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WOMEN OF CHINA English Monthly ISSN 1000-9388 CN 11-1704/C 国外发行代号: 1580 国内邮发代号: 2-713 京东工商广字第0121号 国内定价: 10.00 元

WOMEN OF CHINA **beijingkids**

《中国妇女》

Beijing's essential international family resource

September 2020

WOMEN OF CHINA

中國婦女

September 2020

PRICE: RMB¥10.00 US\$10

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国际标准刊号: ISSN 1000-9388
国内统一刊号: CN 11-1704/C

ISSN 1000-9388



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WOMEN OF CHINA English Monthly 《中国妇女》英文月刊

Sponsored and administrated by
All-China Women's Federation
中华全国妇女联合会主管/主办

Published by
**ACWF Internet Information and
Communication Center (Women's Foreign
Language Publications of China)**
全国妇联网络信息传播中心
(中国妇女外文期刊社) 出版

Publishing Date: September 15, 2020

本期出版时间: 2020年9月15日

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International Distribution 国外发行

China International Book Trading Corporation
中国国际图书贸易总公司

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WOMEN OF CHINA English Monthly

《中国妇女》英文月刊

15 Jianguomennei Dajie, Dongcheng District,
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Printing 印刷

Toppan Leefung Changcheng Printing (Beijing) Co.,
Ltd.

北京利丰雅高长城印刷有限公司

国际标准刊号: ISSN 1000-9388

国内统一刊号: CN 11-1704/C

国外发行代号: 1580

国内邮发代号: 2-713

广告经营许可证:

京东工商广字第0121号

WOMEN
OF CHINA 《中国妇女》英文月刊



2020年9月 (下半月)

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ON THE COVER:



Sister and brother Nora (age 4) and Tim (14 months) Lorenz spent a gorgeous morning at Chaoyang Park.

Photographed by Dave Hanssen of Dave's Studio

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Helping the international community get the most out of life in Beijing

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
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Tim first came to China in 2001 and has made Beijing his home for the last 10 years. He specializes in new market development for the world's most iconic consumer brands, previously helping luxury brands enter and expand in China, and now helping a Chinese technology company build their global business. He enjoys outdoor adventures with his two young children, and time permitting, vlogs in Chinese under the moniker of "Kangaroo Daddy".



Mike Signorelli

Mike Signorelli arrived in Beijing in 1994 as a student and has called China home ever since. He has held several senior management roles over the past 20+ years, including his last corporate job with NBA China. Mike is the founder of Signature Wine, an independent subscription wine club. Contact him at mike@sigwine.com.

Marianne Daquet

In Beijing for 12 years, Marianne Daquet has always been passionate about art and education. She founded Atelier Art School 6 years ago with the mission to pass on her strong belief that creativity can change the world. She and her French husband have two daughters. You can reach her at Marianne@atelier.cn.com.



Tara Gillan

Tara is from England, UK, and been in China over 14 years where she is raising third culture, bilingual kids. She has a passion for education in China, and is a life long learner still trying to master Mandarin. In between, work, study and being a mum, you will find her looking for her next adventure!

Caroline Nath

Caroline Nath moved to Beijing as a teenager after having grown up in the US, Canada, France, and India. She is a filmmaker, radio host, Parent Effectiveness Training teacher, founder of Bonne Nani Jams, and an organic food promoter. She has two multi-ethnic and multi-lingual children. Contact her at kulfidoll@gmail.com.



Alessandra Azambuja

Alessandra's Beijing adventure began in 2010 when she arrived here with her local Beijinger husband and two children. She is originally from Brazil and has also lived and worked in Argentina and New Zealand. With a passion for working in multicultural environments with international students, Alessandra worked for nearly nine years at The University of Auckland English Language Academy, and is currently at AISB-Hope International in Beijing. You can contact her at azambuja.alessandra@hopeintschool.org

Lise Floris

Lise Poulsen Floris is an EU official turned blogger. Since leaving her native Denmark in 1998, she has lived in Italy and Belgium before moving to China with her family. She writes about life in Beijing on her blog ninemillionbicycles.com, aiming to tell "the big story through the small story." Her work has been published in the *South China Morning Post*, *Global Times*, and *Point of View International*.



Juliet London

After seven years in Beijing, market researcher, branding consultant and writer, mother to two teenagers, Juliet 'Lady' London continues to be fascinated by this ever changing city. British by birth, she has also lived in Australia and other parts of Asia. Her work primarily focuses on education research, leaving less time than she would like to take exercise, walk her dog, and snap up bargains at local markets.

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

“

A big part of life is navigating all the different types of relationships we encounter. Whether it's within your family, romantic relationships, life-long bonds of friendship, or our day-to-day encounters, knowing how to manage the relationships in our life will give us a high emotional quotient (EQ) and keeps us from being that one socially awkward friend.

In this issue of *beijingkids* we explore a wide range of different relationship dynamics, from the playground to walking down the aisle. Our Ask the Expert writer Julie Wolf discusses a question that we've all wondered at some point in our lives, "Is it ever ok to discipline someone else's child?" (p. 22), and teenage sweethearts Tom and Clare Starobynski share their secrets to a long happy marriage after four kids and 18 years of marriage (p. 16).

Without a doubt, one of the key components to a healthy relationship is spending time together. In this issue we've found some of Beijing's best places to go for some less conventional family bonding (p. 24) along with the local etiquette on gift-giving when it comes time to celebrate (p. 12). Believe it or not, in China sometimes a well-meaning gift may just offend your new friend.

One of the major milestones of life is that first romantic relationship followed by first heartbreak. We interviewed two families from

different cultural backgrounds on their views of letting their child date (p. 28) and polled Beijing's parents for the best relationship advice they've ever received (p. 30) and will most likely be passing down to their own kids.

But not all young relationships are innocent. Some can leave emotional scars for years to come. We're so proud of one brave young writer Anna Ren for speaking up and sharing her story, about the traumatic experience of being harassed and cyberbullied by her peers, in hope that other victims of bullying will also feel emboldened to speak out (p. 38).

”



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mina Yan'.

Mina Yan

What's New



We'll Miss You, Anna!

As we welcome in our new Deputy Managing Editor Cindy Marie Jenkins, we say farewell to Anna Pellegrin Hartley who's been an integral part of the *beijingkids* team over the past few months. Pellegrin Hartley has been a part of the True Run Media family for 2 years, first working as the Senior Editor and Digital Media Strategist at *the Beijinger* before moving over to *beijingkids*. Pellegrin Hartley's personality was like a ray of sunshine and we're going to miss seeing her in the office every day. We wish her all the best in her next big adventure!



Meet Our New Deputy Managing Editor

Beijingkids welcomes Cindy Marie Jenkins as our new Deputy Managing Editor. Jenkins hails from Los Angeles where she was a writer, director, and marketer for theaters and nonprofits. Her published works address the intersection of parenting, travel, culture, and work. Cindy consults with both work-at-home-parents, employers who want to hire them, and most recently helped live theaters pivot to virtual experiences. She lives in Beijing with her husband and two kids aged 4 and 6. She read *beijingkids* for four years before moving here and we're so thrilled for her to join the team!



Summer Well Spent

We've had such an amazing time working with our interns this summer. This group of talented young writers contributed their unique voice and views of our beloved city. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Dorothy Asiedu, Qinglan Du, Jack He, Olivia Li, Pranav Sundararajan, Eloise Wester, FeiFei Xu, TianTian Xu, and Lauren Zhou for their hard work. We're so impressed with the quality and maturity of your work, and know that you will achieve great things in life. It's been a privilege working with you guys!



Hot & Spicy Fest 2020

This year's Hot & Spicy Fest was a weekend of fun, music, drinks, and (of course) a ton of delicious spicy food, and a great crowd showed up to celebrate despite the threat of bad weather. Luckily, the rain never came and the good times rolled on! It just goes to show that when it comes to having fun, there's no stopping us Beijingers. Stay tuned for more food festivals coming up later on in the year.

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Milanya Zhang

Chinese/South African. Born May 3
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Nicole Dudnyk

Ukrainian. Born May 22
to Anastasiia Dudnyk and Ihor Dudnyk
at Peking University First Hospital of Mother and Child



Victoria Smidt

German and Russian. Born June 6
to Elena Smidt and Maximilian Smidt
at Beijing United Family Hospital



Remy Thomas James Kasibante-Page

British/Ugandan. Born Jun 9
to Victoria Peace Kasibante and Daniel John Page
at Beijing United Family Hospital



Pechatnov Alexander

Russian. Born on Dec 1
to Alexandra Pechatnova and Alexey Pechatnov
at Global Care Hospital



Bella Eisler Hoffman

Brazilian/Swedish. Born July 15
to Livia Eisler Hoffman and Per Hoffman
at Beijing United Family Hospital



A L'AFRO MODE – BLACK HAIR IN CHINA

Our Experiences of Growing and Caring
for Natural Black Hair in China

By Mark Allan Karanja

For non-Black people the world over, Afro-textured hair can be a source of fascination, if not absolute wonder and amazement. For one, our hair grows straight up and out, with certain exceptions. As if by magic, the same man or woman with Afro-textured hair can rock different hairstyles from day to day or month to month. The aesthetics and science of afro-textured hair largely remain a mystery still, despite the tons of videos and photos online. Growing up in Kenya, there was no such thing as 'black hair'. Hair was hair and it came in different textures but largely

the same color. As a child and teen, I wasn't allowed to grow my hair long but I had female relatives with everything from TWAs – teeny weenie Afros – to long natural hair, to the now demonized relaxer, popular varieties of braids, and on the rare occasion, dreadlocks. It was only when I decided to grow my hair long that I experienced the vastness of Black and African hair care.

For starters, not all our hair have the same curl or kink pattern. I learned about the hair chart which categorizes hair into four types, with type 1a being the straightest, and type 4c being the kinkiest variety. The variations of

kinks and coils meant different routines and regimes. I learned buzzwords like the LOC method, which means using three products – liquid (possibly water), an oil, and a cream to moisturize and seal my hair to avoid dryness and brittleness. Having a thick head of kinks often means a high risk of horrible tangles and catastrophic breakage if I don't adequately lubricate my strands. Then there was the whole issue of protective styling, where the hair is put into styles to reduce manipulation and retain length. This is where the almost mythical braids come in. But it is not just the braids. Buns, cornrows, and even wigs and



Chinese women discussed all matters hair. "We are hoping that we can do more deep-dive discussions into this current hot-topic while sharing more nuanced stories and historical contexts of black and African hair," Momoh says of the event.

Also present at the 'Don't Touch My Hair' seminar, was South African Themba Hadebe, an ESL teacher at Beijing BISS International School who shared, "I stopped chemically straightening my hair and started growing out my kinks. Good-quality relaxers were too expensive and the cheap ones were damaging my hair so I did my research on growing out kinky hair and I went natural! Six years later, my hair is healthy and growing, kinky and soft and I'm loving it!

It would seem, whether young or old, especially in China, the process of discovering and caring for natural black and African hair is a personal journey of self-learning. There are numerous resources out there now dedicated to the care and maintenance of natural hair, and with Taobao, you can get almost any sort of product or hair accessory you want.

weaves worn by those with hair like mine help keep our hair protected from the elements and helps retain length.

But beyond the requisite housekeeping, there was the social aspect of hair. As a black, African man, there was a way I would inevitably be perceived by the world for having long hair. As a child, dreadlocks in my country were associated with truancy and delinquency. But as a young adult, dreadlocks became the a la mode hairstyle, inspired by breaking with the European convention of wearing straight hair. Suddenly, women wearing their hair natural was not because they didn't have money or time to get their hair done, but a conscious decision to proudly do so.

I have watched the transition from mandatory relaxers and the expected straight hairstyles to voluminous fros and banging braids! But coming to China put a different spin on my hair journey. I came to a country with no real history of Western versus African hair. Here, I was no less likely to get a job for not having my hair at a 2" all over, or for showing up to an interview with my hair in locks. But I was likely to get a lot of attention. My hair seemed to just add to the fascination. People on trains and streets would insist on touching my hair, taking photos with it, complimenting it, and asking tons of questions about it.

The issue of touching black and African people's hair is deeply contentious, with the majority firmly standing on the 'never' camp. Too many see it as a violation of personal space. I will admit that I find it annoying, but after four years in China, I have come to just accept it. After getting to know Dorothy Asiedu, American teen with beautiful natural hair herself, I wondered what it felt like to not only have natural hair for the younger generation but to have grown up with it in China.

Thanks to Douyin and Chinese celebrities and socialites rocking Afrocentric hairstyles like braids and dreadlocks. Was the discussion of cultural appropriation as hotly debated in the teen circles as it is in my own?

"Growing up in Beijing, I'm not surrounded by as many young black girls with kinky hair. I didn't have anyone but family to talk to about learning to do my hair and other hair struggles. This played some factor in my braiding skills. Compared to other girls my age with kinky hair, my skills are subpar. I only know how to do the basics such as cornrow braids and twists. My lack of skills is a significant disadvantage because whenever my hairstylist can't come, I become dumbfounded and have no idea what to do with my hair," Asiedu, age 16, explains, adding "The lack of hair salons for kinky hair in Beijing drives me crazy. When I moved to Beijing it took two years for my family to find a suitable salon for black hair, sadly it closed around five years later. Now, a hairstylist usually comes to my house to do my hair for me."

Miatta Momoh, the co-founder and business development manager of Kente & Silk, offers a inter-cultural perspective. "In China, I have been fascinated by how music and pop-culture have inspired young Chinese millennials to take on hairstyles like braided hair and dreadlocks. It's clear through some conversations I have had that the fact the roots of these fashion statements extend beyond popular Rap culture is not always known. This trend and the fascination with African and African diasporic hair is not always welcomed and this interfering can be intrusive," offers Momoh. Just this past July, she explored this and other 'hair raising issues' at a seminar aptly titled 'Don't Touch My Hair', where a panel comprising of both Black and

"My new natural hair journey is something I had been toying with for at least a year before taking on the chop." - Miatta Momoh



"I stopped chemically straightening my hair and started growing out my kinks." - Themba Hadebe





Luciano


For-help and self improvement resources one of the most influential platforms that inspires me to improve my way of thinking and view that I would recommend to anyone is the Joe Budden Podcast. The podcast gives you weekly motivational content, knowledge and advice pertaining to current and past events while being entertaining. It's a platform where listeners enjoy a broad array tips that you can introduce to your daily life. Although the podcast may seem boring, I can assure you will find yourself laughing and captivated for hours.

Maria

Living in Beijing has been an amazing experience for me and my family. Being a diplomat I really had the opportunity to become an international citizen, to be able to appreciate, understand, and be tolerant with others. I had the chance to move around the world, meet different peoples and cultures, and learning a lot from it. Therefore, my first and primary resource for self-help and self-improvement is the people experiences, daily life challenges, books, and newspapers. A part from the Bible, especially the Chapter on Proverbs, one of the books that I found very inspirational and I read it in just one weekend was "Becoming" of Michel Obama. Also I like to hear the talk shows of Oprah, since they are motivational. I also love the books from the Mozambican writers such as Mia Couto and Paulina Chiziane.

ON THE RECORD

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley



Maria Gustava and her twins Luciano and Stella (ages 18) moved to Beijing from Mozambique in 2018. The twins recently graduated from Beantalk International Bilingual School. As a typical diplomatic family, only three of the seven Gustava family members moved to Beijing. The family is fascinated by China's rich history, diversified cultures, cuisine, and ethnic groups. Aside from the numerous museums and historical site in the city, one of the things that the Gustava family loves is the sense of unity and work culture of the Chinese people. "We witness with admiration on how the all nation came together against COVID-19."

Stella

The Disney Movie "The Princess and the Frog" has always been my favorite I was a child and I often use Tiana as my inspiration. The first black princess who is resilient with her dreams, hardworking, carries her family and values in her heart no matter the circumstances. This may sound silly to some but this kind of representation creates a meaningful impact on a young black girl. Although she was a frog for majority of the movie, you could feel her presence and character shining through.

CLEAR AND PRESENT *DANGER*

Five Things You Should Never Give as a Gift

By Olivia Li

A dear friend's birthday is coming up, but you just can't decide what gift to buy them. After hours of trawling the aisles, you finally settle on something that is neither too cheap nor superficial. However, your friend takes one good look at your gift and frowns. Where have you gone wrong? While your intentions may have been good, gift-giving in China is a more delicate matter than one can imagine and it is surprisingly easy to cause offense with a clumsily-chosen gift.

In order to make your life easier, and preserve the special relationships you already have, we've rounded up a list of five everyday items you should never give as a gift in China.



Shoes

Traditional Chinese culture puts heavy emphasis on the appearance of homophones. It is actually a great taboo to gift shoes. The pronunciation of shoe (鞋 *xié*) is homophonic with evil, demonic, or heretic (邪 *xié*), so giving someone shoes is considered synonymous to giving them evil spirits and bad omen. It also means you will probably lose contact with them soon after gifting the gift. However this taboo does not apply to family members or loved ones, so feel free to go all out and get them fancy shoes.

Clocks

Time is the most precious gift we have, right? Well not always in China. Giving someone a clock can be a big mistake, as the pronunciation of clock (钟表 *zhōng biǎo*) is homophonic to ending, termination, or death (终 *zhōng*), and can be especially offensive to older people, as it sounds like you are praying for their death. Furthermore, the act of gifting someone a clock (送钟 *sòng zhōng*) sounds like the custom of staying by a parents side right before their death or taking care of the funeral arrangements (送终 *sòng zhōng*). Thus, it is imperative that you steer away from clocks when choosing a gift, no matter how pretty they look. On the other hand, although watches may have been taboo to gift for older generations, there are now mixed opinions on whether or not they are an appropriate gift. Some say that it means longevity with a loved partner or close friends, while a smaller group claim it has connotations of running out of time. If in doubt, try to discretely find out whether your friend is a traditionalist, or will appreciate a chic timepiece!



PHOTOS: UNSPLASH, PEXELS



Umbrellas

It is very tempting to purchase an umbrella of vibrant colors and cute patterns, but it's better if you keep that umbrella for yourself. Umbrella (伞 *sǎn*) is homophonic to parting or scattering (散 *sǎn*). You should never gift a close friend an umbrella because that can mean that the two of you will soon part ways. You are, however, exempt from the rule if you are bringing someone an umbrella in the rain. That's just good manners.

Hats

Unlike the previous examples, rather than being a homophone, hats are taboo in traditional Chinese culture because of their historical context. In China the saying "to wear a green hat" means that your spouse has cheated on you, and it's such a powerful association that you will rarely see anyone wearing actual green hats in China. Furthermore, when a parent or elder passes away, you must wear a special kind of hat at the funeral, called a 孝帽 (*xiào mào*), which is translated into a Filial Piety hat. Therefore, it is better to abandon the idea of giving a hat as a gift completely, lest you accidentally wish for a death in someone's family, or for a scandalous affair to occur.



Wallets

As wallets are used to contain money, by extension they represent your personal wealth in traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, gifting a wallet is like giving away all your money, and could mean that you'll lose all your fortune and luck. However, there is an exception: it's totally ok to gift a wallet to a spouse or other family member who already shares your financial accounts and money, just avoid giving out all your money to a friend!



BEYOND THE TENANCY AGREEMENT

When the Relationship Between Renters and Landlords Go Beyond the Basics

By Pranav Sundararajan

On paper, the relationship between a renter and a landlord is a symbiotic one, where one provides shelter and basic up-keep the other provides payment. Yet an apartment is rarely just a place to sleep, but also a home and a place where you make many special memories with your family. With so much at stake, it is no wonder that the relationship between renter and landlord can quickly become fraught. Although they are increasingly rare, we do still sometimes hear of rental horror stories in Beijing, caused by cultural and linguistic differences, misunderstandings, and even crafty real estate practices. But what of the good stories, when the relationship between the renter and landlord goes beyond the basic payment dates and scheduling of repairs, and into the realm of friendship and trust? While like any relationship, it takes time and effort to build such a fruitful relationship, but in a large and densely-populated city like Beijing

will always be some who are up to the task.

Like in any relationship, open communication and a clear understanding of expectations go a long way in maintaining amicability. Expat renter Charmaine Julie, a South African teacher at the Beanstalk International Bilingual School (BIBS) Haidian campus makes a regular effort to stay in touch with her landlord, whom she has known for the past year. "We communicate casually on WeChat. He usually sends me messages to check up on my welfare or to say hi", she says. Before making a move to Haidian from suburban Shunyi in July 2019, Julie's landlord personally made the long trip from his home in Hangzhou to meet her in person and show her the apartment's appliances and how to purchase utilities. From this friendly start, their relationship has grown, and Julie often checks up on her landlord and his family, especially of late during the COVID-19 pandemic, to make sure they are

safe and healthy.

Reciprocity is a critical element too, especially in communication or in returning favors and acts of kindness. It's usually seen through simple gestures, such as sitting down together over tea, coffee, or a meal. Matthew Kang, a long-term South Korean expat student, fondly remembers the landlord of his family's first apartment in Beijing. The latter would regularly offer to take them out for coffee or a meal. "We would always make arrangements to return the favor, whether that be inviting the landlord and the landlord's family out to coffee or a meal, or offering them travel tips and advice when touring South Korea," he mentions. Another expat mom says that her relationship with her landlord is founded on gift-giving. "When we meet in person, my landlord presents us wonderful gifts, such as Chinese teas and herbs," she says. In return, every time she and her family visit their home



country, they always make sure to buy some authentic, traditional gifts to present their landlord and his family.

Having a friendly relationship and being in close contact is one way to foster a warm relationship with your landlord, but some expats actually recommend doing the exact opposite. Kyle Mullin, a long-term Beijing expat, recalls his experiences with the landlord of a CBD apartment that he and his wife rented from 2009 to 2019. "We would purposefully not disturb her and handle any needed repairs by hiring contractors ourselves. That way, she had no hassle from us as tenants. We thought it was the least we could do," he says. By taking on small problems and repairs that invariably crop up themselves, some renters are able to fly under the radar with their landlords, who might otherwise come to see them as a nuisance.

But what are the real advantages of put-

ting in this hard work to get on your landlord's good side? Laws protecting renters' rights in Beijing are increasingly robust, so it's much less common to be thrown out by your landlord on a whim than it used to be. It can, however, be very helpful to have built some mutual trust when it comes to contentious situations like rent payments. For Julie, this was put to the test when she was planning for her daughter's wedding "Due to my daughter's wedding plans, I happened to be over-budget with my spending. This meant I would not have been able to pay 3 months' rent at the end of January," Julie recalls. "I explained the situation to my landlord, and he agreed that I could pay the shortfall a month later, which I did."

When the husband of Mullins' landlord passed away last year, it had a very real impact on his family. "She discretely told my wife over the years that her husband had regularly

pressured her to sell the apartment or at least raise our rent. However, she always had a soft spot for my wife and deemed it unnecessary to give us a rent hike." With her husband gone, the landlord did finally decide to sell the apartment, but thanks to their years of friendship the transition was much smoother for the young family than they might have feared. "She was very kind with her decision and gave us nearly half a year to find a new place before looking for buyers."

Whether you get lucky enough to find a landlord who will give you special gifts, give you a grace period on rent if you fall on hard times, or simply take you into consideration when they make major life decisions such as selling your home, having a friendly relationship with your landlord certainly seems to be something worth pursuing.

GIDDY UP COWBOY!

18 Years of Marriage, Four Kids, and One Bullride Later,
This Texan Couple Know What It Takes to Make It Work!

By Mina Yan



When we heard that there was a Texan restaurant that serves large portions and combines down to earth comfort food and good old fashioned fun with the Beijing city view, we just had to put it to the test. Tagging along for their date night, we joined Texan couple Tom and Clare Starobynski for a night of good food, drinks, relationship advice, and bull riding! Yeehaw!

At first glance, you get a mixed vibe walking into Rodeo Connection. On one hand, its location on the 26th floor of Junhao Central Park Plaza means you can enjoy the posh Beijing skyline above all the hustle and bustle. But on the other hand, the centerpiece of the restaurant, which you notice the moment you walk in is the giant mechanical bull standing smack dab in the middle. It's clearly a restaurant created by people who love to drink and party, for people who love to drink and party.

Seated by the window overlooking the city all the way to Sanlitun, the Starobynskis dished on their 18-year marriage while digging into some BBQ favorites. Starting off the night was Rodeo's snack selection (RMB 198), whose name doesn't do it justice. They say everything's bigger in Texas, well, this is one starter that doesn't disappoint. The "plate" is essentially a long wooden plank filled with onion rings, spicy chicken wings, fish fillet, shrimp, nachos, potato wedges, a bit of salad, and, according to Tom, the best calamari he's ever had in China.

Next, the Starobynski's date night took a fiery turn with a Rodeo Connection classic, the flaming Roasted Pork Ribs (RMB 388), a whole roasted rack of fall-off-the-bone tender pork ribs, topped with mozzarella cheese, and set ablaze at your table with a lashing of Rum151. While the ribs are finger-lickin' good and ever so cool to photograph, don't get too close, because nothing will ruin a date night faster than singed eyebrows.

The Starobynskis finish off their date night with a nightcap drink, sort of. The latest addition to the Rodeo Connection menu is known as the Food Safari (RMB 298) and the wild name should have been an indication of what was to come. What arrived at the table was one gigantic glass of rum and Coke garnished with an entire roast chicken, a full-size pulled pork burger, a mini slider, a hot dog, a kebab, onion rings, fried shrimp, and buffalo wings. Is it a drink or is it a meal for two? We're still not 100% sure. But what we are sure about, is that this is definitely one for the food pic album and a very fun addition to the evening.

After 18 years of marriage and four children together, the Starobynskis have a lot of relationship knowledge up their sleeves, and their "how we met" story is like the plot of a Hallmark movie. The two caught each other's eye at a Christmas party back when they were just 14 years old and decades of



friendship, love, marriage, and children later, their relationship is as strong as ever. Their secrets? "Always, always have each others' backs, never put your partner down to others" Tom tell us. No matter where you are, whether living in your hometown or venturing across the world and settling in Beijing, your partner is your best companion and you need to tackle life together, as a team.

"Always date your husband or wife," says Clare. Even after you've been married for years. And one of the most true-to-life pieces of advice that every mature relationship should take note of is to "learn to love the things you don't like about your partner. As long as your partner has the most important quality to you, that is what matters." You'll never find a person who's perfect in every way, who'll never annoy you, and never ever say the wrong thing. But Disney princes don't exist in real life, and even if they did, I'm sure Prince Charming's bound to leave the toilet seat up every now and then. As long as your partner has the qualities you value most, the rest is easy peasy.

Before heading home, the Starobynskis took on one more of life's challenges together as a team – their first (and possibly last) mechanical bull ride! Rodeo Connection is all about having a great time, so if you're amped up on liquid courage, or finally giving in to sheer curiosity, their mechanical bull is ready to give you a ride of a lifetime and one heck of an evening to remember.

Rodeo Connection (山顶Rodeo)

26 F, Block A1, Junhao Central Park Plaza, No. 10 Chaoyang Park South Road 朝阳公园南路10号骏豪中央公园广场A1座26层
Ph: 5361 0666 or 178 0177 2070

One Bite *at a Time*

What's a Normal Relationship With Food

By Jack He

You might have heard of *The Biggest Loser*, a reality TV show which features obese contestants who embark on a 30-week long journey to attempt to lose as much weight as possible. To do this, they go through grueling workouts and eat measly but “healthy” and low-caloric salads and sandwiches. In this show, food is portrayed merely as a tool for weight loss and contestants often lose 20-30 pounds per week although professional guidelines usually recommend losing no more than 1-2 pounds per week. Unsurprisingly, many contestants find themselves regaining most of the weight they lost in the long run.

Sadly, many people have a *Biggest Loser*

kind of attitude towards food that is, in the view of Dr. Liu, a clinical dietitian working at Beijing United Family Hospital, extremely one-sided. Instead of labeling foods as sinful and untouchable, she believes that people should develop a grateful attitude towards food, which is a necessity in terms of our health and survival. According to Dr. Liu, the nature of food is neither moral nor immoral, however improper food choices do negatively affect our health.

One cause of this imbalance attitude to food is unrealistic beauty standards so prevalent in mainstream media. One report published online by the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition found that half of the assessed

teenage girls and a quarter of boys weren't satisfied with their bodies. This dissatisfaction often leads to excessive dieting which can lead to eating disorders, abnormal hormone secretion, and even infertility, not to mention the equally destructive mental health problems improper dieting instigates.

Pictures of influencers and celebrities on social media appear attractive, but they are often unattainable. In East Asian cultures, girls with slender frames are generally deemed more attractive; thus, girls go on diets and ignore cues of hunger, which studies have shown to be counterproductive to weight loss in the long run.



Finding a healthy relationship with one's body and food can be difficult when the problematic idea of a "perfect" body image is so prevalent and widespread, but we should all recognize that we have our own individual body types and eating patterns. Rather than seeing food as evil or something to blame, a barrier between ourselves and healthy bodies, we should recognize that developing healthy eating habits will improve our metabolism, mood, and health in general.

And what about dieting? Dieting culture can be found the world over, but as local fitness and dance instructor Vanderwegen Moreno Dorotea, or Diva to her friends and students, shares, that although people have become more educated about how certain foods affect our bodies in recent times, diet culture can quickly become toxic and detrimental to one's physical and mental health. Practicing ballet from a young age, Diva struggled to emulate the extremely thin body type synonymous with classical ballet dancers. In order to achieve this, she tried all sorts of diets, to the extent of starving herself and becoming anorexic, and suffered from hormonal imbalances, subsequent overeating, and psychological shocks as a result. These days, Diva does not believe in diets and emphasizes that as we all have different bodies that react differently to different foods, a diet that works for one person won't necessarily work for another. Dr. Liu also does not recommend diets, especially fad diets due to the lack of scientific evidence behind them. Dr. Liu believes many diets don't take into account the bigger picture, in which being healthy is not exclusively limited to being thin.

But if dieting is out, what constitutes a healthy, normal relationship with food? One movement, for so-called 'intuitive eating', is gaining traction of late, and takes a somewhat primitive approach to food, with adherents eating according to their instinctive cues of hunger and cravings, rather than diets. Dr. Liu says that she finds the concept interesting, but that the lack of scientific support is concerning, as people are biologically wired to crave sweets when they are tired. She also points out that one's feelings or cravings don't always correspond to needs, but what she calls 'taste memory' or basically, habits. To transition to a healthier relationship with food, Dr. Liu recommends referring to professional resources like the World Health Organization, national nutrition associations, or clinical specialists instead of following pseudo-professionals online.

Somewhat related to intuitive eating, mindful eating is another movement growing in popular-



ity and is designed to prevent the habitual and unconscious consumption of food, for example munching on chips while watching TV. When eating like this, our brains are not engaged with the food we are tasting, and it is easy to completely miss cues such as fullness, and end up overeating. To prevent this and to re-engage with the eating experience, advocates of mindful eating encourage taking measures such as only eating at the dining table, putting away phones, books and other distractions while eating, and writing a reflection of your eating experiences after each meal.

Finally, along with dietary modifications, making lifestyle changes such as incorporating a consistent exercise regimen will also contribute to a better mood and health. To do this, many of us need a shift in mentality, to view exercise not only as a tool for weight-loss but something enjoyable that also carries other positive health and social effects. If you're thinking about starting a new exercise regime, Diva recommends thinking through and recognizing the ways that it will benefit your life, not only from a weight-loss perspective. This way, you are more likely to stick to it long-term.

Painting with Pens

Making DIY Watercolor Pens
with Maestro Giosuè

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley



Looking for a fun, safe, and easy DIY craft activity for your kids? This one can be ready in no time, and you probably already have all the materials in your house right now. Kids can experiment with color combinations, and the food dye easily washes out with a little soap. Younger children will probably need help with the fiddly steps, like rolling the pens and using the pipette or straw.

To show us how it's done, we met up with Giosuè S, an eight year old student at Blossom Montessori. Don't let his tender age fool you, however, because Giosuè is a serious artist. When he's not drawing with watercolors, he is usually working on his comic books *Amazing Guy* and *Captain Thunder*, playing music with his brother, or cuddling the family cats Dupa, Pillow, and Lulu.

Let's get started!



What You'll Need

- Cotton swabs
- Wet wipes
- Food dye
- Water
- A plastic pipette or straw
- Scissors
- Sticky tape
- Jar lids or any other waterproof containers
- Paper to paint on



Step 1:

Lay a wet-wipe flat on the table, and cut it in half.



Step 2:

Roll the wet wipe around the cotton swab, leaving some of the tip exposed as the nib of the pen. Trim the end of the wet wipe to the length of the swab if necessary.



Step 3:

Take a large piece of sticky tape, and wrap it around the pen. This will help keep your hands dry and clean and hold the shape of the pen. Repeat steps 1-3 for as many pens as you want to make.



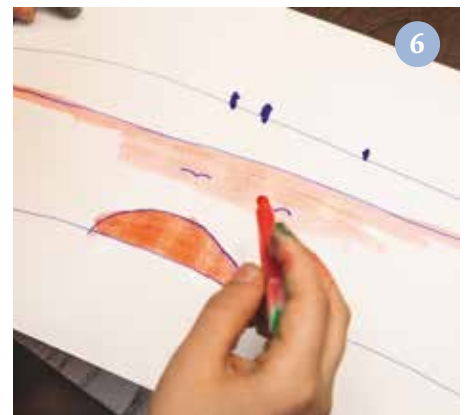
Step 4:

Put approximately 2tbsp water in a jar lid or other container, and add 6-10 drops of food dye then mix together. Repeat for as many colors as you want. You can easily adjust the amount of water and dye to your liking.



Step 5:

Use the pipette to carefully drop the dye onto the tip of the pen. Watch as it soaks up the colors! Alternatively, use a straw, putting one the end in the dye, and blocking the other end to create suction.



Step 6:

Time to paint with your DIY watercolor pens! Either make it up the design as you go along or follow Giosuè's suggestion and draw an outline first. You can 'recharge' your pens at any time.

LISTEN HERE!

Is It Ever Ok to Discipline Someone Else's Child?

By Julie Wolf



It's a perfectly peaceful afternoon. The sun is warm, the breeze is cool and you sit on the bench with one eye scanning this month's book club pick and the other watching your five-year-old happily entertain themselves on the playground. Suddenly earsplitting screams shatter the bucolic silence. You look over to see your angel in an epic struggle with another child for their prized dump truck!

Instinct and your alter ego "super parent" take over as you go to rescue your little one and their property. The other child's parent is nowhere in sight....

This is a common (if overdramatized) situation with a sticky question attached. Is it ever ok to discipline someone else's child? Most of us agree that if a child is in danger or causing serious damage, we should step in. But what about the situations where the stakes and the consequences aren't quite so high?

There are as many answers to that question as there are parenting blogs and no simple solutions. Each situation is unique and needs to be navigated with the diplomacy of a UN ambassador and the skill of Mary Poppins.

The following tips won't work in every scenario but assuming there is no hitting or violence involved, here are a few tools that have helped me resolve issues ranging from toy theft to swing hogging and name-calling.

► **Give Peace a Chance**

The instinct is always to advocate for your child, but I am often amazed by how well children can solve issues with each other if given a little space. Several years ago, I was on playground duty and watched a preschooler try to pull a ball away from her friend. I was halfway across the yard to impart an important lesson on sharing when I heard the aggrieved child say, "I don't like it when you take! Wait your turn please!" Her confidence stopped me in my tracks. Within a few moments, they had agreed to play together and negotiated equitable terms that any diplomatic advisor would have envied. Had I been standing closer and intervened, I would have unwittingly robbed that little girl of the opportunity to state clear boundaries and the other child the chance to respect them.

Obviously, this won't always work out but if it doesn't look like the situation is dangerous, try giving the children a few beats to sort it out for themselves. They might surprise you.

► **Remember You Are Dealing With a Child Not a Criminal Offender**

If you do have to intervene and the other parent can't or won't get involved, remember the other child is not the enemy (even if they made your little one cry). They are a kid who is still developing impulse control and is trying to figure out the world and social boundaries. Try not to yell or shame them; and it should go without saying, that you should never put your hands on another person's child.

This is a learning moment for everyone. You want your child to be able to clearly but compassionately stand up for themselves and you want both children to learn to respect other people's bodies, property, and feelings. There may also be extenuating circumstances or special needs of which you are not aware, so approach them with the same kindness and understanding you would want for your own family.

► **Be the Calm in the Middle of Their Storm**

If you had to step in, emotions are running high for both little

ones so enter the fray with serene, loving authority. As long as no hitting, biting, or general kid-on-kid violence has occurred, try to get them to express their feelings: "How did you feel when they took your ball? Ok, tell them." Try and get the other child to express what it was they wanted and guide them towards the realization that there may be a more effective way to get it in the future. Once everyone feels heard and understood, you will be surprised how naturally apologies and forgiveness flow.

As someone who has guided more of these interactions than I can count, I know this method is more time consuming and exhausting than simply removing the offending toy and shooing the other child away. But wouldn't our world be a lot better if more adults had the skill set to resolve issues with words? That is learned in childhood!

► **Address the Behavior Not the Child**

Your issue is not with the child but with the behavior in which they choose to engage. Avoid value judgments like calling the child "bad" or "mean" and deal directly with the issue by giving the behavior real-world consequences. For example, "I know you were upset but when you call someone a name it hurts their feelings, and then they can't play with you anymore." Give the child an opportunity to correct the behavior by giving an apology and finding a better way to verbalize their feelings in the future.

► **Be Empathetic to the Other Parent**

You will need to tell the other adult what happened and how you handled the situation. Hopefully, they will be understanding and agree with the way you reacted. If they apologize, make sure you accept graciously with a 'kids will be kids' attitude. You never know when you might be on the other side of the conversation because your child had a bad day and overstepped social boundaries.

If the parent seems disengaged, unapologetic, or even aggressive try not to respond in kind. It can be easy to blame the other adult for "bad parenting" in these situations but jumping to conclusions can create an entirely new conflict. If there is a disagreement, talk it out and try to find a common ground for how you both should handle issues in the future, especially if your children will be playing in the same park or going to the same school. Keep in mind a lot could be going on under the surface. There could be issues in the home that are affecting the child, work stress that has them distracted, or they could just be embarrassed by the behavior of their child and responding in a less than productive way. These are not excuses, but going into the situation with an open mind and caring heart will usually yield a much more satisfactory outcome.

► **Take Culture Into Consideration**

This is true everywhere but especially in an expat community! Not only are there different social norms for the country in which we currently reside, but every family is coming from a drastically different culture as well. For some people, the "village" mentality of child-rearing is normal, while for others it is seen as invasive and insulting. In some places queueing is standard, in others, lines are rarely if ever seen. Don't make the assumption that your version of common courtesy is common and, within reason, try to be accommodating.

Children watch how adults interact to learn how to act themselves. No matter how many times you tell your children we need to respect each other, nothing will speak louder than seeing you respect someone else, even if that person isn't returning the favor. By engaging in a civil way and working to come to an understanding, you are setting an important example for your child. Those seeds you plant now could have wonderful and long-ranging effects on the world as your child grows into a responsible and caring adult.

All The Places You'll Go

Family Fun Without Ever Leaving Beijing

By TianTian Xu

This year has been like no other. Most Beijingers have spent the past seven months stuck in the same house with the same people doing the same things over and over again. It's like we're

stuck in limbo. But even though we still can't travel far, there are so many great things to do around Beijing to help you reclaim 2020 with your family.

Live Your Ice Princess Dreams at Le Cool Ice Rink

国贸溜冰场

Address: B2/F, China World Shopping Mall, 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie Chaoyang District 建国门外大街1号国贸商城中区B2层

Opening hours: Daily 10am-9:30pm

Price: RMB 44 per 90 min

Ph: 6505 5776

Beijing summers are notorious for its heat. What better way to cool down than to move the activities onto the ice? No worries if you can't pull off a perfect triple axel – most rinks cater towards a wide range of ability and offer rental skates, lessons, protective gear, and snacks. Perfect for both the kids and adults/even the newest of beginners.

And since most rinks are located in popular malls, they're the ideal place for a day trip. You could easily grab a bite, skate for a few hours, then reward yourself with some delicious ice cream afterward. (Or, you know, drop the kids off for a couple of hours and go on a long-deserved shopping date). It's fun for the entire family!

Boating in Beihai Park

北海公园

Address: 1 Wenjin St, Xicheng District 西城区文津街1号

Opening hours: Daily 6.30am-9pm* May be subjected to change due to COVID-19. We suggest going around midday.

Price: RMB 120 per hour + RMB 400-500 deposit. Park admission: RMB 10, RMB 5 for students. Tickets need to be booked at least a day ahead of time.

Ph: 6403 7972

If you're looking for a more scenic option, Beihai Park is one of Beijing's oldest and best-preserved imperial gardens and it's a must-see especially with the lotuses in full bloom.

For RMB 120 an hour, you can rent a small motor or pedal boat and explore the garden via the water. The boats fit up to six people and give you free rein over the giant lake and the view that comes with it. It's the perfect spot to take Instagram worthy photos and is surprisingly leisurely, even for families with young children.

Exciting for the kids and relaxing for parents, Beihai is the perfect spot to learn about Beijing, escape from the city life, and maybe even see a couple of ducks.

Reclaim Your Childhood at Latitude 乐图

Address: No. 3, Anping Street, Houshayu, Chaoyang District

朝阳区市顺义区后沙峪安平街3号

Opening hours: Mon-Fri 10am-5:30pm, Sat-Sun 10am-6:30pm

Price: RMB 115 per hour

Ph: 8047 6556

Also for fans of the vertical life, trampoline parks are a must-go. These popular birthday party destinations are wonderful places to drop the kids off for some fun.

While this activity seems more for the children than parents, it's just the thing to bring out your inner child. Trampoline parks are stocked full of foam ball pits, climbing structures, sports equipment, and, of course, trampolines.

Pull on some anti-slip socks, grab your water bottle, and get ready to jump!

Get In Touch With Your Adventurous Side at Hao Rock Sports Climbing Space 浩石运动攀岩空间

Address: Unit 2, 7/F, Lantao Center, 5 Wanhong Road, Chaoyang District 万红路5号蓝涛中心7号楼2门

Opening hours: Mon 2-10pm, Tue-Thu 12-10pm, Fri 12-11pm, Sat-Sun 10am-9pm

Price: RMB 119 per day

Ph: 6431 9881

For those who prefer activities on solid ground and up in the air at the same time, rock-climbing gyms offer the perfect spot to get your body moving, release some of that pent-up energy, and take a break from the stresses of everyday life.

These bouldering gyms offer a wide range of difficulty (from V0-V7) and are perfect for beginners, young children, and experts alike. Though climbing without a harness may seem daunting, the routes are relatively close to the ground and heavily protected with thick mats and instructors ready to offer you help at all times.

Let the kids explore the gym's built-in slide and children's wall while you wake those dormant muscles. Happy climbing!

Borden Your Horizons at 798 Art District

Address: 2 Jiuxianqiao Rd, Chaoyang District 朝阳区798西街

Opening hours: Most shops are open from 10am-6pm

Price: The 798 Art District is open for free, but some galleries charge admission.

Ph: 5978 9798

Love art? 798 is a modern Beijing must-go and a great location for families with older children. Explore what used to be an electronics factory and now a steampunk art district. You might find pipelines the size of cars, graffiti that reaches three stories high, or long-abandoned industrial plants straight out of a dystopian movie.

Take a stop at one of the many coffee shops, bars, and restaurants. Visit some galleries and support local artists. Take a stroll among the street art and make up stories about all the sculptures. Was that one a monster now frozen in time? Does this one come alive at night to protect our city? Let your imagination run wild.

Indoor Skydiving at Happy Flying Home 飞行家太空体验馆

Address: Bldg 12, South Sector, Zhongliang Xiangyung Xiaozhen

顺义区中粮祥云小镇南区12号楼

Opening hours: 10am-9pm

Price: RMB 240 per 2-minute session

Ph: 138 1010 4809

Ever wanted to go sky diving? (For most people, probably not). Ever want to sky dive without hurdling 60 meters per second out of a moving plane?

That you can try right here in Beijing. For two minutes, don a flight suit and experience the thrill of flying in a special built wind tunnel. While there is a minimum weight limit for some younglings, indoor skydiving is the perfect family adventure for those who dreamed of soaring through the sky.



THE BIRDS, THE BEES, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Initiating 'the Talk' With Kids

By Mark Allan Karanja

For many parents, the prospect of initiating the birds and the bees conversation can be daunting. What is the right language to use? How much information is too much information, and on the flip side, how little is not informative enough? What are the resources I, as a parent, can use to initiate this conversation with my children? And at the end of the day, is it that important for me to have this conversation with my child or should I leave it to their teachers? These are just some of the questions which are wont to race in parents' minds when confronted with the prospect of the birds and the bees conversation. Everything from conventional wisdom to personal beliefs and even nationality can dictate how, or even whether parents have this conversation with their children.

For those who grew up in mostly conservative countries, it was almost unimaginable for religious parents to ever dare to have this sort of conversation with us beyond the "sin" and "abstinence" rhetoric.

This responsibility often fell on our teachers, who mostly taught sex education from a biological point. This however didn't do much in the way of preparing many students for a world ruled by peer pressure, and the imagery we got via various media.

So, how do parents and educators avoid the pitfalls which befell previous generations in terms of sex education? And how might a parent's upbringing color how they might engage with, and relay sex education to their children?

A CHINESE MOM'S PERSPECTIVE

China's parent-child relationships are historically known to be quite conservative. This was no different for Beijing mom Rebecca Gong. According to Gong, "I'm from an ordinary Chinese family. Although my parents are more open minded than most traditional Chinese parents,

Rebecca and kids



they still didn't take the initiative to talk about sex with me when I was growing up." It comes as no surprise then that, according to the Public Health School of Peking University study done in 2015, only "10% of nearly 20,000 university students had received any sexuality education while in primary school". This vacuum begs the question of who then is responsible for providing these young people with information? Some might point to schools, and the Chinese government has answered the call to bridge this gap through the Chinese Family planning Association (CFPA), which aims to provide Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) which promotes peer education among the youth.

But is this the be-all and end-all? Not according to Gong, the onus should also fall on parents as well as schools along with initiatives such as the CSE by the CFPA. "I think both parents and teachers have the responsibility to teach children sex education. Teachers represent formal education. Sex education should be more knowledge-based, and it should be taught as natural science. For parents, they mainly shoulder the responsibility of family education," asserts Gong, adding "In terms of sex education, I think parents should pay more attention to the changes and needs of their children in their emotional, physical, and psychological development." And to help her with this task, Gong professes to buying books which might help her gain more knowledge with which to teach her son and daughter.

Admittedly, Gong's two children are still on the younger side (ages 5 and 7) to have the complexities of CSE explained to them. This, however, doesn't mean that some information cannot be provided to them. Gong relies on one trick. "I think that when the children are already curious about sex, I can start Sex Ed. For example, when children ask: How did you give birth to me? This is a good opportunity to explain female anatomy," explains Gong.

As far as Gong goes, when her children are ready, they will find her prepared to provide them with as much information as she can provide.

AND THEN THERE'S THE CRAZY WESTERNERS

While on the other side of the world, Scandinavia and western European countries like Germany are hailed some of the most liberal countries in the world in all matters including sex and sex education. Comprehensive Sex Education in Germany for instance, was made mandatory for all German students in 1992. Even before this government mandate, many schools had made CSE a part of their curriculum as far back as the 1970s. One might expect this to hold true also in the US. But with no federal mandated curriculum, each American state is free to include CSE or ban it entirely. Increasingly, the push

against CSE in America is on religious grounds. So while some states mandate compulsory CSE, others offer no more than religious-based call to abstinence and no more. What do American kids do and how does this plethora of approaches mean in the long run? It means that compared to Germany for instance, America has three times more cases of teenage pregnancy, with teenagers in America being far less likely to use contraception compared to their Western European counterparts.

David Hanssen is a product of this system. He was among the children who got an early, albeit academic introduction to CSE. "If I remember correctly, we had a sex education class in grade 6 in middle school. It was about a week-long lesson in place of our normal science class where they separated boys and girls into different rooms and showed videos and had discussions about puberty, sex, etc. I don't think my father talked to me about sex until my senior year of high school, right before I went off to college," recalls Hanssen. Much like Gong, Hanssen believes both teachers and parents share the responsibility of providing sex education to their students, but not in equal measure. "I feel it's definitely the parents' responsibility to talk about sex, love, and having children. But I also feel it's good for the school to then educate students about the same. The more information the better," asserts Hanssen.

As the dad to two sons ages 6 and 10, he also believes in not only tapping the pool of Beijing dads for wisdom and resources but also a balanced and frank conversation with both parents. Hanssen explains, "I think it's important for both parents to have separate one on one conversations about it. I think it's important for my sons to get both the male and female views on sex." And like many progressive parents, Hanssen believes in providing this information as early as possible. There is an increasing concern amongst parents around the world over that. In the absence of this information, young and impressionable children might still get access to highly inappropriate content thanks to the increased prevalence of mobile devices. "Ninety percent of my 10-year-olds friends have some sort of electronic device — iPads, phones, laptops — and I'm sure they are curious and searching before their parents even realize it's time to have 'the talk'," ventures Hanssen.

In the face of such possibilities, it would behoove parents to take the bull by the horns and have these often uncomfortable conversations with their children. Most international schools in Beijing have some form of CSE, which might go a long way in priming children for the all-important "Birds and Bees" talk, but as both local Chinese families and international families alike are facing the realities of freedom of information in this tech savvy day and age, it never hurts to introduce this topic to the kids in the way you and your family feel most comfortable.



Dave and kids

DO YOU WANT TO GO OUT WITH ME?

Parents From Different Cultural Backgrounds Share their Thoughts on Dating

By Jolie Wu, Pranav Sundararajan, Mina Yan

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe



Mom Cindy Marie Jenkins is a writer, speaker, and communications and corporate consultant, and her husband Dan is a theme park designer. The couple moved to Beijing from California, US in June of 2019 with their two sons Malcolm (age 6) and Bashy (age 4).

When was your first date?

I consider my first date to be the first time I invited a guy to my house specifically because I wanted to be more than friends. I was fourteen. We played some basketball games and then watched *The Little Mermaid* on VHS. By the time Sebastian the crab sang "Kiss the Girl," I guess I'd made my intentions clear, because he did.

What age should kids start dating?

It really depends on the kid, but I thought I was ready by 13 or 14. I was at least ready to make the mistakes I needed to make in order to learn and mature. By 15, I moved from dating to some longer relationships. As idiotic as I acted sometimes, I learned so much about myself — what I want and what I deserve — that later relationships were much better — or at least over faster!

Do you think children should have romantic relationships before college?

I will absolutely support my children having romantic relationships before college. If they want to pursue dating, my husband and I will

be there for them, however they need us. And if our kids don't want to talk to us, I hope they have someone else they can trust.

Have you talked to your children about sex?

Not yet. Malcom has a great book called *It's Not the Stork* that we read whenever he has questions. It talks about bodies and fertilization of eggs pretty plainly, without saying how the sperm gets to the egg. We taught them the real terms for their body parts; we don't use nicknames. Once his understanding of biology catches up with his questions, we still plan to answer plainly and honestly. Kids understand so much more than we give them credit for, and if we don't tell them the truth, they'll seek it somewhere else.

We do, however, discuss consent. "If you are playing and your friend isn't having fun and says no, you stop and see if they're okay. You need their consent, or permission to tickle them," that kind of thing. Both kids know they have the right to say "No, stop. I don't like that" anytime, whether it's tickling or playing or getting their picture taken. We are adamant that they can and should tell us when they want to stop doing something, even if they don't know why.

When they start dating, do you want to know the details? Why?

I doubt I will want to know the details. However, my parents always made it clear that if they needed me, I could talk to them, and

sometimes I did. Knowing that I could talk to them went a long way towards trusting them. I don't remember giving them details but I did ask for help when I needed to buy birth control, and I was more uncomfortable than they were about it.

More important than knowing details, I want my kids to know they can always talk to us without judgment. I don't want them to ever feel shame about their bodies or their feelings. Whether they talk to me or their Dad or whoever, I want our kids to know they can ask any question, any time.

Do you think PDAs (public displays of affection) are acceptable in front of kids?

Absolutely. We are their models for relationships. My husband and I don't have make-out sessions in front of them, but we show affection. Since they are little mimics, we are careful not to do anything that we don't want them to play-act with their friends. But we've never considered not showing affection to a certain degree.

What are your biggest concerns regarding your children's emotional development?

I want them to feel free to be themselves, to explore who that is and how they interact with the world. Some of our favorite authors and creators encourage their audience to consider the world complexly, and that is the core of what we want for our kids. There are few easy answers in the world, especially in relationships. They see us work out conflicts or disagreements together. There aren't always good guys and bad guys in a story; the world is more complicated than that.

After sheltering in place and being in quarantine for so long, we are now re-learning some social and emotional development. It can be slow going, but their friendships in Beijing help.

What is the number one piece of relationship advice you will pass on to your children?

Trust your gut. Embrace your feelings and express them, even or especially if they are scary. Surround yourself with people who challenge you, support you, and will always look out for your best interests. Treat everyone who you date with respect, and expect that same respect in return. That's more than one piece of advice. It all comes down to respect and consent.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CINDY MARIE JENKINS

Dad, Xing Tao graduated from Peking University and went on to co-found Beijing Chuangshi Excellence Culture Co., Ltd with his wife Gong Xun, a company that publishes and distributes children's books. Mom, Gong Xun, graduated from Renmin University of China. They have two children, Leslie (7) and Ivy (5) who both go to Harrow Beijing.

When was your first date?

Gong Xun: My first date was during my third year of high school, with one of my classmates. Even though I was very studious and academic at the time, I still made room for emotional growth and feelings. After finishing my homework at midnight, I would often listen to Zero Point Music radio show hosted by Wu Zhoutong. Whenever I liked someone, listening to love songs and stories felt different. The first time I went out on a date was to watch a movie, Love Mala Tang. We had reached the theatre late and the movie had already started. When we entered the pitch dark theatre hall, Karen Mok's hit song I Want a Boy was playing. The rhythm and lyrics of the music really matched my mood at that time [laughs.] That was how my first love began.

What age should kids start dating?

The mental maturity of each child is different, so I think it's difficult to judge when it's acceptable to them to start dating just by age. I think if the child is relatively mature, then they are ready to go on dates. The person should have a good understanding of themselves, have independent opinions, and be able to solve problems through communication with others. Above all, the most important thing is to have a sense of responsibility and to know how to respect others' feelings.

Do you think children should have romantic relationships before college?

I will support the choices that my children make when they reach an age where they are mentally mature enough to make those choices. So, whether they are in college or not is not really important.

Have you talked to your children about sex?

I will definitely talk to my children about sex, and gradually deeper the topic as they grow older. Currently, one of my two children is seven years old and the other is five. For the time being, we have discussed how a baby is born, and the physical differences between



boys and girls. For this, I bought an awesome book called Our Body, which contains very good content and is well-written. In terms of sex education, I am more of an academic buff. So I will basically shortlist books and resources that I think are suitable for the kids, content-wise. Then I will either read and narrate the key points to the children, or I'll let them read by themselves.

When they start dating, do you want to know the details? Why?

I wouldn't want to know the details of their relationship, because I am not the type of mother who frets about everything regarding their children. For example, at their current age and stage of life, my children mainly play with children of the same age. Of course, while playing, conflicts do come up. However, I generally do not focus on the minute details of these conflicts. I just figure out which side is right and wrong, whether I should apologize, and how the reconciliation should take place. As parents, you should respect your children and care for them. So, in the process of educating your children, you should give them full trust and understanding.

Do you think PDAs (public displays of affection) are acceptable in front of kids?

This is hard to say. When the children are very young, I don't think there is any problem with

it. But once the children are older, I am afraid that excessive displays of intimacy could bring about negative feelings of awkwardness and embarrassment.

What are your biggest concerns regarding your children's emotional development?

My two children have very different personalities. My son is a very emotional person, enthusiastic, and impulsive at times. I just worry about him making bad choices when in that impulsive mood. But if he can stay in control and think deeply about himself and his actions, he will be able to deal with problems calmly. My daughter, on the outside, is lovely and well-behaved, but inside she is strong and has her own opinions. In terms of her future, what I worry about most is that she can be herself in a relationship.

What is the number one piece of relationship advice you will pass on to your children?

To learn how to respect others. If they are in a relationship, they should be able to balance that between their individuality and their outlook with friends, family, and other groups of people. When in a relationship, one must establish a sense of responsibility and form a positive outlook on life and values. I think that by finding a person who encompasses these three pieces of advice, happiness is just around the corner.

Before The “I Do’s”

The Best Relationship Advice From Beijing Parents

By Dorothy Asiedu

Whether it be romantic or platonic, personal relationships influence who you become. They are the foundations for an individual's happiness and health, and healthy relationships with friends and family fill our days with liveliness and entertainment. We asked a few expats in Beijing to give us insight on the best relationship advice they have ever gotten.



Billy Jin

General Manager of Grand Mercure Beijing Dongcheng

"Every individual is special therefore we need to respect that and treat each friend differently."

Mina Yan

Chief Manager at Beijingkids

"One of my favorite pieces of relationship advice comes from my best friend from high school. During my last trip home, we met up for dinner to catch up and while on the topic of our relationships, I spilled the beans on the small things that my husband does that gets on my nerves; one of them being how he always throws his laundry half way into the basket. After I was done she looked at me like I was crazy and said 'if that's your biggest concern in your relationship then you need to get over it. No one is perfect in every way, yourself included, but if they've got the qualities that actually matter in a long-term partner, then we need to chill out and not sweat the small stuff.' "



Camilla Kongshavn Jovanovic

Mompreneur

"One hundred percent transparency. There are no secret, no judgments. To be able to be open and honest with each other about everything is liberating."



Tim Coghlan

Beijingkids Board Member,
Global Marketing and PR at Xiaomi Technology

"Marry someone smarter than you. Someone who will help you grow and make you a better person. All couples, but especially mixed culture couples should sit down and find a third party (counsellor type) to help if needed and talk through potential future issues before getting married like; will older parents move in with the family? Will you financially support them? What are your education and child rearing philosophies? Are grandparents full time careers? Where will you live in 5, 10, 20 years, and how will you care for parents if you live in another country? And despite all the advice, there is a lot of struggle in relationship to go through, this year has brought the worst of it too."



Patrick Fok

Journalist, Feature Story News

"Don't go to bed before resolving an argument. But I'm not sure if that was good advice... it's kept me up late many times!"



Alessia Chizzoniti

Founder and Director of Blossom Montessori

As much as I love my friends, I never seek advice about my relationship. I may be wrong, but I think that we do not have the same backgrounds, experiences etc... and relationships are too delicate for such sharing. Having said that, this is from 'On Marriage', a poem by Kahil Gibran and it sums up my point of view:"

"Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of
your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the
same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each
one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they
quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each
other's shadow."



Tara Gillan

Director of Early Years at Beijing International Bilingual Academy (BIBA)

"Don't underestimate the importance of self-love. You are responsible for your own happiness and well-being."



UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Keeping Your Kids Away From Bad Elements

By Mina Yan

I'm sure you've heard the saying "birds of a feather flock together" at some point in your life. It's one of those old sayings that describe how people naturally gravitate to others with similar interests and hobbies. But as a parent, what do you do when you notice your child flocking with a group of less than reputable friends? In other words, what do you do when your child starts to associate with kids whom you deem to be "bad influences"?

On one hand, you want your child to discover their own path in life, explore the world around them, make mistakes, learn from them, and grow. But at the same time, it's in our nature to want to protect our babies and keep them from doing things they'll regret.

Who Are These "Bad Influences"?

Spotting a child who can be a potentially bad influence on your kid depends a lot on what age range they're in. For teens, it can be as simple as singling out the one friend who vapes if your kid suddenly decides to buy a vape. For younger kids, it's a bit trickier. Kids aren't inherently bad but they absorb the behavior that's exposed to them on a regular basis. If your child's new friend bullies others, aggressively acts out, or steals toys, then this behavior that they learned elsewhere

might get picked up by your child.

If you notice an abrupt change in the behavior of your young child, it could be worth looking into where they learned it from. For a long time, my little nephew was extremely well-behaved when it came to toys. If he saw a toy that he wanted in a store, he would tell you that he liked it, but also solemnly inform you that good kids only accept toys if they're given to them and that if grownups don't want to buy them, then that's also ok. To test if this was simply his way of guilt-tripping me, I first purposely refused to buy him a toy, and true to his word, we walked out of the store with no fuss. But, all of that changed without warning one day. He pointed out a toy he wanted, I said no, and instead of walking away like before, he screamed, sat down on the ground, and cried right there in the middle of the store. Skip to a few hours later at home, after 'toygate' was over, I asked him what happened and why he suddenly decided to behave in a way that he used to think was only for 'bad kids'. Sure enough, he told me that he learned it from a boy at school, who had told him that if he wanted something and his parents refused, he should throw a tantrum in public so they would become embarrassed and buy the toy just to make it stop. Well, I was sorry to break it to my cute little nephew, but in my

family, the grownups don't fall victim to emotional blackmail so easily. "Do you think auntie felt embarrassed in the store?" I asked him, and to my surprise, he said no. "Did you feel embarrassed when you didn't get your toy even after your tantrum?", I asked. "A little, because you took a video and laughed at me," he said.

Alright, so maybe laughing at a seven-year-old's first attempt at emotional blackmail isn't great parenting, but I'm just the aunt, so I get to call out his bratty behavior for what it is. But the 'toygate' incident taught him one thing: my nephew will probably think twice before listening to his new friend's terrible grown-up manipulation advice.

How Do We Get Rid of These "Bad Influences"?

I wish that ridding the bad influences from your child's life was as simple as telling them they can't be friends anymore. But no matter what age your child is, telling them not to be friends with another kid "because you said so" isn't a great approach. By doing this, you are forcing them to choose and have also made their friend a kind of forbidden fruit that they want even more. I've always been one to treat children like they are young adults and as with any of my adult friends, disagreements on any topic deserve some explanation. After all, you'd never tell your best girl friend that she should breakup with her new boyfriend just because you said so, would you? According to Kristin Wilson, National Director of Clinical Outreach at Newport Academy, a rehab center for teens with high-risk behavior, "teenagers can be very defensive of their friends, and you don't want to engage in a power struggle. In other words, by criticizing, you're only going to make the relationship stronger. Instead, make clear statements about your observations of how their friends are acting. For example, "I don't like the way she talks back to adults." Next, review your expectations about your own child's behavior and let them know that you will hold

them accountable for their actions, regardless of their friends' behavior."

For younger kids who are doing playdates, parents have much more say in who they can be friends with. As they get older, trust that you've raised your child to know the difference between right and wrong and trust that they'll make the right judgment. Set a hard limit in your household for the lines that should never be crossed. Even when at times they might want to experiment with the wrong choices, trust that they know the difference, and give them strategies to get out of bad situations. It could be something as simple as telling your child that they can always use "sorry, my mom said I can't go" to get out of attending parties they don't want to go to.

Remember That You're Not the Only Type of Bird Out There

In a melting pot of a city like Beijing, there are families from all around the world, mixed families, and blended families. It's worth reminding yourself that different cultures have beliefs and habits that they pass down to their children, and what you may consider poor behavior in a child may actually come down to cultural differences. Not everyone will think the way you and your family do nor will they agree with you on the way you parent. Take the Chinese culture for example. There's a long-standing tradition of respecting your elders and taking care of them when they get old. Having your parents live with you when they're old is a cultural norm here. But it's not the same in other cultures. In Japan, for instance, elderly people tend to re-enter the workforce after they reach retirement age and continue to live on their own. It doesn't mean that the Japanese don't respect their elders, it's just cultural differences and while it's not necessary for your child to follow another's culture and abandon their own, there's no harm in learning about the world before they make up their own mind, and find their own flock.



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Oh Brother!

What Is It Like to Raise Siblings, When You Never Had Any Yourself?

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley

Siblings Without Rivalry, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish is often cited as the gold-standard book for raising siblings. Originally published in 1987, it is a #1 New York Times bestseller and focuses on giving parents the practical tools to help them navigate sibling conflict, encourage cooperation, reduce competition, and in general “make it possible for children to experience the joys of their special relationship.”

As any brother or sister can attest, the relationships between siblings are deep, complex, and sometimes downright weird. But what is it like to be raising siblings, when you never had any yourself? What if you are part of an entire generation of people who grew up as only children, and to whom these bonds are perhaps some of the most alien you know? The one-child policy, which was in place from late 1970s to 2015 has given us this exact situation in China, leading to a generation of parents who are now feeling their way in the unfamiliar territory of sibling rivalries.

Many only-child parents who now have two or more kids of their own describe it as bittersweet to see their children interacting in ways that they never got to experience first-hand. Others are shocked to realize that siblings can be – to put it bluntly – bloody awful to each other, and blame themselves for the inevitable conflict. For others, it’s just another parenting mystery and every day brings a new challenge and lesson.

Siyu He grew up dreaming of having an older brother who could protect her when she was young, but beyond idle daydreams, did not regret being an only child. “Honestly speaking, since I don’t know the beautiful feelings of having siblings, I never feel disappointed that I didn’t have one.” Yet like many other Chinese of her generation, she does believe that only children are more likely to be lonely, an attitude she says was influenced by her parents. “They are the only generation which had to strictly implement the only-child policy, which is their common regret. They always hoped their children could make up for it.” When starting their own family, He and her husband Huang Yaohui initially decided to have only one child, largely for financial reasons. “With the rapidly increasing cost of raising a child, especially in cities like Beijing, I think it’s better for me to have only one child.”



Siyu He and family

She explains, “Compared with spending half the budget on different kids, I prefer to put the whole effort in the only one, which means I could offer the only child as much as I can.” But as they say, the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry and He and her husband ended up welcoming twin boys – Yichen and Yining – into the world a year and a half ago. “Life played a little joke on me,” laughs He.

For Hong Shen, having multiple children was always the plan. “When I was in middle school, I thought if I grew up and had kids, I would have two kids, both boys. And my dream came true!” She and her husband Michael Wei are both from China but met in the UK and are now raising their two boys Jacob (10) and David (5) in the US. By chance, the two boys share the same birthday five years apart, but as Shen has discovered, siblings often have extremely different characters, even when they have had very similar childhood circumstances. “Jacob is simpler and

more straightforward, while David’s head is teeming with ideas,” says Shen.

Like He, Shen and her husband are both only children, so the process of raising siblings has been an eye-opening experience. Due to the five-year age gap, her children do not play together very often, but she sees that changing as time goes on. “Especially during this pandemic, the two brothers spent more time together, and I saw little David trying to keep up with his brother. And we can tell they are happy to have a brother.”

A range of different studies has found that twins tend to form even closer bonds than fraternal siblings, and He has already noticed that despite their squabbling, her two boys can hardly stand to be apart. “Both of them feel lonely and act strangely if the other one is absent, even if they don’t realize it themselves,” she says. “Also, they always love to imitate each other. They scream together, crawl together, run together. One starts doing



Shen Hong and family

Shen agrees, saying "Sometimes we feel sorry we don't spend enough time with them. Sometimes we also feel that we are not good enough for being parents." Guilt may be the most familiar emotion to many parents, who never feel they are giving enough to their children, but for He, a simple piece of advice shared by another parent has been especially useful. "I always try to spend my time with each of them individually," she adds. "It's easy for them to show their aggressive side if they are always together, but when they are alone with me, they behave differently. It becomes easier for them to communicate, show more patience, and have better concentration." Given some time alone, He finds that the boys are able to express their individual natures more easily. "It helps me to know more about my boys, and it can also help me to find the proper ways to get along with each of them."

But while Shen and her husband may not have experience with siblings themselves, they know what kind of relationship they want their kids to have. "Hopefully, they'll understand that they're supposed to be partners and friends, not competitors."

something, and the other one follows immediately. From their expression, I can tell they enjoy it very much."

Both Marina Li and her husband Wesley grew up as only children, but now recognize advantages to having siblings that go beyond one's own experience, such as caring for other members of the family. "As we get older, especially when our parents are older and you are not around, we begin to feel that if we had a sister or brother, it would be good to take turns to be around our parents and take care of each other." The Li's currently only have one child, Angelina (8), and like He, cites the expensive cost of living and education in Beijing as a reason not to have more. However, as Angelina grows up they have begun to soften on their stance. "Angelina has always wanted a sister. When she was a small child, we did not think about her needs seriously, but now she has grown up, we have talked about the matter of having another child seriously with her. She feels that she can help parents take care of her sister." Li also adds that the fact Angelina is more grown up and independent now means they have the energy to think about a second child.

While these three families may have diverse experiences and choices, one thing is clear: raising siblings is no walk in the park. "I bought two of everything for them to avoid their fighting," He says of her twin boys. "But I failed," she laughs. "They just never stop taking the exact same thing from the other one's hands. I underestimated the inevitable conflicts between siblings. However, if they fight for my hugs, I am always happy to see that."

For the Shen family, finding a way to medi-

ate the boys' conflicts, taking into account the big age gap, has not been easy. "When boys have conflicts, we always try to be impartial judges. I know that sometimes it's better not to participate, but often it's out of control." She has also discovered perhaps the trickiest parenting act of all: finding enough time to spend quality time with each of her children. Without any breathing room between her two boys, He and her husband employ a full-time ayi to add an extra pair of helping hands, but also expressed fears of losing her children's love, and guilt about how much time they spend with their ayi. "Ayi definitely spends more time with my kids than I do, and considering about the kids' age, they will easily love someone who is always around them and looking after them, I often panic that my kids need ayi more than they need me."



Marina Li and Daughter



A photograph of a person's arm and shoulder, wearing a black shirt, set against a dark, textured background. The arm is raised, and the shoulder is visible. The lighting is soft, highlighting the skin tone against the dark background.

I SAID “NO!”

We Need to Put an End to Victim Shaming

By Anna Ren

After the worst, darkest moment I experienced in my teens, the words I heard the most were: "If you refused him at the very beginning, it wouldn't have happened," and "saying 'no' is an ability that needs to be cultivated."

People said these things easily, as if I never refused my harasser, and as if I did not have the natural instinct to reject what I did not want. They implied that if I had refused, this really would not have happened and that I would not be unhappy or hopeless. They made me blame myself over and over again – like I was the one at fault.

But now, years after the traumatic incident in which I was harassed and threatened at school, I can see this behavior for what it is: victim blaming.

When I was in middle school a boy in my class began to approach me in a way that I was not comfortable with. In the beginning, he would cover my hand with his when I picked up a dropped eraser, and I would withdraw it. I felt embarrassed but dared not let others know. He often approached me, and got in my personal space in front of others. I ran away every time, and tried to convince myself that our interactions were just spontaneously. At the same time, the more that this went on, the more uncomfortable and regretful I became. I felt that I should say no to him, and that putting a stop to the situation was my

responsibility alone.

While leaving for an overnight field trip to another city, my best friends warned me that I should not let the boy get too close to me. They described my actions as indiscrete, self-indulgent, even irresponsible. I was confused. I thought that he was the one who was crossing the line, not me. Was this my fault?

Listening to the advice of my friends, I intentionally avoided talking to the boy; taking pains to always walk with girls, and not let him approach me. He, of course, kept following me and even began to ask me why I was ignoring him.

That night, the landline phone in my hotel room rang. I thought it was my teacher, since no one else should know my room number. But it was the boy. He said he wanted to come to my room right away. My heart sank. I was scared and I told him that the teachers were in the room next to me (which was a lie) and I reminded him that teachers would not let us go to each other's rooms. He insisted that it was okay. I squeezed the phone hard, told him that I was not feeling well, and I was going to bed soon. Shaking, I hung up the phone.

I turned off the lights and went to bed. In the darkness, my roommate, who had heard the entire conversation murmured: "You should have rejected him sooner." I stared at the ceiling for hours, unable to sleep, with one

thought running through my mind: He knows my room number! Sure enough, sometime later I heard knocks at the door. I pretended to be asleep and did not open the door, and mercifully, they did not continue.

The next day, the boy continued to ask me why I was ignoring him. After a fierce internal struggle, I spoke up. "Um, I'm sorry... but I think I'm not quite ready to let our relationship develop to the next step. I'm not very comfortable with it." Of course, I didn't want to be friends with him at all, but I was just too scared so I tried to sugar coat my words.

I do not remember what he said, but I clearly remember his face suddenly turning dark and feeling scared. He finally said, "Then you mean to tell me to go away?" His face was grim, and his eyes were like knives. If I'd had any doubt, at that moment, I knew for sure that he was not the kind of person I wanted around me. Trembling, I responded, "If you say so, something like... this." Judging by his expression and clenched muscles I felt sure that if I said outright "Yes, that's exactly what I mean," he would punch me in the face.

For a moment, everything was silent, then he suddenly jumped up, threw a stool on the ground, grabbed the door, kicked it fiercely, and left. The floor seemed to shake when he dropped the stool and again when he kicked that door, and everyone stopped what they



were doing to stare after him. To this day, his behavior still seems unimaginable, but although I wish to forget it ever happened, three years later I still remember every detail vividly.

Yet this was only the start of an even bigger nightmare. On the train back to Beijing, I sat quietly in my seat, unable to find calm. This violent incident had happened in front of all of the other kids in my class, but they regarded it as nothing more than a joke, a source of gossip. Checking my phone, I saw that he had posted a long, profane WeChat Moment in which he cursed me and my family. I read every character quietly, and did not shed a tear, but felt like my heart was being stabbed. I stared at the phone screen with my shaking hands and felt sick. Within moments, he had received at least fifteen “likes” from my classmates. I looked at the scenery zooming past the train window and kept silent. Everyone had told me to stay strong. They had told me I should refuse him, yet when I did, instead of praising me for it, they turned on me.

It seems like everyone in our grade felt the need to comment on his post. Those who commented the most were the class monitors and the most popular girls in the grade, who said that I had ‘played him like a puppet’, that when I saw him my eyes lit up, even as that they had seen me holding his hand, trying to kiss him, and that they had heard I had gone to his room with a gift.

People say that internet drama can only last for a short period of time, and indeed, few people mentioned the incident again in the following months. However, even though I transferred schools many times and years passed, the scars left on my heart did not disappear. They grew even deeper. Because of the absurd stories they fabricated, the Moments they sent out, and the “like” they clicked I lost almost everything — my friends, my trust in others, and most importantly, I lost myself.

My only good friend said, “I told you already, rejecting others is a learned ability. If you had refused him earlier, it wouldn’t have happened later.” Even my mother and teachers doubted me, saying “If everyone has a bad relationship with you, then it is obvious that you need to find the problem in yourself.” I trusted them unconditionally and believed that I had caused the incident. I believed that my pain was punishment, designed to let me know that I should learn to refuse others correctly.

Later on, in high school, my interest in psychology and gender equality led me to do some more research and allowed me to reflect on this experience. Did I really never reject him, as my friends said? What exactly count as a real refusal? Does withdrawing my hands and refusing to have intimate physical contact count? How do you avoid physical violence when you’ve rejected a boy and he

is embarrassed?

Now I know that I’m not the only person who has struggled with these questions. According to my research, girls may only show subtle and non-verbal rejection, and boys certainly can detect it, but it is a common phenomenon that boys selectively ignore that rejection. Even worse, they will use this to their advantage, telling girls that “You didn’t object very much, so you must have enjoyed this as well.” In the end, it all becomes the victim’s problem.

After sharing my story with Dr. Elly Wong, a psychologist at Oasis International Hospital, I got some expert insight on the subject. She emphasizes that schools and parents should pay more attention to the topic of harassment and consent, and educate children accordingly so that they know both how to protect themselves and how to respect others. She

also recommends discussing the topic of harassment and cyberbullying with children from a young age, in order to prevent such incidences from happening. Furthermore, she says that it is important to have a professional psychologist available to help victims of harassment and bullying to support victims after these incidences.

Girls like me have spent too much time blaming ourselves and have spent too much energy trying to stay polite to those who try to invade our space or hurt us. I was harassed and cyberbullied, and blamed myself for what happened to me for more than three years. But I’m glad that I can now share this incident with others, and I hope that other girls will not have to live through the same experiences that I did. The message parents and teachers should send their sons and daughters is not one of victim-blaming. It’s time to change.



Stay in Touch!

Tips for Maintaining Long-Distance Friendships From China

By Anna Pellegrin Hartley

Maintaining a healthy friendship at the best of times requires some work and commitment, but when you are living in different cities, countries or even continents, and juggling a career, home, and raising children, it gets tricky very fast. Weeks or months can easily fly by without meaningful interactions with your close friends. However, all is not lost. Here, we've gathered some tips about how to maintain friendships abroad, and specifically, from China.

► Manage Expectations

As soon as you can, warn your friends that you may not be able to maintain the same frequency or style of contact as you did before. Saying things like "I care a lot about you and still value your friendship, even if you don't hear from me as much as you used to" can go a long way to easing the transition and preventing friends from feeling abandoned.

If you have friends who have never lived abroad or even in another town, it may literally not have occurred to them that staying in touch can be hard. Talking to them through challenges like time differences and technological barriers could make a world of difference.

► Don't Force a Square Peg Into a Round Hole

Friendships that were formed around a shared activity

like a sport don't always transition well to 'one-on-one conversation' modes, and not everybody enjoys spending hours on the phone. Don't take it too hard if your hiking buddies and knitting circle friends don't pick up when you call nor respond to your long emails in a timely fashion. It's not your friendship that's awkward, it's your medium and it will take time for you to find your new friendship groove.

► Expect the Unexpected

Making stable long-distance calls from China can be a pain. WeChat is the most reliable app for making calls but rather difficult for foreigners to set up without a Chinese SIM card. Lucky iPhone users are able to FaceTime one another for free, but the rest of us need to find other alternatives. Regardless of the method you use, allow a bit more time to deal with technical issues when scheduling a call than you may usually do to avoid frustration.

► Reframe the Conversation

Saying "I miss you" and "it's been ages" to a friend, even if it's totally true, might make them feel pressured or even guilty about your lack of contact. We all have busy lives, but a slight change in approach could make it easier to keep the conversation flowing. "I've been

thinking of you a lot" is a great alternative, as is "so much has been going on, I can't wait to share my updates with you and hear all of yours."

► Ask Advice

Ask for help, even if you don't need it. One friend regularly asks her Dad for advice about everything from home repairs, to health insurance, and the best time to buy vegetables. As a grown woman she doesn't need this advice per se, but she knows that it makes her Dad feel included, and part of her life. For cultures (like Chinese) in which people don't usually express love and affection with words, this can be a powerful way to show appreciation and keep bonds alive.

► Schedule Sends

Another friend has found a way to make emailing feel more like old-fashioned letter writing. Every two weeks, he writes an email to a friend who lives in another time zone, then using the email software schedules it to send at a time that he knows his friend will be on a boring commute. A week later, his friend does the same thing. These regular emails give them both something to look forward to, and also takes the pressure off feeling that they need to reply immediately.

► Avoid the Dreaded "So How's Life?"

Remember when you talked to your friends one month after moving to Beijing, and "so how's China?". Um... big? ended questions like this are but hard to answer. If it's since you were last in contact pause before you reach out think of a few specific, pointed can ask to get the ball rolling. "What are you reading right now?", "Is solids?", "Have you found a in your new neighborhood?".

they asked you Huge, open-easy to ask been a while with someone, and try to questions you ing. "What are the baby eating good lunch spot As they answer

these questions, you'll both build the momentum to cover the rest of the 'life' stuff.

► Get Meme-ing

My oldest friend and I can go months without a proper conversation, but we stay connected and in each other's hearts by sending ridiculous memes back and forth over Instagram. Whether it's sending memes, sharing articles you think they'll like, or tagging them in funny tweets, there is a myriad of ways to easily 'nudge' your friends and remind them of your shared interests and history, no matter how busy you both are.

► Bait the Lurkers

If you are struggling to get news from that quiet friend in a group chat who reads messages but never responds, set low-commitment mini-challenges that everybody can do, regardless of their mood. For example, post a funny, unflattering selfie and tell everybody to reply with their own, immediately! Or take a picture of their lunch, or their view, or their shoes, or whatever. Little challenges like this are easy to do no matter how busy you are and help everybody feel connected.

► Send Voice Messages

Depending on the context, unsolicited voice messages can be a pain in the butt. But there is something really lovely about hearing the voice of a good friend instead of the usual block of text. Many different apps support sending VM's, and you can fit so much more feeling, warmth, and, well, information into a 10-second voice message. Your children can record special messages for friends and relatives too, and it literally only takes a few seconds.

► Finally... Accept That Friendships Change

Friendships come in all shapes and sizes, and they change over time too. If despite all your efforts, you find yourself drifting away from a friend, don't sweat it too much. It's natural for long-term friendships to go through seasons and you may come very close together again in the future.



SCHOOL NEWS



Daystar Academy Set To Welcome New TLI Team Members

In order to strengthen their service to the Daystar Community, the Teaching Learning & Innovation team welcomed new members with strong educational qualifications and experiences in specialty areas.



Beijingkids Intern Graduates From BIBS!

This summer break, *beijingkids* had the pleasure of having Pranav Sundararajan as an intern, working alongside the team to create amazing content for both the *beijingkids* blog and magazine. Sundararajan's brilliance spans far beyond the editorial pool, as he graduated valedictorian from Beanstalk International Bilingual School's class of 2020. We at *beijingkids* would like to congratulate him and wish him the best of luck as he embarks on his college life in the fall. We would also like to congratulate all the graduates of the year 2020, not only from BIBS, but all other international schools in Beijing!



YCIS Beijing Summer Camp A Roaring Success

This August, Yew Cheng International School (YCIS) Beijing, offered its students, both in Beijing and abroad, the opportunity to attend a fun online summer camp. Led by Mr. Devereaux Poole, the camp was offered as an antidote to students who were unable to enjoy a summer of travel and other fun summer activities. Despite the course being online, it was still designed to immerse the participants in an array of activities, encouraging exploration of new interests, while also giving teachers and students from different grades a chance to interact. The camp ran from Aug 3 to 21.



YueCheng Courtyard Kindergarten Upgrades the Learning Environment

The YueCheng Courtyard Kindergarten (YCCK) is a non-profit member institution of YueCheng Education (YCE). During its first summer break, YCCK upgraded the learning environment. In the new school year, YCCK will open up new areas such as the new Parent Center, STEM Maker-Space and Performing Arts Center.



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The Circuit is a chance to check out what's happening in the Beijing community. Want to see your event on these pages?

BIBA Hosts Univisual Art Show

This past July, Beijing International Bilingual Academy hosted its Univisual Art show at the Yun Ting Club Center in Shine Hills. It featured various works of art created by BIBA'S own students, featuring themes ranging from the beauty of life, the joys of summer to the 2020 and the year that was. The exhibition aimed to showcase the incredible talent at BIBA, where students are encouraged to so artistically express themselves.



DCB Announces Its Dates for Fall Semester

Dulwich College Beijing (DCB) is one of the first international schools in Beijing to announce a return to school for the fall semester. In a recent post on its official WeChat page, DCB announced the reopening on August 24, promising to provide further information to parents about the opening date and any other pertinent information.



Send an email with the date of your event, a brief description, and high-resolution photos (at least 1MB each) to magazine@beijing-kids.com



House of Knowledge Welcomes New Teacher

This fall semester, House of Knowledge (HoK) shall be welcoming Lior Frey, who shall be joining the school's international Kindergarten section in Beijing as the lead English teacher. This Florida International University Alumnus comes to House of Knowledge with several years of experience teaching both adults and children, via both online and in person. Frey hopes her fun approach to teaching and learning will be just the tonic for her soon-to-be students.



AP Capstone Diploma Program at AISB-Hope International

AISB-Hope International is excited to announce that beginning in the 2020-21 school year with their Grade 10 class, it will offer the AP Capstone Diploma as an option for students. As a premier AP school in Beijing, the AP Capstone Diploma program allows students to develop the skills that matter most for college success, such as research, collaboration, and communication. The school is looking forward to a fantastic start for the 2020-21 school year.



Dad's favorite restaurant is Jiang Hu He Feng, 江户禾风 in Housahyu. The food is overall decent and it is close by.

Mom's favorite restaurant is Mei Zui Tang, 美醉堂, a Japanese yakitori restaurant in Sanlitun.

YaoYao's favorite restaurant is My Crib, a new fusion brunch restaurant in Shunyi.

On the weekend we usually cook and enjoy a meal together as a family.

The one thing we can't live without is humor. We like funny people.

The first thing that dad does when he comes home is relax in the automatic massage chair.

According to YaoYao, the best thing about having Jack as a big brother is not feeling lonely.

The thing YaoYao admires the most about her parents is how Dad can remain calm even in the most irritating situations and how Mom can help her express her feelings when she doesn't know how to.

The thing Jack admires the most about his parents is Mom's ability to balance her work and life, while caring for him and his sister, and Dad's interesting and critical view on life.

Our favorite thing to do as a family is to travel to different parts of China and around the world during vacations.

Dad's favorite place to go in Beijing is Long Tan Hu Park (龙潭湖公园). We started our family in a compound near the park. When the kids were young, we used to take long walks there, row boats in summer and enjoy snow sports in winter.

According to Jack, the best thing about having YaoYao as a little sister is her outspoken personality, which is annoying at times but otherwise admirable.

The first thing that mom does when she comes home is check out what is in the fridge and start cooking.

Mom's favorite thing about Dad is his patience with the children.

Mom's favorite place to go in Beijing is the Houhai and Shichahai area in downtown Beijing where there are old hutongs, lakes, restaurants, and shops to explore. That is where her high school was located, and it is eye-opening to see the great changes that have occurred over the past 20 years.

Family Favorites!

Photography by Uni You

Dad Xiao He is a Private Investor and mom Yiner Ya has a Master in Psychology from the University of Chicago and is currently working as the Parent and Alumni Relations Coordinator at Keystone Academy. The couple has two kids Jack (16) and YaoYao (12) who are both students at Keystone Academy.

中国女性 WOMEN

《中国女性(中文海外版)》是由全国妇联主管、全国妇联网络信息传播中心(中国妇女外文期刊社)主办并出版的国家级女性主流刊物。创刊于2001年,16开本全彩印刷,发行几十个国家和地区以及国内大中小城市。

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