

North Shore Families

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kids!

MARCH 2019

Dr. Kate

Tips for Managing March Madness & Beyond



by Dr. Kate Roberts, PhD

Most people associate March Madness with the NCAA world of college basketball, where the best of the best college basketball players compete for the championship title. And yet beyond the world of hoops, into the world of children and teens, there is a whole layer of madness that begins in March and extends through the remainder of the school year. The demands on youth include increasing academic pressure, as there is only one quarter to raise poor grades, standardized tests such as MCAS, college acceptances or rejections, and these are only a few of the more pressing challenges. Outside of academic demands, there are social and other pressures in the activities of semi-formals, proms and *promposals*, class elections, making summer plans, competing in spring sports – often in terrible weather – and the list goes on.



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We take advantage of the local activities that Newburyport has to offer. There are local gems among us and beautiful trails to spend the day hiking and relaxing. The Clipper City Rail Trail, for example is over 1-mile long. This gets us moving and can get you moving too! Utilize the trail as a family by walking, biking, or roller blading while spending a beautiful day outside.

Go explore. Give us a call and allow us to help keep your family healthy too.



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In addition, it's a documented fact that March is one of the most, if not *the* most, trying months for mental health. It's a time when stress increases and depression and anxiety in children also increase. Parents need to be aware of how children are coping with the stresses at this time of the year. For many, March signifies the coming of spring and ending of winter. But for some, spring does not lead to feeling better. Instead, some people react to the beginning of spring with increased depression as they watch others blossom with longer days and warmer weather. Parents, educators and most of all, students, benefit from recognizing that beginning in March and extending to the remainder of the school year, this is a high stress period. Learning ways to cope with all the stress is essential to maintaining a healthy mind, body and spirit. Here are some suggestions to help cope with March stress:

1. See it for what it is: March is challenging. Embrace the difficulties with a positive attitude and your children will follow.
2. Acknowledge the problem when it's there. If a child is struggling, don't avoid it. Get a child help if they need more than you can provide, in the form of tutoring, counseling, coaching, etc.
3. Accept the reality that academics will be substantially more difficult between now and the end of the school year. People who adapt and embrace stress with a positive outlook are more successful and cope better.
4. Don't overreact, and instead, be supportive. If your child gets bad grades or if they are not performing well, discuss it with them and find solutions together to help them address and resolve their problems.
5. Remember that grades and success at class work are important for building a child's self-esteem and not important, in and of themselves. Look at the bigger picture and teach your child to think this way as well.
6. Be active. March tends to be a bad weather month in Massachusetts, with dreary and rainy days and raw cold. Find ways to get out and be active, despite the miserable weather. Doing outdoor activities such as walks, hikes or jogs with your children will help promote healthy coping.
7. Avoid isolation. Insist that your child be around others and this will help your child to see the importance of people and a social life as a way of overcoming stress and the blues that follow stress.
8. Have humor. Put on funny movies and try to laugh, because laughter makes even those who are feeling miserable feel better.
9. Plan for the future. Try to plan activities that will be done in the later spring and summer, perhaps explore your summer camp options, and give you all something to look forward to. There will be light at the end of the tunnel and you can decide what that looks like together.
10. Recognize your own doldrums. When parents feel down and discouraged, it's a tall order to be a cheerleader for a child. If March beats you down, find ways to recover to help you to take care of yourself and your children.

I hope these tips help you and your family cope with March Madness. And remember, spring truly is just around the corner.

Dr. Kate Roberts is a psychologist on the North Shore. Contact kate@drkateroberts.com or learn more at www.drkateroberts.com.

Raising Compassionate Children



Teaching Kids to Give Brings Happiness, Healing and Purpose

by Leah Okimoto,
Exec. Dir./Founder

Kids love animals! We never realized how true this was, until they started applying in droves to do anything and everything they could to help out at animal shelters and spend time with animals in the community. There aren't too many opportunities for children under 16 to volunteer and be able to interact with animals, but the MSPCA ~ Nevins Farm has a variety of wonderful, hands-on programs for kids, and other shelters, such as the Lowell Humane Society and Northeast Animal Shelter in Salem, allow some interaction with animals up for adoption and welcome

donations of wish list items. Here are some examples of what our young animal lovers have been doing lately:

4th graders Kaya and Niki spent their Sunday morning reading to bunnies, guinea pigs, cats and ferrets at the MSPCA ~ Nevins Farm. Socialization is a very important part of what the shelter does for animals and their future families, so this is a very creative way of both tapping into the creative energy of kids for this purpose and helping kids with their reading skills!

One Saturday in January, an amazing volunteer at the MSPCA, Jennifer Falbo-Taris, welcomed a large group



of our volunteers from the Wetherbee School and Boys & Girls Club in Lawrence, and put them to work socializing kittens and all kinds of animals. They had so much fun, and learned so much from Jenn, whom we adoringly and accurately call, *The Animal Whisperer*. In the photo, she is

helping 8th grader, Holnac, manage a kitten – while 7th grader, Cailyn, enjoys the show.

And on a chilly Sunday morning in February, elementary students, Hazel, Hannah, Sadie, Katie and Brooke, helped gather several dogs for a

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North Shore Children & Families



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for our upcoming deadlines.

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Issue **Ad Space Deadline**

April **Noon, Wed., 3/13**

May **Noon, Wed., 4/17**

Summer (June/July) **Noon, Wed., 5/15**

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Our Next Issue is Our April Issue!

Featuring Part 3 in
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Aaron's Presents

Continued from page 3



playdate and ran around, threw tennis balls and frisbees and gave out treats and toys to all of the owners at the end.

When we see kids showing so much

love to animals, we see their empathy and gentleness shine and come to life. And it's clear to anyone watching that animal interaction for young people is a powerful way to combat violence. So please continue to encourage

children to spend time with a furry friend.

If we can develop a next generation of people and leaders who care about the needs of others and know how to take action to connect, help and build community, we can change the world

together. For more information about how we can help a child you know to create and lead such an experience, please visit aaronspresents.org or contact one of our staff members below. Our application is now on our website in English and Spanish.



Leah Okimoto is the Executive Director of Aaron's Presents, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that she founded in 2014 in memory of her infant son, Aaron. Feel free to contact: Leah at lokimoto@aaronspresents.org or (978)809-5487; Kimberly LaBonte-Kay, North Shore Regional Director, at kimberly@aaronspresents.org; Ebony White, Lynn Mentor, at ebony@aaronspresents.org; Franchesca Arias, Lawrence Mentor, at franchesca@aaronspresents.org; Jenny-Ann Diaz, Lawrence Mentor, at jenny@aaronspresents.org; Monica Veth, Lowell Mentor, at monica@aaronspresents.org; or Matt Wolterding, Lowell Mentor, at matt@aaronspresents.org.

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Spring Into A Family Bucket List

by Lauri Diamantis

With the New England winter still upon us, it's hard to imagine Spring is approaching. Budding trees, emerging crocuses and much more daylight give way to chirping birds, warmer days and muddy boots. In our home, we like to welcome the beginning of each season with a Family Bucket List, a list of things to do and places to visit for the next few months. Some of our favorites are repeated each year, while others have been on our 'must-see and do' list and we insist we'll get to them this year. This winter, our list consisted of skiing at a new mountain such as Gunstock Mountain Resort (check!), a snowy hike with our dog (check!), ice skating at the Frog Pond (not yet) and visiting the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum after listening to the podcast, *The Last Scene* (check!). Brainstorming a list of places we want to go or new activities we want to try is half the fun. Our rules for the Bucket List are that each family member must have an idea included and activities should be as inexpensive as possible. For instance, we went ice skating at the Frog Pond on President's Day because we have learned that it's free that day. We also use our library's museum passes for discounted admission tickets whenever we can. The Spring Equinox will arrive on March 20th, which is when we write our Spring Family Bucket List. Typically, we include growing new plant seedlings for our vegetable garden, choosing an audiobook for our family book club and thinking of a project to do around our house (it may be cleaning out our basement this year). New this season will be hiking Mount Monadnock, exploring local general stores (after my children gave me the book, *New England's General Stores: Exploring an American Classic*, by Ted Reinstein) and making a fairy garden in our backyard. Whatever the season, our Family Bucket List reminds us to embrace the weather, be adventurous and try something new while doing it all together.

Children's Book Review



If I were a moose ...
If I were an octopus ...
If I were a duck ...
If I were a puppy ...
If I were an elephant ...
If I were a panda ...
If I were a unicorn ...

Anne Wilkinson for Jellycat

Published by Jellycat Books, London, UK

Reviewed by Ann Britton Ranger

Old MacDonald had a farm, ee-i-ee-i-o. And on his farm he had a ...

It always amazes me how young children love this song. It seems to be one of the first songs they learn, and as an educator, I realize how important singing this song can be to fostering language development. Venture into any playroom or daycare class, hold up a plastic cow and start singing. Even those who are only speaking a few words will inevitably start to dance about and *mooooo*.

Recently I found several new, soft and fuzzy books designed for toddlers that had me humming *Old MacDonald* right in the book shop. Each features an animal, and a simple story about that animal, complete with adorable, tactile illustrations. The puppy, moose, elephant and unicorn have velvety, fuzzy or fluffy tails. The octopus has raised tentacles on all eight wiggly arms. The duck's and panda's faces are soft and soothing to the touch. Throughout the pages, there are different surfaces to explore. And as you read to your child, be sure to incorporate new vocabulary, such as smooth, bumpy, shiny, etc.

These books are sturdy enough to survive baby drool and curious little hands. If you are purchasing them as gifts, you might also consider buying the accompanying stuffed animals. While enjoying these books with children, don't forget to sing *Old MacDonald*. I wonder what a unicorn says?

Ann Britton Ranger is the Early Childhood Education Program Director at Beverly Children's Learning Center. She began collecting picture books when her own three children were young, and enjoyed sharing these stories while teaching preschool for many years.

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To secure your ad space, please contact
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