Millions of moms and dads now see the world as so fraught with danger that they can’t possibly let their children explore it. Many of us have been swept up in the impossible obsession of our era: total safety for our children every second of the day.

All around us, parents are clutching their children close. Think of how, thanks to fear, we restrict so many aspects of our kids’ lives. Schools ban activities, parks ban games. Forty years ago, most U.S. children walked or biked to school. Today, about 10 percent do. Seventy percent of moms these days say they played outside as kids, but only 31 percent of their children do.

This is happening not only in the United States but throughout the English speaking world—especially Canada, Australia, England and Ireland.

Where did all this fear come from? For one reason, we’re all working so hard that we don’t know our neighbors. Another is that the marketplace is brimming with products to keep our kids “safe” from things we never used to worry about. And just about everywhere we turn, we’re being exhorted to watch out, take care and plan for worst-case scenarios.

What part does TV play?

Of course, television plays a major role. From the news to the dramas “ripped from the headlines,” TV is focused on the most horrific, least common crimes. We’re getting a skewed picture of what it’s like out there.

This started in 1971 when the rules changed and networks no longer had a strict code of conduct (in the early days of TV people couldn’t even say the word pregnant on the air). In 1981 cable television began to provide a new kind of sensational tabloid journalism, all day, every day, on hundreds of channels.

The story of a young boy who was abducted in Florida gave rise to the milk-carton phenomenon that helped set the stage for our modern-day fear of abduction. Photos...
of missing children were printed on cartoons, without clarifying whether the child was kidnapped by a stranger (very rare), taken by a parent in a custody dispute (more likely), or had run away (also quite likely).

What it’s really like
When parents say, “I’d love to have my kids have the same kind of childhood I had, but times have changed,” are they making a rational argument? Actually, in some ways, times have not changed. For example, the number of children abducted or killed by strangers has held fairly steady over the years: about one in 1.5 million, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. In fact, all crimes against children have plummeted since the early 1990’s.

But what if that one child in 1.5 million is yours? That’s a worry we all have. Again, the facts: a child is 40 times more likely to die as a passenger in a car crash than be kidnapped or murdered by a stranger, 20 times more likely to drown than be molested by someone he or she doesn’t know. Plus: now that we’re all carrying cell phones (with cameras), suspicious behavior can be reported immediately to the police.

The free-range movement
By questioning whether it really makes sense never to let kids out of our sight and always to protect them from germs, jerks, sports injuries, sports disappointments, stress, sunburn, skinned shins and every other conceivable risk, I’ve become the face of what I call the Free–Range Movement.

I believe that all kids need opportunities to roam, to fall, to fail and, finally, to fly.

Teach him or her to look around at the traffic.

When you’re about to remind another parent of an extremely unlikely danger her or his child may face (a danger they’re as aware of as you are), instead hush.

Walk through the baby-safety department of a store with an older relative asking, “Which of these things did you need?”

Let your school-age child go into a public bathroom alone. Wait outside.

Teach your child that it’s OK sometimes to talk to strangers. What’s never OK is to go off with a stranger.

Braver steps
Let young bikers, starting at age six or so, ride around a bit—beyond where you can see them (yes, wearing their helmets).

Try muddling through a day without wipes, band-aids or extra cash. It will help you see that you don’t always have to be ready for the worst. Imagining everything that could go wrong gets to be a habit.

Volunteer to watch the kids who are waiting with your own for soccer to start or school to open. Explain to the other parents that you’re offering them a little free time. If they say no thanks, ask them to watch your child.

Help your child age nine and up find an “apprenticeship.” If you can find a neighborhood organization or business willing to give a child a little responsibility, fantastic. Have your middle schooler do a task you normally do, like taking the dog to the vet or buying groceries for dinner.

One giant leap for kids
Drop off your third or fourth grader and a friend at an ice cream store with money for sundaes. Pick them up in half and hour.

Give kids the tools to go free range. Teach them about bike safety and bad guys and traffic signals and how to ask for help and how to handle disappointment and what to do if they get lost and all the things parents have always had to teach their kids. Or at least they did until recently, when they decided they could just do everything for them instead.

Do something that will truly make your child safer and doesn’t involve dumb, new doodads: test your smoke alarm. Make sure it has working batteries. Change them twice a year when you change your clocks.

The next time you make a parenting decision that you’re worried other moms or dads might find lax, get up the courage to tell them about it. Say you sent your young son out on an errand. They may jump on you, but maybe they’d like to do the same thing and draw courage from you.

Don’t be ashamed of making parenting choices based on your child, rather than on what the neighbors will say. There are always some people who will cast blame and try to make you feel guilty.

If the fear of abductions is still gnawing at you, do something to make the world safer. Call your local police department and volunteer to host a safety meeting at your home. Enroll your kids or the whole family in a self-defense class.

Remind other parents that when we loosen our grip, we’re actually trying to teach our kids how to get along in the world, which we believe is our job. Independence should be a cause for celebration. Children who can fend for themselves are a lot safer than ones who are coddled—because coddled kids won’t have mom or dad around all the time.◆

Talking to kids about people’s differences

Q I overheard my child say, “You talk funny” to the son of a new neighbor. I explained later that Na-young is learning to speak English and that saying “you talk funny” might hurt his feelings. Both kids are starting school in the fall. Should I be talking to my child about prejudice?

—D.J., Elkhart, IN

A You were right to address your child’s comment factually and in a nonjudgmental way. One of the important ways parents can help children avoid biases and appreciate people who are different is to make diversity a topic of conversation at an early age.

As parents, it’s our responsibility to teach children that words can hurt. The old saying “sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never harm me” is untrue. Make it a family rule that hurtful words are unacceptable. And help your child understand that racial slurs, ethnic jokes and stereotypes are off limits. Don’t gloss over differences. Comments such as “we’re all the same on the inside” are not helpful. Children can see that people are different.

Children pick up biases from many sources such as the adults in their lives, the media and their peers. Here are some suggestions to help kids develop positive attitudes about our differences:

Teach kids that words can hurt. The old saying “sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never harm me” is untrue. Make it a family rule that hurtful words are unacceptable. And help your child understand that racial slurs, ethnic jokes and stereotypes are off limits.

Be a good role model. Too often we send mixed messages about cultural and ethnic differences. The best thing we can do for our kids is to set a good example. If we treat everyone with respect, they will too. And if we show kids that we value differences in people, they will be much better able to resist prejudice when they see it at any time in their lives.

Research on health toll of workplace stress

We’re seeing a growing body of research on the causes of workplace stress, and the findings are consistent. There’s a health toll to pay for unhappy workers, writes New York Times columnist Tara Parker-Pope.

For example, Danish researchers, in a 15-year study of 12,000 nurses, found that those who struggled with excessive work pressures had double the risk for a heart attack. Similarly, a British study tracking 6,000 workers for 11 years found that those who regularly put in more than 10 hours a day had a 60 percent higher risk for heart disease than those who averaged 7 hours.

Another area of interest in workplace health is leadership. Research suggests that even if you can’t eliminate stress from the workplace, employees are able to cope much better when they have a good relationship with their boss.

“People who have more support from supervisors tend to do better in stressful situations,” said Robert R. Sinclair, associate professor of psychology at Clemson University. “If there are morale problems, the first thing I would look at is the relationship with leaders.” Bad bosses are a perennial source of stress. In a British study, nurses who didn’t like their supervisors had consistently higher blood pressure throughout the workday.

Robert I. Sutton of Stanford University, author of the forthcoming Good Boss, Bad Boss, agrees that the biggest source of stress on any job is one’s immediate supervisor.

He argues that good bosses are essential to workplace success—and that skyrocketing health care costs should motivate businesses to focus on ways to lower stress.

Not that you can do much about a bad boss, of course, except complain to anyone who will listen. And that’s not a good idea. The American Psychological Association suggests finding a mentor within the company with whom you can discuss strategies for dealing with a problem supervisor.

“The pile of evidence coming out shows that if you want to be an effective organization or an effective boss, you’ve got to strike a balance between humanity and performance,” said Sutton.

Studies say don’t put friendships on back burner

One of the first things we tend to do when we get overly busy is to let go of our friendships. But researchers say that’s a mistake, especially for women.

A landmark study at UCLA found that women respond to stress differently than men do. While men under stress are more likely to “fight or flee,” women are more likely to “tend and befriend.” One reason for this difference is chemistry (testosterone versus estrogen).

A Harvard Medical School study found that the more friends women had, the less likely they were to develop physical impairments as they age and the more likely they were to be leading a joyful life.

In her book “Best Friends: The Pleasures and Perils of Girls’ and Women’s Friendships,” Ruthellen Josselson, Ph.D., explains that friends nurture each other. They’re a source of strength. They offer women a special kind of talk that they can do when they’re with other women. It can be a healing experience.
If parents or in-laws are moving in with you

By Susan Newman, Ph.D.

Multigenerational living is a tradition in many cultures and growing more common in the U.S. But, when you tell your friends that your parent or in-law is moving in, don’t be surprised if you hear, “How will that work?” in polite response. Not so polite: Are you out of your mind?

The good news is that joining forces often succeeds beyond people’s expectations. Take Sarah, for example, a single mom whose parents moved in 12 years ago. “They help prepare dinner and do much of the chauffeuring detail,” Sarah says. “We’ve created a little village in which everyone helps and cares for one another.”

Questions to ask

When a parent or in-law moves in, it’s often thought to be long-term. Older relatives may need your help or you may need theirs. Just knowing that a living arrangement could become permanent makes it important for everyone, including your children, to feel good about it.

In discussions with your parents or in-laws about the move, you’ll want to address their needs and yours. Talk about how everyone visualizes day-to-day living. Here are some questions to ask:

Is the arrangement permanent? Is space available?

What effect will parents or in-laws moving in have on your lives?

Will the move affect you financially in a positive or negative way?

Does your spouse get along well with your parent?

How will a parent’s possessions be handled?

How do your children relate to their grandparents?

What is the plan if the move doesn’t work out or someone’s relationship status changes?

Think about personalities

You may not answer every question before the move. But you can give some thought to personality and the relationship you had in the past—to help you project about, if it crossed your mind at all, was that you would be living with both or one of your in-laws. For every impossible in-law, there’s a divine one—one you wished were your mother or father.

Difficult parents or in-laws will probably remain that way in new surroundings. They may mellow a bit with age, but you can count on old traits cropping up—for example, parents who feel entitled, are selfish or want to be too helpful.

Certain aspects of your life will become easier, others more complicated when parents or in-laws arrive. Your attention will be divided, as will your time. The parents or in-laws who live with you can be welcomed chefs or grounds keepers. In whatever role they serve, they’re more often than not loyal supporters of the family.

Dealing with quirks

Some behaviors are hard to overlook and can become a constant annoyance. You may want to try to alter or amend quirks that interfere or slow you down by saying, for example: “It bothers me when I can’t find the paper towels. Can we agree on where they go?” Or “I understand how you feel about expiration dates, but instead of throwing things out, please leave them. I’ll throw them out when I think they’re unsafe.”

Discussion is the grownup way to handle differences and frustrations. When something isn’t working out, one of you should broach the subject. Deal with it sooner rather than later so the annoyance doesn’t have time to fester. Consider creating a family house rule: If anyone is unhappy about something, speak up so we can try to fix it or change it.

Be a role model

If you have kids living at home, don’t overburden them with responsibility for their grandparents. Have them help out, but within reason. And remember, your children are observing the respect you show and the care you give. How you interact with your parents or in-laws is likely the way they will relate to you in the future.

“My children are experiencing the challenges of three generations in one household,” said Sarah. “It’s teaching them about honoring boundaries and being easygoing. They are gaining an emotional depth that many of their friends won’t have.”

Look at the big picture

Coexisting happily requires stepping away from the small things that can sour a relationship. Avoid focusing on petty behaviors or perceived shortcomings. Parents and adults who are motivated to build their relationship accept that they don’t always have to be right about every incident—that relating well and getting along are far more important.


Cardinal rules for living together

Be realistic about what you expect and how each family member can help.

Don’t let money problems cloud personal feelings.

Be grateful and make concessions.

Keep your boundaries strong and respect those of others.

Don’t rehash past negatives. Move on.

Use humor to ease sticky situations.

Be understanding of the difficult problems a relative faces.

Retain a “we’re in this together” attitude while holding onto your separate life.

Focus on the good things you share.

“It’s easy. Just scroll over it and click once.”

How will that work in your house?
Teaching college students how not to drink

Each year about 1,400 college students die from alcohol-related injuries, including car crashes. More than 500,000 college students are injured while under the influence of alcohol, and 70,000 are victims of sexual assault. One out of four students suffer academically from drinking such as missing class, falling behind and getting lower grades.

These are alarming statistics, but the reality is that there’s a culture of drinking on most American college campuses—and too many students drink too much.

“College students need to learn how not to drink and how to drink less,” said Dr. Dwight B. Heath, a Brown University professor emeritus and expert on the subject. For a young person, this could mean knowing how to refuse a drink, avoiding certain places or simply holding a glass for a long time.

**Booze messages abound**

Most teens have already observed some of the consequences of alcohol abuse in high school. Current research holds that many middle schoolers are experimenting with alcohol and that a majority of U.S. high school seniors drink more than once a month.

Whether we like it or not, kids learn about drinking at an early age—from television, movies, the Internet or the grapevine of their peers. But much of what they learn is misleading or untrue.

**College offers easy access**

For many young people, the risks of alcohol abuse seem exaggerated. They may see binge-drinking as comical and with what appears to be no long-term consequences. College-bound teens also know that soon they’ll have easy access to alcoholic beverages. Parents need to talk frankly about drinking, just as they would about using drugs or careless spending.

It goes without saying that some people should not drink at all and that no one should feel obliged to drink. But many college students have to make the decision to drink or not to drink, again and again, whenever alcohol is available. That makes it all the more important to equip them with realistic guidelines. Dr. Heath suggests that these are the important points you’ll want to convey:

*Never drink just for the sake of drinking.* as a game or contest, or with the aim of getting drunk or forgetting troubles.

*Don’t drink on an empty stomach.* Eat before and while drinking.

*Do not consume more than one drink an hour:* a 12-ounce bottle of beer, 4-ounce glass of wine or 1 ounce of liquor in a mixed drink. Be aware that carbonated drinks get alcohol into the bloodstream faster.

*Know when to say “when.”* Be wary of any changes in your mood or perceptions. Monitor your own feelings.

**The legality issue**

Yes, it’s illegal in all 50 states to sell alcoholic beverages to anyone under 21. But there are so many exceptions to this law (and ways to get around it) that it’s rarely enforced vigorously on campuses and in college towns.

These days many, perhaps most, parents themselves use alcohol to be sociable or as an enhancement to food. They want their children to see it as part of everyday life—but, if misused, can result in tragic harm.

Parents who want to raise kids who will never use alcohol should set that example in their own home and offer sound reasons not to drink.

**What parents can do**

There are some critical times in kids’ lives when parents can make a real difference.

**Pick the right college.** When you and your child are looking at colleges, ask about campus alcohol policies and if the school sponsors alcohol-free social events. Find out if alcohol-free dorms are available.

**Focus on living arrangements.** Drinking rates are highest in fraternities and sororities, followed by on-campus housing. Students living independently off campus tend to drink less, while commuting students who live with their families drink the least.

**During the freshman year**

Environmental factors tend to affect students’ drinking. A growing concern, for example, is that having no classes on Friday may lead to more partying on weekends. Here are some tips for your child’s first year at college.

*Pay close attention to the first six weeks.* Heavy drinking during the early days of college interferes with successful adaptation to campus life. About one-third of freshmen fail to enroll for their second year.

*Call often during the first couple of months.* Listen to what your child has to say about roommates, friends, problems, parties and campus life.

*Pay an unexpected visit.* Ask to meet your child’s friends. Attend Parents’ Weekend and other campus events open to parents.

*Stay actively involved* in your child’s life. Even when young people are away at college, they continue to be an extension of your family and its values.
Get better at listening and talking

W e've all known people who are smart, have great technical skills and are experts in their fields—but they have trouble getting along with their employees, coworkers or their managers. They are less effective as leaders or members of teams than they should be, and they may not get the respect they deserve within their organizations.

A big reason why so many people find themselves in this situation is that they're not communicating as well as they might. In fact, communication is a skill that all of us can use some help with at one time or another. As management guru Peter Drucker used to say, poor communication is responsible for 60 percent of all our problems.

How do we get better at listening and talking—so we can hear and be heard more effectively. Here are some ideas:

**Talk less.** As management consultant Wolf J. Rinke, Ph.D., so concisely put it: “When the mouth is engaged, the ears are out of gear.”

**Pay attention.** When you’re having a conversation, give the other person your full attention. Don’t think about what and how you’re going to say next. Granted, this is old advice that we’ve all heard before. But it’s a lot easier said than done—and it takes practice! The upside is when you try it, you’ll notice the other’s person positive response right away. The rewards are immediate.

**Stay focused.** In this age of constant connectivity, it’s hard to avoid cellphone calls and text messages on those little screens that have become such a big part of our lives. But if you really want to make an impact with your communications, you’ll avoid distractions and focus on the other person.

**Show some empathy.** Use words and body language to show the other person that you’re really there at different points in a conversation. Nod your head. Make comments such as: “Yes,” “I see,” “I understand,” “I follow what you’re saying” or “I’m with you.”

**Test yourself.** Make sure you heard the other person correctly by summarizing your communication to that point: “My understanding is that we both saw the situation this way and agreed to... Is that yours also?” Don’t ask: “Do you understand me?” No one likes to admit that in a different way. Instead of “That’s something I’d really like to discuss further.” And “now” is a great word—much stronger than “at the present time.”

**Say it positively.** Statements that are worded positively are easier to understand and more pleasant to hear. “I’ll get that for you in a few minutes” works much better than “I can’t do that right now.” Or you might try saying, “Let me explain that in a different way” instead of “you don’t understand.” Or, if you feel like saying “Well, you’re obviously not listening to me,” you might try “I guess I’m not expressing myself very well. Let me try to be clearer.”

**Aim for win-win.** Look for opportunities to make everyone feel like winners. For example, if new people are joining your team, get them talking about the skills and experiences they’ve had that will contribute to the group’s objectives. Say things like, “How can I help you?” Or “What approach do you think we might consider that will...?” When you make it clear that you want other people to be successful, they will be more likely to share information with you as well as to contribute their best efforts to whatever you’re working on together.

**Be honest.** Don’t play games with people. Communicate in an honest and trustworthy way. Steer clear of conversational tics such as “quite frankly” or “to be perfectly honest.” They suggest that you were less than “frank” or “perfectly honest” earlier. And don’t be afraid to admit that you got something wrong or that you need help. It’s OK (and perfectly honest) to say, “I don’t know.” “I’ve made a mistake.” “I’ve changed my mind” or “Can you help me?”

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**Make your goal win-win for everyone**

Here are some easy ways to achieve some of the “win-win” outcomes suggested by Dr. Wolf J. Rinke in his book “Winning Management.”

To increase cooperation: Ask, “Would you be willing to...?”

To be more persuasive: Use the “feel, felt, found” formula. It goes like this: “I know how you feel. I felt the same way before I found out about...”

To increase another person’s accountability: Ask, “Can I count on you to...?”

To explain how or why you did something a certain way: Give an example, “I found that it works to...”

To deflect hostility: Express empathy. “I understand your point of view.”

To diffuse conflict: Use “I” messages such as, “I disagree” instead of “You’re wrong.”

To communicate with more precision: Do a reality test. “What I heard you say is...”

To assume responsibility for communication: Say, “I’m not saying that as well as I would like. Let me try that again.”

To get things done: Focus on the outcome not the process. Ask, “What stands in the way of our moving forward?”

To focus on goals: Say, “Let’s talk about what we need to do and accomplish.”

To achieve win-win: Ask, “What can I do for you?”

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“Loved your e-mail message! How can I help you?”
Study suggests ‘good sleepers’ don’t count sheep

No one knows for sure why counting sheep is supposed to help you fall asleep—except perhaps the monotony of it. And it’s unclear where the idea came from in the first place. Was it a tallying system used by ancient shepherds?

Whatever the case may be, scientists at Oxford University in England decided to put the strategy to the test, and reported their findings in the journal “Behavior Research and Therapy.”

For the study, sleep researchers recruited insomniacs and divided them into two groups. They asked each group to try different techniques for falling asleep on various nights and monitored the results.

Here’s what they learned:

On nights when subjects were told to distract themselves by counting sheep or were given no instructions at all, they took slightly longer to fall asleep.

On nights when subjects were told to imagine a relaxing scene, they fall asleep an average of 20 minutes sooner than they did on other nights.

The researchers offer these suggestions:

Counting sheep may be simply too boring to do for an extended period of time. On the other hand, images of a tranquil stream or a soothing shoreline seems to hold people’s interest.

Previous sleep studies at Oxford have found that “good” sleepers tend to be quite different from insomniacs in their pre-sleep thoughts. Poor sleepers are more likely to think about unpleasant images, their worries, noises in the environment, intimate relationships and problems they had had during the day.

Good sleepers are more likely to picture scenery.

6 simple strategies to boost your recall

If you’re trying to take in new information and remember what you’ve learned, here are some research-based strategies that you may not know about.

Take a nap. In a Massachusetts General Hospital study, volunteers who napped for 90 minutes before they started a challenging learning exercise did better than a non-napping group. The reason: sleep seems to improve the brain’s ability to take in and recall new information.

Eat greens and beans. Greens, beans, nuts, tofu and whole grains are rich in magnesium, a mineral that helps regulate a brain receptor that’s important for learning and memory, according to a study in the journal Neuron. These days most Americans are not getting the RDA (recommended daily allowance) of magnesium.

Use mental images. Visualize yourself doing a daily task that you want to remember. In a University of Michigan study of older adults, those who spent a few moments picturing themselves testing their blood sugar were much more likely to remember to do so again the next day than (a) those in the study who had repeatedly recited aloud the instructions for testing blood sugar or (b) those who have written a list of pros and cons for testing blood sugar.

Concentrate. Many studies have shown that we forget things like where we parked the car or left our glasses because we didn’t pay attention in the first place. To improve your focus, take a deep breath and spend a few moments thinking about what you want to remember and perhaps repeating details aloud.

Move your eyes. Yes, it seems odd that moving your eyes from left to right for about 30 seconds could improve your recall ability. A study in the journal Brain and Cognition found that research subjects who did this were 10 percent more likely to remember a list of words later than those who did nothing or who engaged in up-and-down eye movements. A possible reason: horizontal eye movement may help to engage both right and left sides of the brain in memory tasks.

Enrich your environment. A large body of research suggests that a stimulating environment challenges the brain, keeps it sharp and helps keep memory strong. Listen to music. Surround yourself with art. Take up a new hobby. Try a new food. Get a massage. Hang out with old friends—and make some new ones.

How to handle a medical emergency away from home

We’ve all heard cautionary tales about people who got sick while they were in another country, and the stories can be pretty frightening. But the solution is not to give up traveling. It’s to take some reasonable precautions before you leave home. Here’s what Travel and Leisure magazine suggests:

Talk with your doctor before you go. If you haven’t had a recent checkup, now’s the time. Find out about any required or recommended vaccinations for your destination. Tell your doctor where you are going and if you’re planning to do anything particularly strenuous.

Check your insurance policy. See if it provides emergency coverage abroad. Be aware that Medicare does not. You may want to add a supplemental policy from an independent insurer (visit usdia.org). Find out if your credit card company reimburses for medical and emergency evacuation expenses.

Do some homework. Check out mdtravelhealth.com or the “country-specific information” section of the State Department at travel.state.gov. You can even register your trip with the State Department online. Find out how to dial 911 around the world at studentsabroad.state.gov and program the number(s) into your phone.

Keep health information in one place. Carry it with you. Fill out and print the easy form at cdihp.org/evacuation/att_b.html. Store information at google.com/health or healthvault.com.

In an emergency, if you’re too ill to fly alone, hire a nurse or paramedic to accompany you. Medical evacuation can be very expensive. Be sure to check the “emergency medical services” section of your insurance policy.
Is parenting *really* so different these days?

I really think I’m someone like you: a parent who is afraid of some things (bears, cars) and less afraid of others (subways, strangers), writes Lenore Skenazy in her new book *Free Range Kids*.

She adds, “The ground has not gradually gotten harder under the jungle gym. The bus stops have not crept further from home. Crime is actually lower than it was when we were growing up. So there is no reality-based reason that children today should be treated as more helpless and vulnerable than we were when we were young.”

In this wonderful book, Skenazy encourages parents to let kids be kids. She’s all for helmets and car seats but insists that children don’t need a security detail every time they go out. Armed with stories, wisecracks and statistics, the author punctures myths about rampant kidnapping, marauding germs and poisoned Halloween candy. She looks at where these fears come from, which ones are baseless and why they’re so hard to shake.

We parents have come to feel that childhood is more dangerous for our kids than it was for us. But there aren’t any more creeps now than when we were kids she tells us. In fact, children today are statistically as safe from violent crime as we parents were, growing up in the 1970s, ’80s and ’90s.

Our kids are also more competent than we may believe. But media-besieged parents feel they must take all possible precautions to avoid some extremely rare possibilities.

This is the perfect book for parents who want to break away from a pattern of acting out of fear for their child’s safety—who want to ease into becoming what Skenazy calls “free range parents.”

For these people, the author provides nuggets of advice at the end of each chapter—starting with “Baby Steps,” moving to “Brave Steps” and then to “Giant Leaps” (see front page article).

Interspersed throughout the book are special “Real World” sections containing cogent comments and advice from parents who talk about their experiences becoming “free rangers.” *Free Range Kids: How to Raise Safe, Self-Reliant Children (Without Going Nuts with Worry)* (Jossey-Bass paperback, $14.95) is available in bookstores and online.  

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**Work & Family Life** provides information and practical solutions to a wide range of family, job, and health issues. Our purpose is to help our readers reduce their stress and find pleasure and satisfaction in their many roles at work, at home, and in their communities.