go through it. The misconceptions about drug abuse and other forms of addiction will always be seen as a bad thing until people begin to connect the dots on the root of the original problem causing an individual to develop an addiction to

something. Addiction abuse may not be an interest to people because of the rumors and the stereotypes, but anyone like the average person can get addicted with enough pressure from their environment. This is why addiction is a topic everyone should be taught about because no one takes it seriously until substance abuse and addiction takes over a loved one's life.

## Thoughts On Social Media

Daisy Ingraham, Hope

Social media has affected me in some positive ways, but mostly negative. When I was 12 years old the new Apple iPods were a popular object. I wanted one so badly. Little did I know how much that would affect me today. I begged my dad to get me an iPod for Christmas and I cried tears of happiness when I got it. I could finally listen to music, be on social media, and show off to my friends. I brought it with me everywhere I went. I made myself a Facebook page, Instagram, and Twitter account.

Every day school would drag for me because I couldn't wait to get home to use it. My Dad upgraded me later to a phone and better ones a few times after that. By the time I was 15, I'd updated to an iPhone 7 Plus. I would spend hours doing photoshoots with my friend because I was so eager about getting "likes." If I didn't get enough likes in a certain amount of time, it would greatly affect my mood and my confidence. Then, I would delete it. I spent hours and hours editing pictures and looking at other people's pages. I did it because I wondered how they looked so perfect on social media and I longed to look like them. It still decreases my confidence, even though today I have learned that social media is very fake. Someone can post a picture with the biggest smile and seem to have the happiest life but really they are dealing with stress, sadness, and their own problems. I genuinely believe that it is a platform people use to project the perfect life they actually want. I'm even guilty of it myself.

A thing that's very common today is photoshop and filters. I've seen many people on social media that look a certain way and then when you see them in person they look completely different. I like to use filters a lot because it makes me feel prettier. I don't even remember the last time I took a picture of myself without one. Some people may think "Oh, it's

just a filter," but imagine how that one small thing can affect people's confidence. They look at themselves with filters on and then later see themselves in the mirror without them. They wish that they could have that filter constantly in real life. I have myself too. There's a certain filter on Snapchat that I use a lot. It makes me have blue eyes, fuller lips, and longer eyelashes. When I first discovered that filter, I didn't want to look at myself without it. I dream of looking like that in real life and it can mess with my head.

There are so many areas where social media has led me in life. It can affect our confidence and happiness and lead to danger and bullying. I regret begging for that iPod at 12 because now I am so addicted to my phone and social media. Between the ages of 14-16 I had nothing better to do in my life, not many goals and I was on my phone more than ever. I was told countless times to get off my phone, stop wasting my time, and go enjoy my life. I never understood or wanted to listen to the people telling me that. Now I understand, there's so much more to life than a phone and social media and I wish I knew that sooner.

I still have a hard time putting my phone down. So many people are so blinded by it. It seems like the world would go mad without it. Now it feels like as much of a necessity to life as much as food or water. Now that I know how much it has affected me, how addicted I am and how many hours I've wasted of my time, I will not let my children go through it. I plan to only let them use a phone for emergencies until they are old enough to pay for their own phone. I never really had the chance to learn what it's like and how to live without social media and my phone. I want my children to see what there is to life, the hobbies they can have, the things they can do WITHOUT social media.



Social Media, Canva

## Culture and Language

Jayden Munroe, Lewiston

In my life, I have been exposed to different cultures and languages whether it was at school, outside, or even just at home with my parents. The elements that define a culture are symbols, language, beliefs, values, and artifacts.

A language in a culture is a system of words or symbols that people use to communicate with each other including slang and body language. For example, in the United States and the United Kingdom, we speak English fluently, but we use slang and phrases that mean completely different things. For example, in the US what we call cookies people in the UK call biscuits. In the US we call french fries french fries but in the UK they are called chips. Our cultures make us different, but that's what makes us all so great, that we aren't the same. It would be boring if we had billions of people that are the same. It's very important to tolerate and accept everyone's similarities and differences because in a way we are all the same human beings with aspirations of reaching the top of the mountain. I would never be the person to not like you because you look a certain way or follow a certain religion.

Culture clash is when two people with different cultural beliefs get into conflict. For example, when McDonald's first opened in India they put the beef patty on the menu which sparked outrage with the customers and employees because in India cattle is considered a sacred animal in their main religion. One of the important ways to work with people from other cultures is to understand your own biases. Your bias is what you feel on the inside and your personal preferences. I took a test on my bias for people with different colored skin. After taking the bias test it says I have a moderate preference for dark-skinned people over light skin people, and that honestly confuses me because I don't feel that way. Just because your bias is light-skinned people that doesn't mean you can go without showing other people respect.

The culture I decided to study was the American South. The southern states are known for having a more relaxed pace of living. Southerners are usually very kind and polite. The culture is slightly more formal than in the other states. For instance, people often show respect by calling men "sir" and women

"ma'am." The South's musical history started before the civil war with songs of slaves or traditional folk music brought from Britain and Ireland. African influence on Southern cuisine rose from the slave trade. Slaves brought their traditions and recipes with them introducing stuff like black-eyed peas and their method of frying food. In Louisiana, the French influence introduced things like Creole and Cajun cooking. Being exposed to different cultures and languages in my life made me want to take a little deeper look into some others like Nigerians. I can't wait to learn more about different cultures.

## The Right to Bear Arms Colby Estes Poisson, Freeport

I support the right to bear arms, which is also called the Second Amendment. The Second Amendment of the US Constitution protects gun ownership. It states, "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." I've supported the right to keep and carry a gun for as long as I can remember. I was born into a family filled with generations of gun owners. While some family members served in the military, others worked as farmers and hunted for their food. My two grandfathers carried guns in police or security work, but they also hunt for sport.



*Second Amendment, Canva*

America's gun culture goes back to the colonial days. According to [gun-control.procon.org](http://gun-control.procon.org), colonists used them for protection and to hunt for food, then they became a source of protection for soldiers in the Revolutionary War. Gun ownership and the Second Amendment allows people a sense of safety and security. In addition, armed citizens have the ability to protect others and help fight crime if needed. Gun ownership helps to prevent crime. Strict gun control

laws will not stop criminals from obtaining guns or breaking laws. There are still murders in countries where handguns have been banned.

Guns are not just a means of protection, they allow people to hunt for their own food and provide for their families. Owning guns allowed my ancestors to protect their livestock from predators on the farm and feed their large families too. Hunting is necessary to control the population of certain species and prevent them from being a risk to humans. For the moose population in the north part of Maine, it is a necessity to control the population to help reduce traffic accidents that can cause serious injury or death to humans.

I believe that it is important for people to be able to safely store, carry and use a gun. My grandfather is a great role model and taught me a lot about gun safety growing up. He teaches hunter safety courses and classes on hunting for L.L.Bean.

## Different Cultures

Isaiah Ellis, Waldoboro

There are many cultures on Earth, some that we may haven't discovered yet. Many cultures have the same religion, language, and even purpose, but there are just about no cultures that are exactly the same. I chose three cultures to write about, and they are Ancient Spartan culture, Mexican culture, and Italian culture.

Sparta was known as a warrior society. They were polytheistic which means they believed in more than one god. They believed in the Olympian gods, Zeus, Posiden, Athena, etc. Their foods were based on fish, pigs, goats, bread, cheese, fresh fruits, honey, milk, etc. They didn't want to overindulge so they could be fit. They spoke an endangered language called Doric.

Mexican culture is something I never read about, so everything here will be new to me. Mexico doesn't have an official religion, but Roman Catholicism is believed by more than 80% of Mexico. Most Mexicans speak Spanish, although many different languages are spoken there, like America, they seem to not have an official language. The national dish of Mexico seems to be mole sauce.

Italy is known best for its foods, such as pizza, lasagna, spaghetti, etc, but many may not know this,

what we Americans view as Italian such as pizza and spaghetti are actually from central Italy. Italians in different regions of their country have different spins on what Italian food is. Northern Italy is known for fish, potatoes, rice, sausages, pork, etc. In the south, tomatoes dominate their dishes. The major religion in Italy is Roman Catholicism, which, along with Christianity, makes up 80% of the population. The other 20% are Muslim, atheism, and agnostic. Italians speak Italian.



Pizza, Canva

Being tolerant of everyone's differences means you can surround yourself with more than just the people that are basically you, it's always good to have a different viewpoint even if you don't agree. Culture clash is when conflict arises from the interactions of people with different cultural values. One example is war starting because our governments can't agree on things, like basic human rights.

## The Good Stuff

Emalee Donahue, Lewiston

Have you ever heard about the green stuff? It's good stuff in today's world. Everyone wants it yet can't get enough of it. To answer that question, it's money and if you haven't heard about it yet you're too young to read this.

I have noticed that I mostly spend my money on food. I mean I can't help it, food honestly is everything. Well even though it is everything, if I start to eat food that I already have at my house I will probably be able to save quite a bit of money. It is a want, not a need -for the most part. Needs and wants are two totally different things. A need is what



you have to have for survival like food, water, and shelter. A want is things that are not necessary for survival like fast food, toys, and ice cream. I struggle daily with my wants because I just want all of it!

I made a pie chart and I found that I spend most of my money on groceries. I spend 39.6% of the money that I have after bills on groceries, but that isn't a bad thing since it is a need. I should probably watch the rest of my spending habits because I spend 20.9% on fast food and another 19.2% on entertainment. I have a bad habit of spending more than I can afford because I have a bank card and it is so convenient to use.

Unfortunately, budgeting the money on that card is not my strong suit, but there are many ways of budgeting. You can do the envelope method where you put money in an envelope for different occasions and whatever is left over is your spending money. That way you don't go over what you spend. Another way is writing down what you spend to keep track of what you have left. I like the writing down method the best. It helps me visualize what I am spending my money on and where.

I even write down what I spend on groceries. I have a BJ's card so I get coupons in the mail. I try to spend my money on things that I have coupons for. I also like to look at the unit price to help me buy things that don't have coupons. That stuff is usually soda, toilet paper, and even animal food. I prefer to buy generic soda because it is cheaper yet still tastes the same. However, I prefer to buy name-brand toilet paper because generic tends to be too thin or not soft enough, but occasionally I will find a generic brand that is almost the same. When shopping for jewelry and things like that I tend to go to pawn shops because it is cheaper while still being in good condition. The only downside of that of a pawn shop is the tendency that they try to make you spend more money than what you have by "pushing you" into it.

The reason why I pay a lot of attention to detail is due to my financial goals. My short-term goal is to stop spending so much money on food for lunch. So far I have achieved that and I have been able to spend more on Christmas. My mid-term financial goal is to buy a good car for me to get to work and other places like appointments. Last, my long-term goal is to move out and find my own place to live.

To find my own place to live I will need to establish credit through my bank. By doing that they will see me as a responsible person and be more likely to let me have the place. Credit is very important in today's world. It shows if you are responsible or not. I have been slowly trying to improve my credit by getting a gym membership. I have even been thinking about taking a loan out. I could get a credit card, but I don't trust myself that much. The bright side of that is it would help with my credit, but the downside is I might get myself into trouble.

I hope reading this helps you with spending your money or someone who has been through this situation. Hopefully, you will think twice about what you spend or where you spend it so that you can achieve your goals. However, when it comes to food, always spend money on it because food is life. Food is everything!

## First Time Home Buyers Course Norma Richards

I took a first-time homebuyers class at the beginning of December of 2021. I took this class because I would love to move out of my mother's house, and rent is so expensive nowadays. I found this class through a program called York County Community Action Corporation. To get into this class, I had to sign up on their website and pay a 25 dollar fee to register. The three meetings were two and a half hours long that I needed to attend to get the certification for the class.

The actual process of buying a house can be fun. First, you need to create a budget and determine an affordable payment. Before you go to the bank and try to get a real estate agent you can try to get pre-approved and explore your financing options. After you get pre-approved, you can start to find a real estate agent that you like!



Realestate, Canva

There are lots of people involved in the house buying process, the most important being the lenders. The lenders help you finance the property and help you get a monthly payment that works best for you. The next person that needs to be involved is a real estate agent. The real estate agent helps you find and select a property that is right for you and accommodates your wants and needs. Once you find a home that you like, your real estate agent will help you make an offer on the property. Once the property owner or the seller accepts your offer, you will want to inspect the property before you start the loan process. The home inspector will look over the house, and they will inform the homebuyer of its condition, and what needs to be fixed. The inspector can only give you their recommendations with their naked eye, as some other issues may arise.

After the inspector comes and looks over the home an appraiser will come and look at the house as well. The appraiser will look at the mechanical aspect of the house rather than the structure of the house. At this point, if everything goes well with the inspection, you can move on to the mortgage servicers. Mortgage servicers process the mortgage payments and manage your escrow (savings) account. The bank/mortgage broker approves the home then you will need to buy homeowners insurance. When you buy a home, your mortgage is not the only thing you will be paying. You also need to pay your property tax. Property tax is determined by each town and will fluctuate yearly. Keep in mind that you will also have to pay for utilities, repairs, and maintenance.

Buying a home can be very exciting, but it can also come with some disadvantages. Taking this class made me realize that there is so much more to buying a house than just having enough money for it. There are so many people involved, so many steps you need to take, and the process can last anywhere from six months to a couple of years just to get into the home that you want.

## What is the Best Shopping Bag For the Planet? Autumn Francis-Stevens, Pembroke

I've been wondering what kind of shopping bags are best for the planet? The video I watched narrows it down to three materials: plastic, paper, and cotton. I watched a short YouTube documentary called, "Which Bag Should You Use?" by Luka Seamus

Wright and Imogen Ellen Napper produced by TED-Ed and I learned which shopping bag is environmentally the best.



*Reusable Bag, Canva*

Plastic is thin and flimsy and is made of High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE). Producing this material requires extracting petroleum from the ground and applying extreme heat. The resulting polymer resin is then transported alongside additional ingredients like titanium oxide and chalk to a bag manufacturing plant. Coal-powered machines melt the materials down and spin them into sheets of plastic which are then folded into bags. By the time it reaches its final destination it contributes an estimate of 1.6kg of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

Paper is made from wood pulp. When you account for the carbon cost of removing trees from their ecosystems, a single paper bag can be responsible for 5.5kg of carbon dioxide. Evidence shows paper bags get quickly thrown away because they break but the good thing is that they break down in the ecosystem in a matter of 90 days.

Making cotton is an extremely energy and water-intensive process, but durable cotton bags are most likely to be reused. The production of a single cotton bag emits about 272kg of carbon dioxide and out of the three is most likely to be reused and they degrade in a matter of months.

It turns out the most environmentally friendly bag has features of several materials I learned about in the video I watched. I learned that the most durable and reusable bag is like cotton, but made of plastic. That has a lower carbon footprint than cotton or paper. The sturdy shopping bag consists of polyester, vinyl, and other tough plastic. I have always thought that bags made of plastic were the worst for the environment and that cotton was the best. I did not realize until after learning about the impact that it takes to make cotton that it can be even worse than plastic.

## What If I Owned a Horse? Autumn Todesca, Berwick

The clock read, ten past nine as I slipped into bed. I crawled under my warm bedspread and lay there. I was wide awake. My eyes gazed at the ceiling and then down at my toes. I couldn't sleep. As I lay there my mind began to settle. Then my body became calm and relaxed.

I allowed myself to wander into a dream. In my dream, I was leading a chestnut mare out of her stall and putting her on the cross ties. She had four white socks and a white blaze that ran down the length of her face. She had kind eyes that spoke to my soul. I kissed her muzzle as I walked to the tack room and found myself in front of a whiteboard. On the board were all the boarders and their horse names. On the top left-hand corner was my name next to a horse's name I didn't recognize. Then the thought hit me as I walked to locker seven. The chestnut mare must be mine. I must own her. As I realized this, I found myself pulling a CWD saddle out of locker seven as well as a bridle, grooming kit, girth, and an Ogilvy saddle pad. I carried the tack to the chestnut mare who stood patiently on the cross ties.

I grabbed a hoof pick, ran my hand down the mare's right front leg, and she allowed me to clean her hooves. I did this to all four hooves, placed the hoof pick back in the grooming kit, and picked up a curry comb. I started at her shoulder and moved the comb in circular motions lifting dead hair and dirt as I moved from her shoulder to her barrel then to her hindquarters. I did both sides and then picked up a hard brush. I began to flick the dead hair and dirt off her body. I grabbed a soft brush and brushed her body. As I did this a natural shine and gloss came to her coat.

Once I was done I laid The Ogilvy saddle pad on her back and gently placed the CWD saddle on top. I pulled the pad into the pommel of the saddle to make sure the pad would not rub her withers. I grabbed the girth and fastened it to the saddle and then went back to the tack room.

I sat on the bench and zipped up a pair of tall boots, placed a helmet to my head, and wiggled my fingers into a pair of riding gloves. Then I met my mare with a kiss. I pulled a peppermint out of my pocket and with my hand held flat, I gave my mare the mint and slipped the reins over her head. I took off her halter,

tossed it to the ground, and lowered the bit to the mare's mouth. As my mare politely accepted the bit, I did up the noseband and throat latch then slipped the reins over her head and clucked for her to follow me to the indoor arena.

In the arena, I walked her around a lap and we stopped at the mounting block. I tightened my girth, pulled down my stirrups, and flung the reins over her head. I lined her up, placed my left leg in the stirrup, swung my right over the saddle, and placed my right foot in the other stirrup. "Cluck-Cluck," I told my mare as I urged her to walk forward. We did a lap of a working walk. When we completed our lap I moved my mare up to a posting trot. We trotted for a while in both directions and I worked on my two-point as well as my sitting trot. Then we took a lap or so to catch our breaths. Next, I prepared to canter. When I was ready to ask I moved my outside leg behind the girth and squeezed and kissed for the canter. We cantered in both directions. I worked on sitting and light seating. We popped over a few cross rails and I made sure to get the correct distances and have the right position over the jump.

Once I was done I led her into her stall, slipped off her halter, and hugged her. When I was hugging my mare I had a feeling this was goodbye, but I felt like I would someday see her again. I then opened my eyes and woke up from my dream. I then felt the mattress beneath me. My heart sank. It was only a dream. But I had a small sense that I would see this mare again. I didn't know when or how, but deep down I knew I would.

## Social Media Brady Lombardo, Hollis

You can use social media in so many ways, to talk to friends and family, to keep up with news from sports and more, also for talking to new people. I use social media to talk to my friends, watch baseball, and keep up with my sports teams. I use social media for about four and a half hours a day depending on whether there's baseball on. When I am at work, my social media usage goes down by about 52%.

Social networking can be positive in many ways. Small businesses like coffee shops, lawyers, small restaurants that are just starting out, and hotels use

ads and reviews to help their business. It's also starting to become the new way to bank with just a click of a button with apps like CashApp, PayPal, and Venmo. Even when you need to visit the doctor you can do it from just your phone with the new virtual visit using Skype. Also, politicians have used social media like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to speak out about their issues and ideas in order to get elected.



*Boston Red Sox Computer Project, by Brady Lombardo*

Even when social media has been positive it comes with some negatives like cyberbullying, catfishing, kidnapping, and much more. It can also hurt you physically and mentally with things such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. Politicians can corrupt people's minds to try and persuade them into thinking what they want.

We are socially connected people so being socially connected to others can ease stress, anxiety, and depression, boost self-worth, provide comfort and joy, prevent loneliness, and even add years to your life. On the flip side, lacking strong social connections can pose a serious risk to your mental and emotional health. While social media has its benefits, it's important to remember that social media can never be a replacement for real-world human connection. It requires in-person contact with others to trigger the hormones that alleviate stress and make you feel happier, healthier, and more positive.

Social media is a fun way to talk and entertain people but can be very dangerous. It can make people less social in the real world leading to fewer and fewer opportunities to get far in life. When that happens

they try to use social media to calm down from their stress and anxiety. According to promediaz.com, even with trying to cope with social media, sometimes that won't work and you will find something that your friends are doing, that since you are socially connected you start to have FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), and your anxiety and stress start coming back and you start to feel lonely and helpless. This is one way that being socially connected can become harmful.

### **Book Review: *Stop Pretending*, by Sonya Sones Lindsey Berube, Calais**

It started with a happy family who loved spending quality time together. Out of nowhere, Cookie watched her older sister have a mental breakdown and be taken to a hospital. It was negatively affecting her and making everyday life unbearable for everyone in the household.

Cookie had a hard time with her big sister being gone. As each day passed, she wished that she could go back to the way things used to be before her sister had a mental breakdown.

Cookie suffered because she didn't have anyone to talk to about what was going on in her life; not her mother, her father, or her big sister. It seemed to me that Cookie's sister was the only one who understood and listened to her. Maybe Cookie's purpose in life was to be her sister's helper; to help her dig deeper into why she is the way she is and why they're so different.

Cookie thought about her memories and all the "bad" things she did or lied about because she was beginning to lose hope and feel guilty. She was grieving what she lost and wished she could go back and repeat those memories to change them. She thought that might save her big sister from all these bad things happening. She wished she could take back the memories, the loss, and the guilt. She daydreams that she can cure her big sister and change what's happening in their life, but that's not reality.

After watching the traumatic events with her sister - her best friend, Cookie began to lose control of her feelings and she watched everything around her fall apart. She watched her big sister not get any better,

but worse! In my opinion, it scared her and reality started to hit her. Blocking out feelings can sometimes be easier and at the same time very damaging. Constantly trying to save others and not yourself is tiring and exhausting. I deal with it daily, but I am trying to cope with it.

The parents bring Cookie to see a counselor because they think she's having a hard time expressing/dealing with her emotions. She is angry at the fact that her parents won't talk to her, and instead send her to a therapist. She doesn't want to be there and doesn't want to open up to a stranger. I think that she realizes how serious depression is and how quickly things can change. She eventually learns to appreciate the memories she had with her big sister before her sister's breakdown.

Cookie seemed to get some satisfaction from opening up about her sister to the therapist and so when she tried opening up about it with her friends, they disowned her and stopped talking to her. They started passing notes to other friends in school about her. She became constantly worried about what others were thinking about her problems at home with her sister AND worrying about how others viewed her. It's sad. Everyone has skeletons in their closets! School and tests became much more difficult because she didn't have her sister there to help her anymore. She felt alone and helpless. Slowly she started to get over her fears by making an effort to talk to people about them.

Little sister is tired of being tired, bullied, and not listened to. She is frustrated. She's tired of being ALONE. She has a harder time adjusting to her life right now and she's going through huge changes. Instead of being there for everyone, she wants someone to be there for her for once.

Near the end of the story, her sister gets a shock treatment and forgets everything, and then later she starts to remember who Cookie is and the memories they've had which make the whole family happy. Once they started seeing life for the way it was and accepted it, they started to have happier visits altogether.

After reading this book I am interested in reading the other books that were written by the same author. I love the story. I love how real and raw it is, and it made me realize how common mental health problems are and how serious it is. It relates to my life in so many different ways.

Other books by Sonya Somes: *What My Mother Doesn't Know*, *What My Girlfriend Doesn't Know*, *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies*, *To Be Perfectly Honest*, *Saving Red*, and *The Opposite of Innocent*.