

50 Wowee Weekend Ideas

GO AHEAD, COUNT 'EM!



**NICK JR**

Family Magazine

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FAMILY  
BIKE  
TRAILS

Are You  
Turning Into  
Your Mom?

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OVERLAP

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JUST FOR KIDS  
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FAMILY BIKE TRAILS  
CREATING MOMS  
PAPER BAG CRAFTS  
TIE-DYE PARTY  
MAY 2004

THE BUZZ ON PARENTING TODAY

Park Bench

What's the best parenting advice you ever got from your mom?

“Take time with your kids; they grow up so fast. Cleaning and laundry never change.”

—Jodie, mother of one son, 5, and two daughters, 3 and 1; Girard, Pa.

“Pick your battles. Let kids express their own individuality.”

—Paula, mother of two daughters, 15 and 9, and two sons, 12 and 4; Houston, Tex.

“Let children get dirty.”

—Whitney, mother of one son, 5; Lexington, Ky.

“Don't be overly concerned with fights between children. Soon they'll be playing with those 'horrible' friends again.”

—Michelle, mother of one son, 7, and one daughter, 5; Fresno, Calif.

“The messier your house, the better mommy you are. It means you made time to play with your children.”

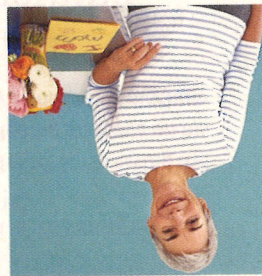
—Stephanie, mother of two sons, 7 and 2, and one daughter, 4; Merrick, N.Y.

“Each child is different, so don't expect to teach them the same.”

—Kathy, mother of two sons, 6 and 2; Simi Valley, Calif.

Join our Parents Panel and share your advice on everyday questions with Park Bench. E-mail us at [parkbench@nick.com](mailto:parkbench@nick.com)

# Meeting of the Moms



Some research crossed my desk recently with information that might be news to anyone who isn't a mother: It announced that it was **motherhood** that most defined women today. Across social, economic, and cultural lines, it's a role that trumps all others.

As eternal and predictable as the role of “mother figure” can be, there are some 21st-century changes we can all welcome. In **Generation Overlap** (page 34), mother-daughter authors Melinda Blau and Jennifer Blau Martin describe a phenomenon they discovered when Jennifer's son, Henry, now 17 months, was born.

As they observe, today's moms and their moms have more in common than previous generations. Besides that adorable kid to go gaga over, **thirty- and fifty-somethings** have shared life experiences, as well as a taste for many of the same cultural goodies. See how kids reap benefits when mom and grandma speak the same language.

Kids are up for lots more fun with our **50 Wowiee Weekend Ideas**. We're so eager for you to check them out that we've left a trail of \*s throughout the issue to highlight them. From a **Surprise Mother's Day Breakfast** (page 57) to the **Ten Best Family Bike Trails** (page 42), we've got what every mom secretly craves, besides a spa week and a professional organizer: more ways to enjoy family time. By the way, our **WW50** ideas have been known to cause giggles and grins Monday through Friday too!

Happy Mother's Day!

Freddi Greenberg, Editor in Chief

Denotes Wowee  
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throughout this issue

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*Good Ideas + Smart Stuff for Families*

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### PLAY THE DOUBLE-TAKE GAME

Rise and shine! Can you find Blue on our cover?



# Generation Overlap The New Mother- Daughter Dynamic

BY MELINDA BLAU  
AND JENNIFER BLAU MARTIN

Missing your favorite Norah Jones CD? Check your mom's disc player. From pop culture to politics, today's young moms share a common sensibility with their equally hip mothers. It's a phenomenon mother/daughter writing team Melinda Blau and Jennifer Blau Martin call "generation overlap." This Mother's Day, we take a look at how changing family roles create new perks (and a few potential pitfalls) for modern motherhood.

When stay-at-home mom Heather Jack, 30, describes her relationship with her mother, the phrase "generation gap" isn't mentioned. Rather, Heather and her mother, Ginny Hoverman, 57, are more like best friends—so much so that they've been mistaken for sisters. "We shop in the same stores, wear the same size, and often like the same styles," explains Jack.

Heather and her mother are not unique. Today's moms and daughters are closer—if not geographically, then at least emotionally—and more alike than any mother/daughter generation of the recent past. Far from a gap, there's now a generation overlap.

One explanation: Women are different today. "We're seeing the influence of the liberating sixties and the feminist movement," maintains family therapist Betty Carter, former director of the Family Institute, of Westchester, New York. "In earlier generations, mothers were raised with the view that children were to be seen and not heard." Now women have a voice at home and in the world at large.

Demographer Cheryl Russell, author of *100 Predictions for the Baby Boom* (Perseus Publishing), is not surprised that mothers and daughters today share a common world view. Russell points to three important trends as evidence: education, work, and relationship history (see Like Mother, Like Daughter, page 36).

While the bond with your mom has taken a lifetime to develop, generation overlap really kicks in when you have children of your own. Read on to see what moms say are the not-to-miss bonuses and the try-to-avoid pitfalls of their relationships. Plus, experts weigh in on how this special bond benefits the youngest generation in the family—your children.



**Parenting Decisions...A clash in opinions is part of the package.** When the parenting pendulum swings, mother and daughter are bound to have different ideas about health, discipline, suitable bedtimes, schooling, etc. No matter how close you are, listening to your mom's opinions about childrearing is not always easy. It is even harder when what she says goes against your own parenting beliefs. Many mothers and daughters handle their differences by agreeing to disagree. Or if there's tension, humor is a good diffuser. Jen Murray, 33, once joked with her safety-conscious mother-in-law, "How do you think we keep the kids alive between your visits?"

**Setting Boundaries...It's a tightrope, but you'll learn to balance.** Given your closeness, your mom might forget where her job ends. It helps to remember that your mother just wants to be a part of your children's upbringing, but you need to set the ground rules, says Ron Taffel, coauthor of *Nurturing Good Children Now* (St. Martin's Press). "It is the daughter's right and responsibility to create boundaries in the relationship."

If you're a new mother, allow time to adjust. "When a baby enters the world," says Carter, "all of the relationships get jostled and have to be renegotiated. The mother has to respect her daughter's new turf, authority, and priorities. And

**50% of moms say discipline is the one area where they disagree most with their mothers.**

the daughter has to respect that her mother wants, and deserves, access to her grandchildren."

**Living in the Past...Letting go of the old makes room for the new.** Like spouses squabbling over who does the dishes, arguments with your mother can be symptomatic of a deeper issue. Carter's advice: "Deal with or get over your list of complaints about your own childhood."

**24% of mothers admit that they have lied about a parenting decision because they thought their moms would disapprove.**

And whatever you do, keep the kids out of it. "Never transmit your own critical and negative feelings to your child," says Carter. Fortunately, many daughters are able to let go of the past when they become mothers themselves. "Somewhere along the way, you realize that they did what they could do and you accept that or stay angry, which hurts your children," explains Deb Kind, 39, mother of one-year-old twins. "When you have your own children, you realize that no one is perfect."

## Like Mother, Like Daughter

With each generation, things change—and some things stay the same, especially for you and your mom. The numbers show just how much you may have in common.<sup>†††</sup>

	YOU AND YOUR MOTHER	YOUR MOTHER'S MOTHER
<b>Education</b>	Thirty-three percent of women ages 30 to 39 have earned an associate degree or higher. Your mom's generation is not far off, with 26 percent of women ages 50 to 59 holding a college-level degree.	Among women 70 and older, 13 percent have a college-level degree.
<b>Work History</b>	Having kids and a career is not unique to your generation. In 2002, 69 percent of women were working moms. In 1975, 45 percent of moms were holding down a job and raising a family.	Hats off to those women who flooded the workforce during WWII, with 37 percent of moms still punching the clock in 1948. By 1950, many returned to full-time motherhood, with only 8.7 percent of moms working.
<b>Relationships</b>	Single parenting, divorce, alternative lifestyles—many of you have nontraditional families, and so do many of your moms. In 2001, the divorce rate was roughly 47 percent. In 1974, the rate was about 34 percent.	In 1949, 1 percent of marriages ended in divorce.

# Best of Both Worlds

It's a win-win situation. With mom in your corner, you've both got a best friend for life. And as you try on new hats (you as mom, she as grandma), your relationship takes on new depth as well.

## Support...if you need a hand, mom usually offers

up two. Parenting is hard, especially given life's hectic pace. Including "grandmom" in the process is one of the shared perks not to be overlooked or undervalued. Architect and mother of two Kara Kressy, 38, feels "spoiled" by her mother's help: "I work three days a week, and my mom takes care of my kids one day a week. She has a close relationship with my children, and that's important to both of us." Experts agree that mom can be an invaluable resource. "Nothing is more incredible," states Chicago-based family therapist Michele Weiner-Davis, "than having your mother there for support and being open to what she may have learned about parenting."

## Work and Family Balance...Find out the

secrets from your in-house expert: Mom. Despite advances in the workplace to meet your needs, juggling work and family life is still difficult. Your mother not only understands, but she's been there herself—and often still is. In *New Passages* (Ballantine Books), social observer Gail Sheehy writes about "fly-in grandmothers"—women who adore their grandchildren but are also entrenched in careers that they love. Hence, both generations are dealing with the work-family split. It's a shared struggle that reinforces a sense of togetherness. Because you share so much with your mother, you have more to talk about than just your children. And talk you do. Many daughters say they feel free to tell their mothers anything. Sometimes your mother might not like what she hears and vice-versa, but at least you can weather the ups and downs. "My mother and I are very close, even when we're disagreeing," observes Kressy. Her mother, Doris Jaffertian, 69, a retired professor of business management, seconds that

83% of moms say they have career and family issues in common with their mothers.

77% of mothers feel their style of parenting is similar to their own mom's style.

opinion. "We blow off steam and tell each other what we think and then it blows over." "The good news, says Carter, is that you carry such communication skills into other friendships—including your marriage. **Mutual Mentoring...Share the wealth; you've got a lot to offer too.** Your mother is not the only role model in this relationship. Both of you bring strengths to the table. Your mother has the benefit of experience, but you offer the fresh perspective of youth. "My mother has taught me a lot about nutrition and treating your body right," says Jack. At the same time, Hoverman credits her daughter for influencing her in the fitness arena: "Seeing Heather work out so diligently, I started strength training and signed up for aerobic dance and yoga."

# Avoiding the Traps

Even though you and your mother share a similar universe, it's not always easy to maintain balance. Everyone has their moments—in fact, some daughters have been battling with their mothers since adolescence. Whatever your history, at some point you are bound to step on one another's toes. But there are ways to regain your equilibrium even in the face of common struggles.

## Separation Anxiety...It's okay to be

different. Being close to your mother shouldn't mean giving up your independence. Dorothy Firman, coauthor of *Daughters and Mothers: Making It Work* (Health Communications), suggests that to separate from your mother—and yet still feel connected to her in a healthy way—you have to see yourself as an "ex-child," while your mother has to become a "mother graduate." Even if Mom doesn't make the shift, you can. As an adult and a parent, Nancy, a 37-year-old writer with three daughters, says she is now able to stand up to her "controlling" mother. "The less I needed and depended on her, the easier it was," admits Nancy. "We still don't agree on that much, yet the relationship is better and things are a lot more relaxed."

40% of moms say the relationship with their mothers has significantly changed since they have become parents. The reason? They better understand each other.

30% of moms picked as the first person they'd call if they had a minute to gab.

## Communication...Make it a busy two-way street.

And talk you do. Many daughters say they feel free to tell their mothers anything. Sometimes your mother might not like what she hears and vice-versa, but at least you can weather the ups and downs. "My mother and I are very close, even when we're disagreeing," observes Kressy. Her mother, Doris Jaffertian, 69, a retired professor of business management, seconds that

\* A special thanks to our Nick Jr. Family Magazine Parents Panel and others for participating in a select survey about mother/daughter relationships. Those statistical responses are included throughout this article. † Mother real name.

## The Kid Connection

The mother bond—and some good sense on both your parts—is often enough to heal old wounds. The biggest incentive to work through your difficulties is the positive trickle-down effect on your children.

**Role Modeling...Having friends in the family has big payoffs.** “It’s great for children to see their mother and grandmother treat each other with respect. They may not understand the words, but they hear cadence and tone,” explains Ron Taffel. “Even a young child can see the give and take of a strong bond. While the relationship may not always be perfect, a child learns empathy, respect, and compassion, and sees what it is like to actively solve problems.”

**Growing the Family Tree...A shared history helps kids feel connected.** Grandma is the bearer of family lore. She will tell your children stories about you. And what could be sweeter than seeing your mother and child walking hand in hand? “When I watch my mom with Clay, I imagine what it was like when I was a baby, and I can see how my mom was with me at that age,” says graphic designer Jordana Napurano, 37. “When she is not around, Clay is always asking for her. Somehow he knows we are family.” These shared intergenerational family rituals act like an anchor in a child’s life, explains Taffel. “They are an antidote to unavoidable negative aspects of the kid culture.”

**Emotional Development...Self-esteem blossoms within strong family bonds.** A good relationship with your mother fosters your child’s ability to relate to others, express feelings, and face the hard knocks of life. “Mutual respect between mother and daughter creates a better environment and emotional stability for the kids,” says Taffel. And don’t be surprised if you hear yourself reciting your mother’s lines. “Just the other day,” says Libby Delana, 42, who is very close to her mother, “I found myself saying to my son something that my mother said to me: ‘Don’t try to fit in—you’re built to stand out.’”

**Security...Kids bounce back when they have a strong safety net.** Countless studies on resilience have proven that having close family relationships can help a child bear and deal with even the most stressful situations. Napurano already sees the fruits of her close-knit relationship with her mom: “It’s similar to a marriage.



## Crossover Classics

Looking for more ways to gab and share with mom? We went to industry gurus to get the latest cross-generation hits:

**On Bookshelves** On the Barnes & Noble hot list for X-ers, Boomers, and beyond are **The True and Outstanding Adventures of the Hunt Sisters: A Novel**, by Elisabeth Robinson (Little Brown & Company) and **PS I Love You**, by Cecelia Ahern (Hyperion).

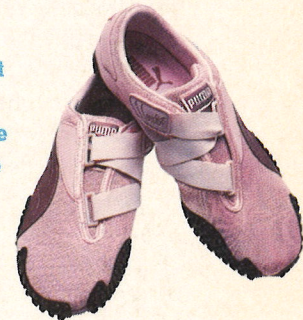


**In Disc Players** Who are moms tuning in for? According to *Rolling Stone* magazine, it’s **Norah Jones**, **John Mayer**, and—believe it or not—**Justin Timberlake**.

**At the Box Office** For a movie outing with mom, *Premiere* magazine suggests cross-generation themes and celebs. Three to consider: **Ella Enchanted** (Miramax); **Connie and Carla** (Universal Pictures); and **Troy** (Warner Bros.; May 14).

**At the Gym** “Ommm” is the hottest workout word there is, according to *Fitness* magazine. The noncompetitive fitness craze, yoga, is so flexible three generations can do it together.

**On Your Feet** *People* magazine style director Susan Kaufman’s picks for cross-generation footwear fashions: **Birkenstock sandals** (the toe-thong variety), **Manolo Blahniks** (the real deal or look-alike), and **Pumas**.



My son senses that I am in some ways an extension of my mom, and he feels very safe and loved by her.”

The best part of this new togetherness between mothers and daughters is that they are like family pioneers. Because of generation overlap, they are venturing into new territory in their relationships. In turn, they are affecting generations to come.

*Melinda Blau, best-selling parenting author, and Jennifer Blau Martin, a nationally known health educator and new mom, have collaborated as mother and daughter, friends, and, most recently, coauthors. They are currently writing their first book, an exploration of how mother/daughter relationships change when the daughter becomes a mother.*