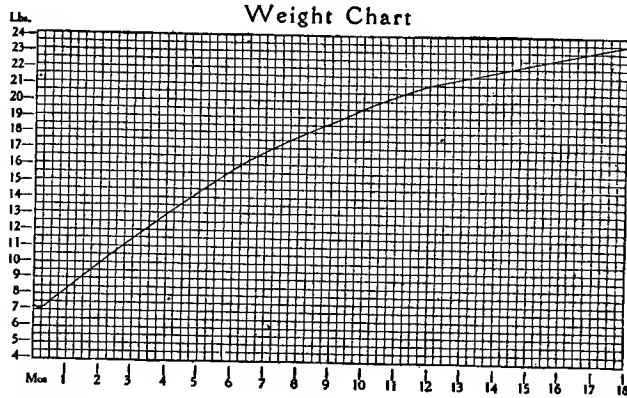


# MATHER/ FOTHER

a parenting zine

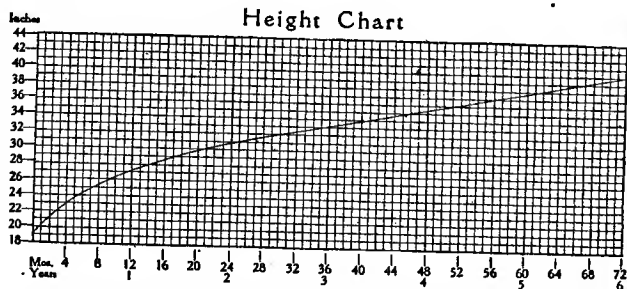


by MICHELLE RATHAVERA &  
JOSEPH PRIMAGEBER



MATHER/FOTHER intends to be a radical parenting zine. It will gather images, words, quotes, collage, and detritus. It will approach the ever-challenging, always-confounding, potentially-revolutionary praxis of parenting.

This is ISSUE 1.



These charts show the increase in weight and height of the average baby. To use the Weight Chart: Put a dot on the line at the left at the point corresponding to the weight of your baby. Each week put a dot on the line to the right of the last one used, and draw a line to connect. Compare this curve with that of the average baby. Use the Height Chart in the same manner at month intervals.

OF WOMAN BORN

← WRITTEN BY  
ADRIENNE RICH

Entry from my journal, November 1960.

My children cause me the most exquisite suffering of which I have any experience. It is the suffering of ambivalence: the murderous alternation between bitter resentment and raw-edged nerves, and blissful gratification and tenderness. Sometimes I seem to myself in my feelings toward these tiny guiltless beings, a monster of selfishness and intolerance. Their voices wear away at my nerves, their constant needs, above all their need for simplicity and patience, fill me with despair at my own failures, despair too at my fate, which is to serve a function for which I was not fitted. And I am weak sometimes from held-in rage. There are times when I feel only death will free us from one another, when I envy the barren woman who has the luxury of her regrets but lives a life of privacy and freedom.

And yet at other times I am melted with the sense of their helpless, charming and quite irresistible beauty—their ability to go on loving and trusting—their staunchness and decency and unselfconsciousness. *I love them.* But it's in the enormity and inevitability of this love that the sufferings lie.

ANGER AND  
TENDERNESS

"Now I'm going to EXPLOSIVELY  
DIARRHEA all over your polka-dot  
HOUSEWIFE APRON."

PHYSICAL  
DEVELOPMENT



is 'unconditional'; and  
ges of motherhood as  
new parts of myself ex  
e to those images, were  
monstrous! And—as  
ny-one, remarked on t

WRITTEN BY → EURIPIDES

FROM THE PLAY → MEDEA

And this is my opinion: those men or women  
Who never had children of their own at all.

Enjoy the advantage in good fortune  
Over those who are parents. Childless people  
Have no means of knowing whether children are  
A blessing or a burden; but being without them  
They live exempt from many troubles.

While those who have growing up in their homes  
The sweet gift of children I see always  
Burdened and worn with incessant worry,  
First, how to rear them in health and safety,  
And bequeath them, in time, enough to live on;  
And then this further anxiety:  
They can never know whether all their toil  
Is spent for worthy or worthless children.

And beyond the common ills that attend  
All human life there is one still worse:  
Suppose at last they are pretty well off,  
Their children have grown up, and, what's more,  
Are kind and honest: then what happens?  
A throw of chance — and there goes Death  
Bearing off your child into the unknown.

Then why should mortals thank the gods,  
Who add to their load, already grievous,  
This one more grief, for their children's sake,  
Most grievous of all?

our—birds in  
naunopuag  
and in need  
it has as if  
demented  
after even  
is losing  
always be  
self, and also

**5 PHRASES that could HELP PROTECT your KIDS from SEXUAL PREDATORS:**

*[as cribbed from Lucy Aitkenread]*

**"THAT'S YOUR VULVA!"**

Call it what it is. Ditch the euphemisms: it's not a *coolie*, for crissakes. Don't infantilize it or make it twee. "Children who know and use the correct anatomical terms discourage perpetrators."

**"STOP!"**

"Stop" needs to be meaningful and empowering. When you've got them on the carpet in uncontrollable laughter during a tickle war and they tell you to *stop*, stop! Teach them "that they get to say what happens to their bodies."

**"NO SECRETS"**

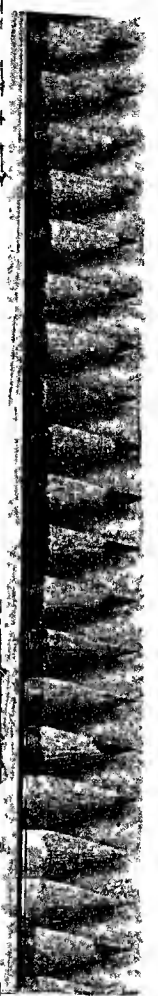
Have a no-secret family. Secrets get shared with mom and dad. "A culture of secrecy is one of the foundations that perpetrators require and seek to establish." Encourage openness.

**"Did you feel safe?"**

When your child returns from an event you weren't at, don't ask: *Were you a good girl/boy? Did you do what you were told?* Ask: *Did you feel safe?* "Strive to keep open channels of communication with your children."

**"High-five, Kiss, or Hug?"**

Your child's body is their own. They shouldn't have to kiss or hug relatives no matter how much the relative guilts them or you about it. "Children must never be forced to show affection." If your kid wants to do nothing as a goodbye—that's okay, too.



—Susan Briante, from "Mother is Marxist" from *The Market Wonders*

Mothers attempt to erase integers, to move decimals, to point out discrepancies in the ledger, disrupt the protocols of exchange.

When the mothers of the victims of police violence march on Washington DC, when mothers in Central America set their children like paper lanterns on a breeze, when warehouses of children wait at our border, Mother is Marxist, exposing as false and pernicious the mystification of capitalist instantiations of value, promiscuous relations of value and their violence.

Mother is not a biological or relational subject position, but can be an attitude of resistance before the market.



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"The Children's Hour"  
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Between the dark and the daylight,

When the night is beginning to lower,

comes a pause in the day's occupations

That is known as the children's hour.

I hear in the chamber above me

The patter of little feet!

The sound of a door that is opened,

And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,

descending the broad hall stair,

grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,

And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence!

Yet I know by their merry eyes

they are plotting and planning together

To take me by surprise!

A sudden rush from the stairway,

A sudden raid from the hall!

By three doors standing wide

they enter my castle wall!

They slam up into my turret

over the arms and back of my chair;

If I try to escape they surround me

they seem to be everywhere!

They almost deavour me with kisses,

Their arms about me entwine,

Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen

In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,

Because you have scaled the wall,

Such an old mustache as I am

is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress!

And will not let you depart!

But put you down into the dungeon!

In the round-tower of my heart!

And there will I keep you forever,

Yes, forever and a day.

Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,

And moulder in dust away!

They seem to be everywhere

My heart, arms, and back  
is no match for you at all

Voices not soft

Voices not a whisper

Voices not silent

Occupations of my heart

Little feet climb up my

arms and back

Little feet descending  
to ~~deavour me~~

Little feet, voices, eyes,

entwine ~~in my fortress~~  
plotting and planning together  
to devour me

The Grave Children's Hour

Left unguarded, they

~~will~~  
crumble me,

Ruin my fortress, take me  
by surprise.

I am not me



Our older daughter [she is four] is somewhat DEATH-OBSESSED lately. This startles us. Some excerpts from her / insights and inquiries:



1.

Jojo: I found parry bear [a long-forgotten stuffed animal]. I don't know if he's hibernating or dead. We have to wait and see if he wakes up.

2.

Jojo: Daddy, I wonder what you look like when you die.

3.

Jojo: You and mommy need to have more kids so that if Cece and me die you won't be alone.

4.

Jojo: [after getting upset because I've told her to wash her hands] If you make me cry one more time I'm going to say goodbye to my whole family except me. Does that hurt your feelings? It would be fun to live in a world with nobody.

5.

Jojo: Mommy, I just told Cece that on the outside she's Cece and on the inside she's a skeleton.

6.

Jojo: [to Cece playing with Anna and Elsa action figures] Say she's dead, Cece. The mommy's dead—that's when you look like you're sleeping.

7.

Jojo: Cece, I love you, but when people get old they die.

Cece: Did you hear that? I farted.

a



# CHILDREN & DEATH

I was braiding my 4-year-old's hair one morning before school. We were looking at a family portrait ~~and~~ she had drawn and talking about size. "You're the biggest guy," she said,

pointing to the giant depiction she had drawn of me. This discussion of growth & size swiftly changed to a conversation about mortality. She asked: "Am I going to die, Daddy?" Her back

was to me when she asked this; she didn't see my face drop. My expression might not have been as comforting as my tone. I told her, "Everything dies." I

avoided saying "Everyone." That, I thought, would've made it too devastating for her. I felt I had to soften it—generalizing it could do that. I don't want to shelter my children from DEATH, but I also don't want to scare or traumatize them. She asked, "Why isn't grandma [her great-grandma] dead yet?" I told her, "She's very old, yes, but



↑ FRIDA KAHLO, "child with the Death Mask"

still living." "Is grandma gonna die?" she asked next. I, again, said everything dies at some point. I continued, "But we should focus on living because LIFE is wonderful." I feel like that's something my mother said to me at some point. My daughter said, "I don't want to die. I don't want you to die, or mommy to die, or Cece to die either."

To hear her say all that was both disturbing and comforting. I hate to think she's already becoming, like her father, neurotic about death. How much longer, I wonder, until the catastrophizing starts? But hearing this was also comforting in that it lessened the dread I sometimes experience. If she can question death, then she might be at the beginning of conceptualizing it. I look forward to that day when we can communicate openly about it and provide comfort to each other.

[REDACTED]  
"Don't have children."  
—Richard Ford

↑ says the WASPY, out-of-touch, male author suburban

[REDACTED]  
"The idea that motherhood is inherently somehow a threat to creativity is just absurd."  
—Zadie Smith

↑ good rebuttal

[REDACTED]  
A "threat to creativity," No. A threat to the time to create, absolutely.

↑ most accurate





*"A child, more than all other gifts . . . brings hope with it and forward-looking thoughts."—GEORGE ELIOT*

Below: Front view of the breast showing the lactiferous ducts, through which the milk flows. Milk is stored between feeds and released by sucking.

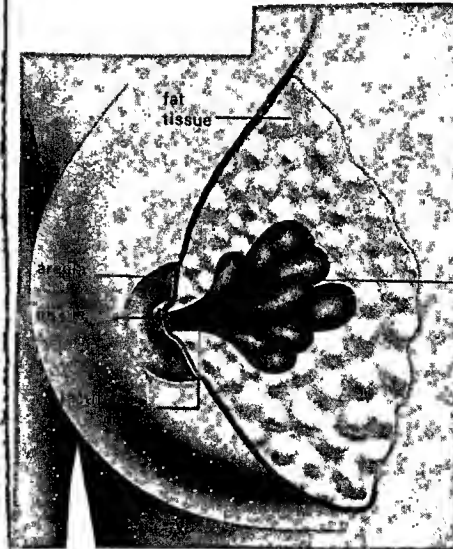
## This Be The Verse

Phillip Larkin

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.  
They may not mean to, but they do.  
They fill you with the faults they had  
And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn  
By fools in old-style hats and coats,  
Who half the time were sappy-stern  
And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.  
It deepens like a coastal shelf.  
Get out as early as you can,  
And don't have any kids yourself.



### upcoming issues:

- #2 CHILDCARE BLUES
- #3 SCREENS/MEDIA
- #4 DISRUPTING GENDER

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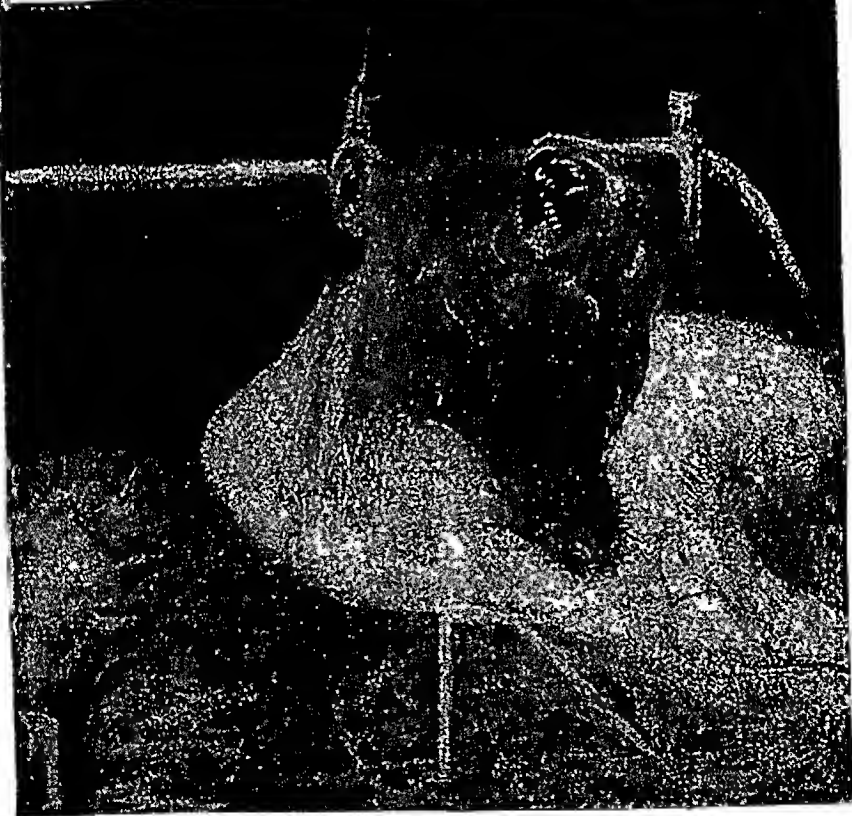
"When you were young, you needed something you did not receive, and you will never receive it. And the proper attitude is mourning—not blame."

—Robert Bly



Sociologists find that as a group, parents in the United States experience depression and emotional distress more often than their childless adult counterparts. Parents of young children report far more depression, emotional distress, and other negative emotions than non-parents, and parents of grown children have no better well-being than adults who never had children.

—Robin W. Simon, "The Joys of Parenthood, Reconsidered,"  
*Contexts*, Spring 2008.



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