Resolving those conflicts that make us crazy

By Sybil Evans and Sherry Suib Cohen

What pushes your hot buttons? When people don’t appreciate you? When they are condescending? When they challenge your competence or give you unsolicited advice? It could be all of the above and more, depending on your reaction to a situation or to the individual involved.

Not all conflict is bad, of course. When it is harnessed, it can be a gift of energy. Some of the great friendships, love affairs and inventions were born from certain kinds of conflict. But there are conflicts we should try to avoid such as those that keep us from realizing full and healthy relationships, that put up glass ceilings at work, that ripple and cripple us and push our buttons until we see red.

Conflict resolution is a learnable skill

We can practice and learn ways to turn anger into energy and greater intimacy. But to do this, we need to understand the following basic ideas:

- **Conflict resolution always requires words.** The old saying “sticks and stones can break my bones...” is dead wrong. Words can hurt horribly, but they can also heal. Conflict resolution is the art of using dialogue and listening skills to work out differences.

- **Conflict resolution is rarely about “I win. You lose.”** Nor is it a matter of “I’m right, you’re wrong.” It’s about acknowledging the other person and recognizing that you see things differently.

- **Conflict resolution can be avoided,** if you give in to wishful thinking and pretend the problem is not there. However, continually trying to smooth over a difference will just make the angry feelings inside you build up, and any little thing may trigger your hot buttons.

**Hot buttons and the family**

Think about situations that bug you. For example, have you talked to your sister since your major disagreement a year ago? What about your brother-in-law who has never been a fan? Family feuds, sibling rivalries and in-law pressures have the potential to push us to respond defensively, no matter how old we are.

But you do have a choice. If you allow yourself to react angrily to large and small grievances, you’ll get nowhere. But if you understand why some people stir your emotions—and what you need to do to turn off your anger (and theirs), you’ll react another way and find a more positive solution.

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Here are some principles for defusing family conflicts:

- **Consider the consequences.** You may feel like giving up on everyone. But think what will happen to you and the rest of the family if you don’t work out a conflict. For example: “If my sister-in-law and I don’t resolve our differences, I’ll miss my nephews’ entire growing up—and I’d hate that.” Or, “If I can’t get past this fury with my ex, I’m going to do a lot of harm to our kids.”

- **Change your approach.** This is **not** about your sister, mother, cousin, neighbor or coworker. It’s about how you react to others in the moment. When you start to feel anger over something that was said, practice some restraint. Let the person continue—and just listen. Then you can say, “What do you want you to see happen?”

The other person will feel respected and will be more likely to say what he or she is really feeling about how the situation could be resolved. At the same time, ask yourself why your hot buttons are being pushed so hard. Then take a risk and share these thoughts. This may lead the two of you to find common ground.

- **Know what ticks you off.** An awareness of specific issues and conditions that bother you can help you to anticipate and deal with them. Think ahead. Figure out what you would like say to neutralize a situation when you have the next interchange with a person who upsets you.

For example, over dinner next Thanksgiving, you can anticipate the typically sarcastic comment your father-in-law is likely to make about your yoga class and be ready for a response that is neither angry or defensive but is simply informational.

- **Be clear and focus on what you really want.** For example, tell yourself, “I want my brother to respect me, so I won’t try to get back at him for an unkind or nasty remark. Instead I’ll shift the conversation to something interesting I’m doing at work and maybe ask his advice about it.”

Or, “I really want my mother to honor my decisions without trying to change my mind. Therefore, I will not allow my anger over her remarks to take over.”

- **Use ‘cooling off’ statements.** They can disarm someone who seems intent on stirring an angry response by shaming or blaming you for something.

When your brother blurts out, “It’s all your fault,” for example, you might respond by saying, “It’s my fault? What have I done to make you feel that way?”

Cooling off statements can be empowering. Instead of taking the bait, you can answer with respect and even humor. You’re telling people that you want to hear what they are thinking and that you would like to start a dialogue.

- **Don’t assume too much.** It’s tempting to make assumptions about another person’s motives and actions, but when we do, we are often wrong. And we are very likely to raise another person’s hackles when we tell him or her, “I know what you’re thinking.”

How can anyone know for sure what’s on someone else’s mind? A better approach is to say, “Tell me what you are thinking.”

Be aware, too, that a hastily expressed negative assumption is likely to create misunderstanding and worsen a situation. For example, when a 15-year-old girl announces that she wants to travel with a friend through Ireland next summer, and her mother responds, “Who gave you that terrible idea? You’re way too young.”

The daughter is upset because it was, in fact, her idea. So now she has to defend her friends, convince her mother that she can think for herself and come up with a travel plan that her mom will accept.

—Adapted from the authors’ book “Hot Buttons: How To Resolve Conflict and Cool Everyone Down” (Cliff Street/ Harper Collins).

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**5 basic steps to conflict resolution**

1. **Stand back** (in your own mind) for a minute. Check out the scene that is unfolding as if it’s a play and you’re the audience. This will help you to see the whole picture more objectively and restore your balance. When one of your hot buttons is pushed, the trick is to react coolly and without anger.

2. **Confirm.** Even though you may be feeling some righteous anger, you can defuse the situation by acknowledging that the other person must have had a valid reason to set you off.

3. **Get more information.** You can steer a potentially difficult situation toward understanding by asking open-ended questions. This will allow the other person to give you more than just a yes-or-no response.

For example, instead of saying, “Couldn’t you find one minute to text or call me? You know how I worry,” you could ask, instead, “What happened to keep you from letting me know that you would not be able to meet me in the lobby as we planned?”

4. **Assert your interests and needs.** In the previous steps you have started a conversation and listened to the other person. Now it’s time to discuss the situation from your perspective. You might say, for example: “Let me tell you why I was so upset when you didn’t show up. I imagined that something bad had happened to you or you had lost your phone or maybe you had forgotten that we were meeting.”

5. **Find common ground.** Whatever the situation, at this stage both of you should feel calmer, and you can move to a problem-solving mode. Identify issues of mutual concern and areas of common interest.
Another phone scam to hang up on

A reader writes:

I’ve been reading your articles about various scams that target older people. Here’s one I just heard about that I wanted to share with your readers.

It starts with a phone call, often on a land line from someone who says, for example, “Hi, this is Al (or Allison). Can you hear me?”

People who said “yes” discovered later that their recorded response was used to “authorize” an expensive purchase in their name that they did not ask for or want.

People can lose money if they don’t catch on to the scam—and it can take a while to sort out what happened, according to the Better Business Bureau. The Bureau says that this fraud attempt has targeted businesses as well as individuals. Here’s their advice:

- **If possible, use Caller ID** to screen calls. When you see an unfamiliar number, think twice before answering it.
- **If a caller you don’t know asks, “Can you hear me?” do not answer “Yes.”** Hang up the phone immediately.
- **Write down the number** and report it to bbb.org/scamtracker to help warn others.

- **Check bank and credit card** statements for any unauthorized charges. Also, be sure to check your phone bills.

“No matter where you live, fraud is never far away,” says the AARP. “But you can protect yourself by knowing what to watch out for—and by telling others when you have spotted a scam.”

There’s a Scam-Tracking Map at aarp.org that can be helpful. It allows you to search for information about scams other people have reported. And you can also use a pull-down menu to read the various alerts from law enforcement agencies.

### Getting by with financial help from parents

A nationwide survey shows that nearly half of young people in their 20s get some financial help from their parents for living expenses. The average amount is about $3,000 a year.

The amount of help varies, however, by career choice and geography, according to a “Transition Into Adulthood Supplement” study for the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Young people in art and design fields get the most help, averaging $3,600 a year, and those who work in farming, construction, the military, retail and personal services get the least.

Much of the difference has to do with “higher barriers of entry” into fields like art, education, health and law, says data analyst Patrick Wightman of the University of Arizona. “Someone who wants to go into graphic design or marketing requires a fair amount of time to get up to the point where you’re independent,” Wightman says. “So those career choices are not really an option if you don’t have other sources of income.”

After years of training and internships, there is a clearer, larger payoff for college graduates in fields of science, technology, engineering, management and law, the survey shows, but the pay in art, design and education is low in the early years and, for some people, remains low.

There are also some major differences based on geography. Young people who live in large cities (a million or more population) are 30 percent more likely to receive rent money from their parents than those who live in smaller cities or rural areas. And while the pay is typically higher in big cities, the price of housing is much higher—and this has an impact on mobility.

As Wightman suggests, it has become much more difficult for young Americans to uproot themselves for better job opportunities—especially if they do not get some rent help from their parents.

The University of Michigan data shows that living expenses account for only 20 percent of the financial help parents give to their children. The bulk of the support comes in the form of lump sum gifts for things like a down payment on a house or the capital to start a business.

### Can you train yourself to need less sleep?

People may think they can train themselves to get by with less sleep, but they’re wrong, says Dr. Sigrid Veasey of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

You might feel like you’re doing okay, says Dr. Veasey, but studies have shown that “the more you deprive yourself of sleep over long periods, the less accurate you are at judging your own sleep perception.”

Extended vacations are a great time to assess your sleep needs. Once you catch up on lost sleep, the amount of time you spend sleeping is a good measure of how much you need.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, most healthy adults need from 7–9 hours of sleep a night and people over 65 need 7-8. Teenagers need 8–10 hours and school-age kids need 9–11. Health issues can increase a person’s need for sleep as well.
Writing a ‘last letter’ to family members and friends

Near the end of their lives, the most common emotion people express is regret—regret that they never took the time to express their love and to mend their broken friendships and relationships, according to VJ Periyakoil, MD, a geriatrics and palliative care doctor at the Stanford School of Medicine.

That’s why Dr. Periyakoil came up with the award-winning Stanford Friends and Family Letter Project. The project encourages people to write their loved ones and offers letter templates in eight languages at www.med.stanford.edu/letter. The templates were designed to help people express their love, gratitude and joy as well as forgiveness, regrets and apologies to those they may have hurt.

There are illness letter, healthy letter and life review templates. Letters can be written online and the website has suggestions for creating a video as well. The project is also building a national repository of What-Matters-Most Letters.

“Our goal is to collect 100,000 letters representative of a diverse population and to make it available to anyone who wants to be guided by this wisdom as they write their own What-Matters-Most Letters,” says Dr. Periyakoil.

A living legacy

Once a letter is written, it’s the person’s choice to share it with their loved ones immediately or store it in a safe place or with a trusted person to be given to their family members and friends in the future. Some people also use the letter as a living legacy document that they update over time.

“Our mother died after several years of not being able to communicate with us because of dementia,” says Jane. “So it meant a lot to find handwritten letters to her seven children. The letters were all different. She recalled specific, treasured moments in our lives, and told each of us how much she loved us, her joy raising us and how proud she was of us and our families.”

7 tasks of life review

“In caring for countless seriously ill patients, we have learned that it is extremely important for them to complete a life review process,” says Dr. Periyakoil. “It allows them to achieve a measure of peace that comes from deep reflection about key life experiences and the relationships they have cultivated.”

Sadly, most people forget to do this or they postpone it until it is too late. They miss the opportunity to express the deep love, gratitude and commitment they feel toward their friends and family.

The Stanford Letter Project’s “Dear Friends and Family” template can help individuals complete a life review in a relatively short time—often a matter of minutes. Here are seven tasks in the life review process to think about as you write your last letters.

Task 1: Acknowledge the important people in your life. Start the process of life review by identifying key people in your life. Take the time to express your pride in their achievements.

Task 2: Recall special, meaningful instances or events in your life, especially those that involved your loved ones. These can range from important life milestones to simple family moments that you treasure.

Task 3: Apologize to those you love if you have hurt them in some way. Many older people worry about specific past instances when they have hurt people they love. In doing a life review, take a moment to ask forgiveness. Also, take this time to forgive yourself for the mistakes you feel you have made in the past.

Task 4: Forgive those who love you if they have hurt you. Give them solace. Let them know that you acknowledge what they have done, but that you have forgiven them. This will give you and them a sense of release and peace. It will also give you peace when you successfully let go of old resentments.

Task 5: Express gratitude for the love and care you have received. Thank your loved ones for their concern through trying times in your life and for everything else they have done for you. Mention specific instances that you hold close to your heart.

Task 6: Tell friends and family members how much you love them. It can be difficult to say these words, so take advantage of the opportunity to write those you love—and express how much you care about them.

Task 7: Take a moment to say goodbye. If you feel comfortable, take this time to ensure that you and your loved ones have a proper parting without any regret or guilt. If a cultural taboo makes it impossible to complete the “goodbye” task or you feel uncomfortable about it, defer this task for later.

‘You have made my life a total joy...’

Here are some excerpts from Cathy McFarland’s Video Letter to her friends and family. It’s on the Stanford project website.

“You have made my life a total joy. I’m grateful for my parents most of all—for the values they modeled for my brothers and me. They made life seem easy when it really had to be pretty difficult for them. We’ve had our tough times but a core inner strength has helped us to prevail.

“I’m lucky that Dave, my love and my companion, finally showed up in my life—you could have come along a little sooner!—and for all the adventures we’ve had together. For my life-sustaining friends, thank you for being your lovable selves, unconditionally. For always opening your home so I could stay with you for unlimited periods of time. For making me laugh, for laughing at me, for being loyal, for including me in your plans, for always checking in when I know you were busy.

“You know that I believe in angels. Dad always finds me a parking spot and Mom shows up as a humming bird. So to each of you, be prepared. I’ll always be with you. It might be a thought. Or I might be a humming bird. Keep that in mind. I love you very much.”
How to encourage your child’s positive behavior

By Dr. Laura Markham

When children misbehave, what we do is as important as what we say. But at the same time, the language we use can help guide kids toward more positive behavior. Here are some suggestions.

Set appropriate limits. We may feel like screaming “stop it” to our kids. But when we “lose it,” we’re giving up an opportunity to teach. Be clear about your limits and expectations. Take a deep breath, and try to redirect your child’s impulse into acceptable behavior. For example:

“Blocks are not for throwing. You can throw stuffed animals, or go outside and throw balls.”

“You know we aren’t buying a toy for you today. If that’s too hard for you, we’ll need to leave the store and try again to buy your cousin’s present next week.”

“Your sister loves you, and she needs to decide about being hugged. Can you ask before you hug her?”

“The rule is no screaming in the car so I can drive safely. I hear that you’re mad and you can tell me in words. Can you stop screaming, or do I need to stop the car?”

Acknowledge feelings. Kids need to feel understood before they can hear your teaching. Yelling “How many times do I have to tell you to stop playing and get upstairs to the bathtub?” teaches children that you are not serious until you stop playing and get upstairs to the bathtub.”

This teaches your child that you mean what you say, but you understand if he or she doesn’t like it. This may not give kids what they want, but they’ll get something even better—someone who understands, no matter what.

Be an emotion coach. It’s hard to learn anything when you’re emotional. Demanding “Go to your room until you can speak to me in a civil tone” teaches kids that they’re all alone trying to manage big, scary emotions.

Try saying: “Ouch! You know we speak to each other respectfully in this family. You must be really upset to talk to me like that. What’s going on?”

When upset kids say hurtful things in anger, your goal is to create safety, so they can process emotion. Children can learn that their feelings are not scary and dangerous—and they have a choice about how to act on them.

Kids will learn that you know they’re having a hard time—and are there to help. They’ll come to appreciate, too, the lesson that words have the power to hurt.

Empower to repair. Kids need to know how to make things better after they mess up. But not while they’re mad. When children are no longer angry, they’ll want a chance to restore good feelings and repair their relationship.

Instead of saying, “Apologize to your brother this minute!” help with the emotions that caused a child to lash out. Then, once he or she has regained equilibrium, empower your child to make things better: “Your brother was upset when you knocked down his tower. I wonder what you could do to make things better with him?”

If children say, “I never want a clear expectation that that’s what everyone does—and they don’t feel pushed into it. They learn to wait that when we damage a relationship, there’s a cost—and that they can take responsibility to clean up their messes.

Help your child reflect. Teaching important lessons in life takes a lot of listening as well as talking. Lectures don’t work, and “teachable moments” are only teachable if the student is ready to learn. Practice sharing your observations. “Wonder aloud” to help kids reflect on why they’re acting as they are and also on the results of their actions.

“I notice that your brother doesn’t want to wrestle with you these days. I wonder if you can do something to help him feel safe and have fun.”

“I know you’re concerned that we’ll be late to the birthday party, but I can’t drive safely when I hear shouting. I wonder if there’s another way to let me know how worried you are?”

“It’s disappointing to miss words on your spelling test. The good news is that your brain is like a muscle. If you exercise it, you can learn and get smarter. Want me to help you learn your words for next week?”

If kids misbehave because they don’t know appropriate behavior, simply teaching them is sufficient. If they know the right behavior and still “misbehave,” it’s a cry for help.

That’s why the most effective way to teach your child important lessons requires: (a) First, calming yourself, (b) reconnecting with your child, and (c) helping your child with her or his emotions while you set limits.

If those are your goals, you’ll find that you know just what to say when you need to say it.

—Adapted from the author’s newsletter, available online at DrLauraMarkham@AhaParenting.com.
Say what you need to say...in a polite, powerful way

By Barbara Pletcher

There are some famous sayings about communication that I disagree with, such as “If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.” That can encourage behavior perceived as passive or meek. Or the saying “Don’t get mad, get even.” That can too often lead to nastiness and aggression.

I prefer an approach that is a combination of the two. I call it assertive behavior. It goes like this: “Say what you want to say, need to say and choose to say in a polite and powerful manner.”

Having this attitude will allow you to express yourself during day-to-day interactions, difficult conversations and potentially confrontational situations. You will build positive relationships, enhance your professional reputation, feel good about yourself and, very often, get what you want.

Avoid mixed messages

To achieve this, it’s important to be aware that your words and your body language—both verbal and nonverbal communications—are sending the same message. Here are some suggestions:

Avoid sarcasm. It can backfire if people take you at your word. Or you may seem to be mocking another person.

Avoid mixed messages. The use of “No problem” doesn’t have anything nice to say. It works the other way as well. When comments are negative or off-putting: “We didn’t make our quota for the first quarter, but we are hopeful for a better result in the next quarter.”

Problem with “no problem”?

People often say “No problem” when they are thanked for something. But the responses “You’re welcome” and “No problem” are not interchangeable.

“Your welcome” is a polite acknowledgement that you appreciated being thanked. “No problem” is short for “That is not a problem for me,” and it can sound glib if it’s offered as a response to “Thank you.”

The use of “No problem” may just be generational. But in the business world, clarity and good manners should always prevail over the use of imprecise or slang expressions.

Listen up

I love the saying, “You were given two ears and one mouth for a reason.” You can’t talk and pay attention at the same time. As an assertive person, you need to concentrate on what other people are saying. Here are some suggestions:

Get ready to listen. Turn away from your telephone and computer. Look the other person in the eye. If you can, go to a quiet, nondistracting setting.

Don’t interrupt. Let the other person talk. It’s rude to finish sentences for other people.

Don’t rush to a solution. Other people may just need to talk. Or you may be preventing people from coming up with their own solutions.

Don’t use slang expressions. They are not filler words. Used occasionally, they can let a speaker know you’re interested.

Ask good questions or make comments. You often need more information to make sure you fully understand a situation or to get the complete story. Some questions to ask: “What else happened?” or “What do you think?” Or you might simply say, “Tell me more.”

Put away your phone. Having a phone in your hand inhibits conversation. Give the other person your undivided attention.

Use your own words. Paraphrase someone’s comments to indicate understanding. Try using phrases like, “If I understand correctly, you’re saying...” or “Let me get this right. You think...” This tells the person you’ve heard him or her.

Speak up at meetings

Silence isn’t necessarily “golden.” Many people are reluctant to speak up at meetings but regret later that they didn’t have any input. Here are some suggestions:

Be ready. Think ahead about who will be at the meeting and what will be discussed. Consider what you want to say and express your comments with confidence.

Establish your presence. Walk into a room as if you belong and greet people. When you sit down, say hello to the people on either side of you.

Speak early. The longer you wait, the harder it becomes. Say, “I have a comment” or simply provide your opinion. Be aware that, in some situations, it may be necessary to interrupt. Know the protocols of your meetings.

Is running bad or good for your knees?

Lots of people believe that running ruins your knees—and to prove the point they’ll tell you about a runner with knee problems. The argument mainly is that running wears away the cartilage that cushions joints and, thus, causes arthritis.

But a new study at Brigham Young University suggests the opposite may be closer to the truth. To determine the impact of running on knee joints, BYU researchers recruited 15 male and female volunteers under the age of 30 with healthy knees and no history of knee problems.

After completing both a sitting and running session on separate days, the researchers looked for changes in the levels of several types of cells known to affect the amount of inflammation inside the knee joint. An accumulation of these substances is often a marker of coming or worsening arthritis.

In almost every case, the runners’ knees showed significantly lower levels of two specific types of cells that contribute to inflammation in the “synovia,” a fluid that reduces friction between the cartilage in joints during movement.

In effect, the study found that running actually seemed to benefit knees by changing their “bio-chemical environment” in ways that help keep them working smoothly.

Other studies have found that long-term runners are less likely to develop osteoarthritis in the knees than people the same age who do not run.

Nutrition researchers at Tufts University have found that potassium-rich foods from plants can help us maintain muscle strength as we get older.

Most of us are well aware of the health benefits of vegetables and fruits, but we may not appreciate their role in keeping our muscles strong. This is important because the loss of muscle mass with aging leads to conditions such as sarcopenia that are associated with an increased risk of falls.

Tufts researchers analyzed data from a group of male and female volunteers 65 and older who completed a three-year osteoporosis intervention study. The subjects who fared best in terms of their muscle mass were those whose diets were richer in potassium. The study was published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

The typical U.S. diet is rich in protein, cereal grains and other foods that generate tiny amounts of acid daily. With aging, this slowly increasing “metabolic acidosis” triggers a muscle-wasting response, according to the Tufts study.

Potassium is the third most abundant mineral in the body. In addition to its role with muscle mass, it’s required for healthy functioning of the heart, kidneys and brain. It also helps keep the body hydrated.

Potassium deficiency can cause headaches, heart palpitations and swelling of glands and tissues. It can lead to fatigue, irritability, muscle cramps and weight gain, among other symptoms.

Current federal dietary guidelines recommend at least 4,700 milligrams of potassium daily for older adults. To achieve this, here are the top 10 potassium-rich foods and their daily milligram value (DV), according to the USDA.

1. Avocado (1 whole), 1,068 mg
2. Spinach (1 cup) 839 mg
3. Sweet potato (1 medium), 952 mg
4. Coconut water (1 cup), 600 mg
5. Yogurt (1 cup), 579 mg
6. White beans (½ cup) 502 mg
7. Banana (1 large), 422 mg
8. Acorn squash (1 cup) 899 mg
9. Dried apricots (½ cup), 755 mg
10. Mushrooms (1 cup) 428 mg

With so much advice focused on what not to eat, it’s encouraging to hear about foods we should eat more of. And, while it is possible to get too much of a good thing, an excess of potassium is primarily a concern for people with reduced kidney function or who have conditions that affect the body’s ability to get rid of potassium. People with these conditions should talk to their doctor before making any dietary change.

New study finds getting up can cheer you up

Getting up and moving around have been linked to feelings of happiness, according to a new study published in the journal PLoS One.

Researchers at the University of Cambridge in England noticed that many studies related to the connection between physical activity and psychological health focused on negative moods. So they decided to try a different approach. They would look at correlations between movement and happiness, the most positive of emotions.

To do this, they developed a special phone app that allowed 10,000 study participants to answer questions about whether they had been sitting, standing, walking, running, lying down or doing something else for the past 15 minutes.

The app asked participants to record their mood at that moment, and, periodically, to assess their satisfaction with life in general.

The researchers found that the people who moved more frequently tended to report greater life satisfaction over all than those who reported spending most of their time in a chair.

The study does not address the issue of causation. In other words, we don’t know whether being more active causes us to be happier or if being happy causes us to move more. But it does clearly show that more activity goes hand in hand with greater happiness.

“People who are generally more active are generally happier and, in the moments when people are more active, they are happier,” says Gillian Sandstrom, PhD, a postdoctoral researcher in psychology and coauthor of the study.

Potassium-rich foods keep muscles strong
Parenting is a collaborative effort these days, with dads assuming an active role in the daily responsibilities of raising a child. Which means that many men are experiencing the joys (and frustrations) that moms have experienced—forever.

Two new books by a pair of modern dads are by turns sweet, funny, tender and joyful. They are Sleepless Nights and Kisses for Breakfast by Matteo Bussola and Diaper Dude by Chris Pegula with Frank Meyer.

Bussola, an Italian comic illustrator, writes with charm and wit for an American audience. His book addresses the universal experience of fatherhood. He urges dads (moms, too) to savor every moment.

“Your daughter will only be eight once, only four once, only two once and every day, every hour, every minute you’ll find yourself watching a show with no repeat performance,” he writes. “You’ll learn the beauty of playing even if you are stressed, the wonder of those 35 pounds that want to do nothing but sleep on your chest when you’re dead tired and would give anything to sleep on your back without little fingers going up your nose.” Bussola says when the “show” has moved on to other stages, you’ll regret that you didn’t enjoy it more.

In his book, Chris Pegula talks about a child’s first two years, and he urges fathers to “pitch in” from Day 1. He says the task at hand is to navigate this new phase of life while keeping your marriage, your sanity and your identity on track. He offers lessons learned, pitfalls to avoid, and more than a few hilarious stories of dad madness.

Both books are due out on May 8 from TarcherPerigee. Sleepless Nights and Kisses for Breakfast: Reflections on Fatherhood is available for preorder online in hard cover and Kindle editions.

Diaper Dude: The Ultimate Dad’s Guide to Surviving the First Two Years is available in soft cover and Kindle editions.

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In his book, Chris Pegula talks about a child’s first two years, and he urges fathers to “pitch in” from Day 1. He says the task at hand is to navigate this new phase of life while keeping your marriage, your sanity and your identity on track. He offers lessons learned, pitfalls to avoid, and more than a few hilarious stories of dad madness.

Both books are due out on May 8 from TarcherPerigee. Sleepless Nights and Kisses for Breakfast: Reflections on Fatherhood is available for preorder online in hard cover and Kindle editions.

Diaper Dude: The Ultimate Dad’s Guide to Surviving the First Two Years is available in soft cover and Kindle editions.