

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# LIFE &

# TRADITION

JEANNE PROVOST/SHUTTERSTOCK

Jim Owen, the author of "Cowboy Ethics," pointed out the basics undergirding the code of manners in the Old West. They were as simple as working hard, knowing right from wrong, and following the Golden Rule.



## Mamas, Don't Let Your Cowboys Grow Up to Be Babies

Good, strong men are the product of the men and women who raise them.

History reveals an army of mothers who raised their sons to enter into the fray of life

JEFF MINICK

In "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys," which became a smash hit in 1978 when sung by Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, songwriters Ed and Patsy Bruce warned mothers against the cowboy life:

"Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys  
Don't let 'em pick guitars or drive them old trucks  
Let 'em be doctors and lawyers and such  
Mamas don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys

**Though our culture does indeed need men involved with boys, if we are to see a restoration of manhood, we need the help of women.**

'Cause they'll never stay home and they're always alone  
Even with someone they love."

Here at The Epoch Times and in other publications, I have written about the need for men—fathers, coaches, teachers, pastors, and other mentors—to step up and become involved in the lives of young males. Several years ago, I addressed this same topic in "Movies Make The Man: The Hollywood Guide to Life, Love, and Faith for Young Men," a book that looks at various movies that can act as mentors and instruct the young in manhood.

Like so many others, I wrote these things

in response to the epidemic of fatherless households that continues to afflict our culture. Without male role models, especially dads, many boys and young men lack exemplars of manliness. As a result, they all too often drop out of school, avoid commitments, live without goals or purpose, and rather than tackling adulthood, extend their adolescence by seeking out pleasure and entertainment. The 12-year-old who spent hours a day playing video games is doing the same thing 15 years later.

We need good men to guide young males to manhood.

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# Mamas, Don't Let Your Cowboys Grow Up to Be Babies

History reveals an army of mothers who raised their sons to enter into the fray of life

Continued from Page 1

But what about mothers? What role can they play in developing manly virtues and strengths in their sons?

## Snowflakes

Recently, I heard a woman in the coffee shop where I sometimes write expressing her dismay and astonishment that one of her employees, a 20-year-old male, had sent his mother to work to discuss problems her son was having on the job.

Not good. Most of us have heard of the “helicopter moms” who call professors or college administrators to protest a bad grade or disciplinary action earned by their sons. Some of these young men are old enough to buy beer, drive a car, and enlist in the Army, but rely on Mommy to do their fighting for them.

When we treat legal adults as children, we are creating what C.S. Lewis called “men without chests.”

## Men and Strong Moms

On the other hand, history both ancient and modern reveals an army of mothers who raised their sons to enter into the fray of life.

As their sons marched off to war, Spartan mothers called out, “Come back with your shield—or on it,” meaning come back honorably alive or bravely dead. Cornelia of Ancient Rome regarded her two boys as her jewels and reared them to be fighters and patriots. Andrew Jackson’s widowed mother raised her son to be tough, telling him in the last words she would speak to him: “You will have to make your own way” and “Sustain your manhood always.” Later Jackson would say of her, “She was gentle as a dove and as brave as a lioness. Her last words have been the law of my life.”

In our own time, we find men who credit their mothers with instilling in them the virtues of manhood. Here let us turn to the example of the famed pediatric neurosurgeon and the current secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Ben Carson, who has recounted in his autobiography how his working, poorly educated mother insisted that he and his brother read for hours a day, limiting their television time and keeping them off the streets of the



“A Spartan Woman Giving a Shield to Her Son,” 1805, by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier.

## As their sons marched off to war, Spartan mothers called out, ‘Come back with your shield or on it.’

poor neighborhood in which they lived. Because of his mother’s efforts, Carson attended prestigious universities and was eventually selected by the Library of Congress as one of its “Living Legends.”

## Reminiscences

After my parents divorced in 1974, my mother moved my three younger siblings from Florida to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she found work as an office manager with the Moravian Church and continued to raise her children. Never once during this time did I hear my mother complain about the cards life had handed her. She single-handedly raised her youngest, my brother, from the age of 10 until he graduated from high school and left home, instilling in him lessons like these: tell the truth, work hard, treat others kindly whenever possible, and make your own way.

For me, one of Mom’s most important lessons in manliness came with her dying and death. When doctors diagnosed her with liver cancer, Mom stoically accepted her two-month death sentence, invited friends to her home to say good-bye,

maintained her sense of humor, and never asked “Why me?” She died in her own bed surrounded by her children, some of their spouses, and grandchildren, tranquil and stouthearted to the last.

My mom taught me how to die like a man.

## Help Is at Hand

Though our culture does indeed need men involved with boys, if we are to see a restoration of manhood, we need the help of women. We need mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and friends to encourage boys and young men to act in manly ways, to treat the opposite sex and the unfortunate with chivalry, to tell the truth even when the consequences are dire, to defend their loved ones, to dream, and to work hard for what they want.

Some women I know, married and single, want to teach these lessons to their sons and so help make their boys into men, but they feel lost. They are comfortable handling a daughter’s needs and questions, but their rough-and-tumble sons baffle them.

He didn’t think like someone of English origin, nor did he worship like him.

In other words, even though the Founding Fathers had created America, the American was yet to be born. Those men and women who had made this country their home would have identified themselves as primarily citizens of their state.

Even before the divisions of the Civil War, this regionalism was as true in the South as it was in the North. Such regionalism was of course dangerous because it contained the potential to pit American against American, which it finally did in the 1860s. President Abraham Lincoln saved the Union, but the conflict debilitated the American project. The question of disunity was therefore in pressing need of a solution.

There were many ideas of how to unify the nation, but one of the most popular and novel ideas was to use the public schools to foster a sense of national unity or identity. This was a rather revolutionary concept because public schooling was practiced on a very local basis in this country well into the 20th century. Since America didn’t have a nationally organized educational system, the idea was to create a unified curriculum.

## The Flag Symbol

In the spirit of the Founding Fathers who were well-versed in their Roman history, it was decided that the solution ought to be centered upon a symbol that could represent everyone. The Romans had their republican motto, “The Senate and People for Rome.” Christians had the cross, and Americans would be represented by their flag. Veteran groups such as the Woman’s Relief Corps and the Grand Army of the Republic played a central role in placing American flags in every classroom

across the nation. This goal became known as the schoolhouse flag movement. There was also a popular magazine, designed to appeal to the whole family called “The Youth Companion,” which promoted the movement.

Toward the end of the century, the patriotic movement was searching for ways to renew itself. America was getting ready to celebrate the 400th anniversary of its discovery with the Columbian Exposition of 1892. A national committee of educators and civic leaders was also organizing a celebration of the first “Columbus Day” on Oct. 12, which would center around the flag.

Francis Bellamy, who was the marketing director of “The Youth Companion,” was also the chairman of the committee, and wanted communities across America to celebrate their own local “Columbus Day” with gatherings at the public schools. To promote this idea “The Youth Companion” designed a simple kit which explained the proceedings. As a part of this kit, Bellamy included his original version of “The Pledge of Allegiance,” which read: “I pledge allegiance to my Flag and to the Republic for which it stands: one Nation indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.”

These words have come to express both the historical heritage that gives the United States its indelible strength and its commitment to truth, unity, and freedom.

## Changes to the Pledge

Subsequent changes to the pledge as we know it today were based on worries that it didn’t say which flag one was pledging allegiance to. The State of New York was the first state to legislate the recitation of the pledge of allegiance in public schools, but no form of the pledge received official recognition by Congress until June 22, 1942, when it was formally

included in the U.S. Flag Code.

Finally, the last change in language came on Flag Day 1954, when the words “under God” were added.

The world was in the midst of the Cold War, and there was a pressing fear in Washington that Indochina, Malaysia, Burma, India, and even Japan might fall into atheistic communist hands. After all, Soviet Russia had two pro-communist magazines called “Godless.” The fear was that from Moscow to Asia, communism might prevail on the geopolitical stage. President Eisenhower repeatedly used his speeches to point out the godless nature of communism until by executive order, on Flag Day 1954, he specifically ordered the pledge to read “one nation under God.”

This history teaches us an important lesson of American identity: One of the most important things in our lives—and in our world—consists in recognizing where our freedoms, rights, and self-evident truths come from. The Pledge of Allegiance has been weaving the strands of pious patriotism into the fabric of American society for over a century. It helped unify the nation in the 19th century, fight the Cold War in the 20th century, and it is worth conserving as we progress into the 21st century and hope to protect the unity that our brave forefathers fought and died for.

Journalist Wilhelm Højer is a Swedish native who studied philosophy and journalism at The Angelicum in Rome. In 2020 he began teaching at the classical Christian school Lindisfarne Hall on Amelia Island where he and his wife Sally live with their new son Crispin.

## The Hand That Rocks the Cradle

The above sub-header may call to mind the full aphorism: “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

Certainly, many great men have credited the truth of this adage. George Washington, for instance, once said: “All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her.” Abraham Lincoln followed suit with these words: “All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.”

Good, strong men are the product of the men and women who raise them. We need those men, now more than ever, and women can help mold them. Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose father died when Emerson was 8, gave thanks his entire life for the influences of his mother, his aunt Mary, and other women on his development and success, summing up his feelings in words that remain popular today: “Men are what their mothers made them.”

If we are to have good men, we must also have good women.

Oh, and moms, one more thing: You can raise your boys up to “be doctors and lawyers and such.” But leave a little bit of the cowboy in their hearts.

It’s that cowboy who makes him a man.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.

## DEAR JUNE

On Family and Relationships



## When Politics Are Polarizing Your Marriage

### Dear Readers,

It appears that the current polarized political climate is causing some couples to seek divorce and is bringing great tension between other couples. One reader wrote that his wife and daughters are very much against his preferred presidential candidate.

“We fight now. Everyday. And it’s the same ending every time with her yelling, “I don’t even know you anymore,” or “What happened to you?” I pray for some fairness. I’m concerned for future grandchildren but if these socialists allow other countries to penetrate our country’s values and ethics then perhaps it’s best I have no grandchildren to love and hold and watch grow. I’m so mad. I feel like I’m being cheated out of something and it’s causing so much strife I want to go to sleep. I have been getting counseling but honestly can’t deal with the lies and hatred surrounding my life right now. How can this be allowed to happen? I see no solution except to become a zombie and go along with the dismantling of our country for the sake of my marriage and children. This will also tilt the scale heavily in favor of a depression I may never recover from.”

To this reader and to others facing a similar situation: What you are facing is extremely difficult, but you are also in a very powerful position to serve your family, your country, and a higher calling. Your family needs your strength now more than ever, as well as your protection, courage, stoicism, and caring.

As I see it, you are in the trenches, on the front lines of our current ethics war—a war of perception of right and wrong and for the future of this country.

You have a choice to either pick up sword and shield and stand for what is right, or allow your moral senses to become dull—the zombie state you describe.

So how should you take your stand?

In this battle, your sword is logic and reason, and your shield is a deep inner strength that comes from virtues such as hope, faith, humility, and charity.

I would start by strengthening yourself, deepening your faith, and restoring your hope. Read material that informs and invigorates you (such as classics like “The Iliad,” or self-improvement books such as “12 Rules for Life” by Jordan Peterson or “Man of Steel and Velvet” by Aubrey Andelin); listen to music (I really enjoy Beethoven’s “Egmont” Overture Op. 84, and I hear in it good overcoming evil); do physical labor or spend time in nature; seek out like-minded friends or a faith community. Step as far away as you can from the world of lies; it may help to take a week or two or more off from consuming news.

Regarding the situation with your wife and daughters, I think it is fair to request that politics or other sensitive matters not be discussed in your presence, at least not without prior agreement and not too often. Also as a courtesy, don’t listen to or watch news in family spaces. It might help to allow them to see your vulnerability when you make this request—tell them honestly that you are finding yourself at risk of depression and you love them and don’t want to fight with them anymore.

In tandem, make it a point to have some quality family time, do things together that you all enjoy, and spend time one on one. Also, see if there are things you can do to serve your family—do repairs around the house, clean areas you are responsible for, surprise your wife by doing some extra chores, or do a renovation project that makes her happy.

Consider, too, what makes your wife feel really loved. Look up the “Five Love Languages” (5LoveLanguages.com/quizzes/) and see if you can figure out which ones are key for her (if you can’t, then ask her, most women will love to answer this!).

As you work on strengthening yourself and repairing your family, I would put

politics aside for the time being. What is happening is important, but it’s extremely hard to change an entrenched world view.

### ‘How Can This Be Allowed to Happen?’

Your question “How can this be allowed to happen?” is an important one to reflect on because it can really strengthen your ability to endure the situation.

In “The Art of War,” the great Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu wrote:

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained, you will also suffer a defeat.

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

Here is how I understand the enemy: Since the dawn of humanity, we have walked a path between good and evil, choosing at each step where we will place our feet, guided by our moral compass.

Yet for the past several decades, the moral compasses of Americans have been manipulated, adjusted a little bit at a time, so that most people haven’t realized what is happening. As you said, our country’s values and ethics have been penetrated. This is the demoralization process that is a necessary precursor to the formation of a communist society. In order to better understand this, I would recommend looking up videos of Yuri Bezmenov, a high-ranking KGB agent who defected to the West in the ‘70s, and in the ‘80s, began warning Americans of the signs of demoralization he saw here.

This process leaves people unable to discern right from wrong, and they are defenseless against ideas that seek to destroy them. The Epoch Times series “How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World” has more details about how specific issues have been manipulated.

So as you prepare yourself for what lies ahead, it is important to set realistic expectations: high ones for yourself, and be prepared to meet irrationality with tolerance. The demoralization process is akin to a propaganda campaign; when people have fallen prey to it, they may actually be unable to rationalize due to their emotional reactions or a narrow framework of right and wrong. Done well, propaganda can make people believe that an event they themselves witnessed didn’t happen or didn’t happen the way they saw it, so it is extremely powerful and not easy to undo.

So if your spouse is angry, intolerant, or irrational, try not to take it personally and don’t see it as solely a weakness in their character.

And it’s important to have humility because we all have weaknesses in our characters and fallen at times—myself included. I have believed many things that I now understand to be wrong and I still have much to improve in my actions and thoughts. Sun Tzu’s advice, that in order to win a battle, you must understand both your strengths and weaknesses, is very relevant in our current war of ethics.

I’d like to end with a poem that reminds us to elevate above the mundane, remain steadfast, and keep our aspirations high.

### ‘Heaven Is Not Reached at a Single Bound’

by J.G. Holland

“Heaven is not reached at a single bound,  
But we build the ladder by which we rise  
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,  
And we mount to its summit round by round.  
I count this thing to be grandly true:  
That a noble deed is a step toward God—  
Lifting the soul from the common clod  
To a purer air and broader view.”

Sincerely,  
June

Do you have a family or relationship question for our advice columnist, Dear June? Send it to [DearJune@EpochTimes.com](mailto:DearJune@EpochTimes.com) or Attn: Dear June, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001.

June Kellum is a married mother of two and longtime Epoch Times journalist covering family, relationships, and health topics

### CORRECTIONS:

The article “Coupons: The Battle for Land and Country,” published on Nov. 25, gave an incorrect date for when the battle took place. It occurred in 1781.

The “Dear June” column “George Washington’s Vision Offers Hope in Dark Times,” published on Nov. 18, gave an incorrect date for the publication of George Washington’s vision and misstated which of the “three great perils” was the most fearful in the original version. The vision was published prior to the Civil War, in 1861, and of all the perils stated, the “most fearful” was the second, interpreted to be the Civil War.

The Epoch Times regrets the errors.

## HISTORY

# The Pledge of Allegiance: Weaving Strands of Patriotism Into the Fabric of America

## WILHELM HØJER

In public schools all across the country, children rise—or they can choose to sit and listen—as they recite “The Pledge of Allegiance.” But allegiance to what?

They turn toward the flag, place their right hand over their heart and say this sentence: “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

These words were first composed in 1892 as the country was still reeling from the shame of fratricide during the Civil War. Though the war had been won in 1865, the country was neither unified nor at peace. That was the era of “The Reconstruction,” a time of great upheaval. During these decades of civil conflict—even impeachment efforts—Americans were also having to keep up with ever-growing urbanization, as well as the introduction of a national currency and



Students recite the Pledge of Allegiance in 1899.

the settling of the West.

The temperance and suffrage movements began at this time as well, bringing with them added force to the already hard blowing winds of change.

## New Immigrants

Perhaps most importantly, these years saw the greatest increase of immigration into the United States from Eastern and Southern Europe in its history. The new American immigrant was very different from his predecessor.

# How ‘Irreversible Damage’ Is Impacting a Generation of Girls

Writer Abigail Shrier opens up the transgender discussion

CATHERINE YANG

Abigail Shrier includes in all her interviews something that no one else seems to say: Today’s trans activists don’t seem to represent the transgender adult population at all. Activists are by definition on the extreme side of issues, but in just the past few years, trans activists’ narratives have taken over any and all discussion, and the result has been costly.

In hundreds of cases, the result has been irreversible damage done to a growing population of teenage girls, as Shrier explores in her recent book, “Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters.”

After writing a 2017 op-ed that touched on trans activism, which was really about freedom-of-speech issues, Shrier heard from a mother whose daughter’s life had been hijacked by the narrative. It would be a few months before Shrier decided to take on the issue, and a second op-ed she wrote provoked a thousand comments.

Since then, Shrier has spoken to a wide range of people swept up in the craze—from experts whose professions have been upended, to popular trans influencers, to the people putting gender ideology into schools—and the nearly 200 interviews shape a story that has too long been censored.

“The story here is, we have an absolute epidemic of teenage girls who do not seem to have typical gender dysphoria at all, nonetheless convincing themselves they have gender dysphoria, convincing their friends, and rushing to hormones and surgeries. They are the largest and fastest-growing demographic, and this is throughout the West,” Shrier said.

## False Diagnosis

We know what gender dysphoria looks like because we have data about it going back more than 100 years. What teenage girls are exhibiting today isn’t that.

Dr. Lisa Littman, also interviewed in the book, was the first to publish a report on the spike in teen girl cases, coining the term “rapid-onset gender dysphoria” (ROGD), and she was quickly silenced. Social media abuse piled on, and then professional consequences followed, as her peer-reviewed paper was pulled. But meanwhile, hundreds of families realized for the first time that the nightmare they were suffering wasn’t unique.

Gender dysphoria is a disorder that can be treated. It typically occurs at a very young age (2 to 4), and almost always in boys. These children, historically 0.01 percent of the population, exhibit extreme distress with their biological sex. About 70 of these cases are resolved in childhood, but others persist painfully into adulthood. Sometimes, it is tied to trauma, and sometimes not at all. Hormones and surgery to cosmetically change the patient’s physical body are but one path he or she take to cope with the dysphoria.

What we’ve seen in the past decade is the phenomenon of adolescent and teen girls who have had no history of childhood gender dysphoria suddenly, and in groups, come out as transgender, and then they are fast-tracked toward hormones and surgery. In the UK, for instance, from one year to the next, cases went up 4,500 percent. In fact, this phenomenon follows a pattern seen among teenage girls many times throughout history.

“It’s a contemporary hysteria. We see these periodically,” Shrier said. “In a previous era, they might have said, ‘Oh, the problem is, I’m so fat.’” Ten years ago, these same girls might have been diagnosed bulimic or anorexic. Before that, they might have self-diagnosed and started displaying symptoms of multi-

ple-personality disorder. And these events were always localized epidemics, but today with social media’s wide reach and bushfire speed, it’s an epidemic that has swept across the entire West.

“These young women have a lot of other mental health problems: depression, anxiety, and they’re involved in cutting, there is a lot of self-harm with this population. And this population that already has mental health problems is self-diagnosing with gender dysphoria.

“There are a lot of different ways where we have seen this very population of teenage girls convince themselves of a diagnosis they do not have.”

Instead, what the girls are often suffering from is anxiety, depression, adolescence itself—an emotionally turbulent time when children grow into new bodies—and a culture that has demoted women.

Shrier spoke to about 50 families whose daughters have self-diagnosed as trans, and their stories are strikingly similar. The stories are so similar, in fact, that Shrier worried that someone might mistake an entirely different family in the book for their own, and, feeling betrayed, would cut their own families off. If the typical narrative is that teens who come out as trans get cut off by their unsupportive families, Shrier completely upends that lie as well.

Instead, these are typically wildly supportive and mostly progressive families who are veritable cheerleaders for their daughters. But when they question whether their children really should start taking testosterone or get surgery right now, the children may get up in arms and stop communicating with their parents (who then continue to support them financially).

“[The families] aren’t worried about how everyone else sees them,” Shrier said. They’ve stepped forward to share their stories in the hopes that other families can avoid the same fate. “What they’re worried about is the well-being of their daughters, and the thought that their daughters might cut them off if they find out they even talked to me, or that they didn’t completely support their gender transition, is really scary to parents, for good reason.”

## Continual Discomfort

If all the girls were doing was declaring themselves trans, these parents wouldn’t be exhibiting the absolute terror and heart-break they share in anonymous stories online and in Shrier’s book. But unlike during past hysterias, these girls also live in a culture and system that seems entirely all too prepared to aid them on their biologically damaging journeys. It begins from a young age, inside schools.

Shrier’s book handles the subject rationally, with sensitivity and empathy, and she came to sympathize with many of the people she talked to. When it came to the schools, however, she was shocked.

“The schools are incredibly hard to reach,” Shrier said. The schools intentionally, and effectively, shut parents out or purposely mislead them. In her state, parents protested to remove certain books they felt were inappropriate, and she later found that at least one of those books secretly made it back in through the school’s virtual library. Shrier has been hung up on multiple times and was barred from a training event for principals on gender ideology; even legislators pushing school policies wouldn’t speak with her. But the interviews she did get and include in the book are illuminating.

“The amount of secrecy in the school system and the effort to make sure the parents don’t have the information is legion,” she said. “There is so much game-playing un-



(Above) Author Abigail Shrier.

(Below) Girls taking testosterone develop permanent characteristics, such as a deepened voice and hair growth, which persist even after they stop taking the hormone.



NOA BERTI/REUTERS/ISTOCK

fortunately among our educators with the direction and encouragement of activists.”

In order to teach what it means to be “gender non-conforming” (a sign you may be trans), schools must first teach what it means to be gender-conforming, and they do so in a baffling and regressive way.

“It reduces all women to stereotypes. If you don’t like pink, you’re gender non-conforming; if you like math, you’re gender non-conforming; if you excel at sports, you’re gender non-conforming,” Shrier said. “They are boxing young girls into the tiniest little spaces of acceptability. It is really one of the cruelest and most anti-female ideologies that I’ve seen in my lifetime.”

She writes that the whole history of women’s accomplishments is being erased in schools as these figures are instead celebrated for daring to be gender non-conforming.

At a time when teens, and the culture at large, seem more progressive than ever, one might assume that everyone under the LGBT umbrella is seen to have equal status, but women have been demoted there as well. One teen told Shrier that lesbians are just seen as masculine girls who can’t admit they’re boys, that it’s “not cool” and it’s “a porn category.”

So when these girls—who are typically intellectually precocious, artistic, and anxious—suffer a social setback (for example, when their pictures are judged on social media, or when they experience bullying or being left behind by their friend group), it isn’t that hard to see why they would cling to a minority group that gives them victim status (an upgrade in social hierarchy) and a peer group that enthusiastically celebrates their new identity. It’s one theory for why entire college campuses will have 40 to 50 percent of the student body declaring to be LGBT, when historically the demographic makes up 10 percent of the population.

Some of these teen girls met a new friend at school who later learn came out as trans, while others fell into social media communities that pushed trans activism. These online mentors coach teens into preparing a backstory about how they have always experienced gender dysphoria but never shared this because they didn’t feel safe at home. The teens learn that if they say they’re at risk of suicide, they’re all but guaranteed to get what they’re asking for from schools, therapists, and their parents.

The activists teach us that the keyword here is “affirm.” If a 12-year-old girl declares herself trans, her word must be treated as gospel. The school must affirm her pronouns and new name (without telling her potentially unsupportive parents, of course), therapists must affirm her self-diagnosis, and parents ought to affirm their new son if they wouldn’t rather have a dead daughter.

Therapists are put in a strange position; some are activists themselves and are all too happy to tell a girl and her parents that she is trans. Others fear that they don’t have the expertise to handle gender dysphoria, or that being anything less than “affirming” will lead to accusations that they practice “conversion therapy” and the eventual loss of their license. Still others may be taken in by teens’ carefully constructed backstories and threats of suicide.

If a girl hasn’t gone through puberty yet, her parents are advised to start her on puberty

blockers. These drugs are recommended to parents as a benign “pause button” on puberty to buy them time, without any warning that the drugs, originally developed as a chemical castrator, mimic the effects of a pituitary tumor. Blocking puberty doesn’t just stop physical growth—it stunts neurological development as well. And if the young girl didn’t feel comfortable with her body pre-puberty, she is apt to feel even less so as all her friends around her start to go through puberty and she feels left behind and disconnected.

Parents usually aren’t told that nearly 100 percent of children starting puberty blockers go on to use cross-sex hormones.

If the girls are older and have already gone through puberty, they will likely try to purchase chest binders, which can cause them difficulty with breathing and even tissue damage. Then they start on testosterone (“T,” in slang terminology), which has permanent effects, such as a deepened voice and hair growth, that persist even after one stops taking the hormones. And if the parents don’t help these girls get hormones, the schools will—secretly, and sometimes without even leaving campus.

The drug comes with serious health risks, which are often glossed over.

“I interviewed a lot of transgender influencers—these are people in their 20s, usually—who are influencing and encouraging transition among a young population very effectively and very aggressively,” Shrier said. They share and overshare with their followers, and nonchalantly encourage them to try cross-sex hormones even if they’re not sure they’re trans, but only because they seem not to fully grasp the complications either. “I came to have more sympathy for them because I saw how lost some of these young people were, how well-meaning but lost.”

Testosterone also has the initial effect of alleviating anxiety and depression, which is often what these girls need treatment for in the first place. They thus experience a high once they start, which convinces them they are on the right path. But testosterone also needs to be taken very regularly, or else a girl’s menstrual cycle will start up again and put her at risk of infection and potentially cancer. This means that many who start on testosterone end up getting surgery to also remove their uterus and ovaries after a few years, guaranteeing sterility.

But testosterone also needs to be taken very regularly. It shuts down the menstrual cycle and directs the uterine lining to be shed, so when the girl forgets to take the hormone injections on time, her menstrual cycle starts up again and the fast-growing uterine lining means there is a higher risk of cell mutation, leading to endometrial cancer. This means that many who start on testosterone will in a few years opt to get surgery to also remove their uterus and ovaries, resulting in sterility.

Activists often reassure people that not all trans people get surgeries, and this is true, but those that do often get multiple surgeries, and these tend to be risky and specialized surgeries not every surgeon should be performing.

“Because it comes from a discomfort of not looking like the biological sex, the surgeries run on and on. It’s not one surgery that makes you look like a man; very often, patients will go back for several surgeries,” Shrier said. After “top surgery,” a voluntary double mastectomy (a procedure with questionable ethics, as surgeons are taking away a biological function), these girls realize their hips are too wide, because it’s not just that every cell of the body contains proof of one’s biological sex—bone structure is a dead giveaway as well. And then genital surgeries (“bottom surgery”) are microsurgeries of such a specialized field that not working with the best surgeons all but guarantees a botched surgery.

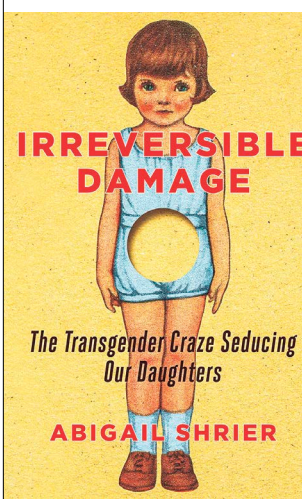
Hormones and surgery aren’t just presented as a quick fix to these girls’ problems; if they declare they are trans, there is also peer pressure to prove it.

Shrier notes, through conversations with some of these influencers, that not all girls trying to transition want to become boys. In fact, the teen girls displaying ROGD don’t seem to want to be boys at all. What they want to be is “not a girl,” to not have every part of their body judged and publicly shamed and suffer being part of a social class that is “less than.”

There are also stories of “desisters” and “detransitioners”—people who, typically in their mid-20s (the time when their brains finally finish developing, one mother notes) find they made a mistake in transitioning. Activists don’t want people to hear these stories; they often say no one goes back after transitioning, but that isn’t true. Shrier notes that it’s understandable why activists would insist on this “immutable” trait of being trans, because that is the language used in the Equal Protection Clause. This is also what makes it law under the 2010 Affordable Care Act for insurers to provide testosterone if other hormones such as the contraceptive pill are covered.

“We have an absolute epidemic of teenage girls who do not seem to have typical gender dysphoria at all, nonetheless convincing themselves they have gender dysphoria, convincing their friends, and rushing to hormones and surgeries.”

Abigail Shrier, author, “Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters”



“Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters” by Abigail Shrier.

## Sense With Children

Shrier knew she was telling a story that a population of parents desperately wanted to share, but she didn’t realize how much support she would be receiving from transgender adults as well.

“In some sense, that surprised me the most, how many wonderful transgender adults have reached out and said, ‘Listen, I agree with you; what I went through has nothing to do with this sudden explosion of transgender enthusiasm from teenage girls, and it’s hard for me to say so publicly, but these teenage girls should not be able to walk into an informed consent clinic and walk out that day with testosterone. It’s irresponsible,’” Shrier said. They don’t think this phenomenon is something to celebrate.

It’s no wonder these trans adults feel silenced, when mainstream media ignores their stories, Shrier said. When her book was published, Amazon refused to run ads for it and sold search terms to books that told the opposite story, celebrating teen girls’ transitioning. “Irreversible Damage” became the top-selling LGBT book anyway. It’s rare to find a book that talks about gender and isn’t political, but Shrier eschews politics and ideology for the truth.

While Shrier’s book gives an inside look at the medical journey of transitioning, it is largely an exploration of culture, examining where we are and how we got here.

“Remember that we’re not having many kids in our society anymore,” she said. “We’ve dropped precipitously in population growth, and we just don’t seem to exhibit a lot of sense with children.

“So we treat, for some reason, some young girl’s announcement that she may have come up with online at age 11 as very serious. She’s almost treated like a prophet.” It makes even less sense when we remember today’s teens act emotionally and mentally younger than those of their age would have a generation ago.

“And of course, if you’ve ever raised a child, it encourages a certain amount of skepticism that 11-year-olds know very much about themselves at all. But unfortunately, we just don’t have very many of those people with sense about children in our society today,” she said.

Gen X parents tend to be progressive and therapeutic. The same parents who are taken aback when their daughter declares she’s a boy had been fully supportive when she came out as pansexual or bisexual or a lesbian a year before. Shrier is a Gen X parent herself, and hearing these stories one after another gave her pause. What does an 11-year-old who has never kissed or dated really know about her sexuality? Identity isn’t something you obtain after doing a bit of social media research.

“Setting guidelines, setting limits on their kids is what they’re there for,” Shrier said. Parents shouldn’t go along with every announcement their kids make, and more importantly, they shouldn’t let their kids post these announcements online, “where they can be reached by all kinds of adults, some of whom are primed to take advantage.”

“Also when they make announcements online, on social media, about their gender or sexuality, it tends to make an adolescent feel locked into that identity, [as if] they can never change their minds,” she said.

In that vein, young teens probably shouldn’t be on social media anyway. Shrier references research discussed in Jean Twenge’s book “iGen” that showed explosions in anxiety, depression, and self-harm linked to social media use. Twenge’s findings were uncomfortable and drew controversy initially as well, but they took hold because they’re undeniably true.

“There are schools that have pacts where they all agree to keep their kids off social media as a condition for being at that school. I don’t see why we couldn’t do more of that,” Shrier said.

Parents aren’t the only ones who can oppose gender ideology in schools, she adds.

“I have talked to parents in the toniest private schools who told me that within the space of a year their daughters had three or four transgender speakers address the student body, and lo and behold, the seventh-grade class then had an explosion of transgender identification. There’s no reason for this. It’s confusing an entire population of kids,” Shrier said.

It’s reminiscent of cases in which schools that host big assemblies on suicide prevent end up with spikes in student suicides. And the solution to bullying should be simple: punish bullies. “There is no reason we can’t show compassion for a transgender student in the schools without indoctrinating an entire population in gender confusion,” she said.

“And another thing is, people have to tell their daughter how great it is to be a girl and a woman. Because it is.

“Unfortunately we’ve forgotten that. We’ve forgotten that women have it actually great in America, and that there have been so many brave women who weren’t always perfectly feminine, and they’re great role models for our daughters, and that being a woman is a wonderful thing to be.”



Kris Zemlak with her brother Gordon Petrie.

## Brother and Sister Reunite After 22 Years

JENNI JULANDER

It’s often the case when a person becomes homeless, family members are left in the dark, wondering what became of him or her. For years, next of kin may languish in limbo without seeing or hearing from that lost loved one.

But when Kris Zemlak was reunited with her homeless brother at a church in Surrey, British Columbia, she was overjoyed to have found him, alive, at last.

Zemlak’s brother, Gordon Petrie, had fallen into struggles with addiction; he slowly faded from her life, and one day, he was just gone.

“I started to look for him down on East Hastings [in Vancouver] but I never found him,” Zemlak told CBC. “I could have walked by him and I would have never known who he was.”

It had been 22 years, and despite building a family and a successful career for herself, Zemlak had always wondered what had happened to her brother.

Until one day when a friend sent her a text message with a link to an article.

Zemlak was astounded; the article featured her brother’s connection with the Ukrainian Holy Cross Catholic Church in Surrey.

She had found him at last. Without wasting any time, Zemlak made the trip from Prince George to Surrey, where she had a loving reunion with Petrie.

She discovered he’d been living as a squatter in a shed behind a church. However, he’d recently been told that the shed was a fire hazard, and he would have to move.

“It’s hard to explain walking up to someone you haven’t seen for that long, and it was really, really difficult to see how he lived,” Zemlak said. “I could tell what his lifestyle had done to him.”

But Petrie hadn’t been living on church property for free. In March, the parish president, Bruce Hitchen, noticed someone had been sweeping the property and squatting in the shed. Upon closer inspection, he also discovered that Petrie had been chasing thieves away from the church.

Hitchen said, “We started asking, what other kind of solution can we come up with for Gordon?”

They wanted to fix up an old house on the property to help Petrie get back on his feet. But the house was deemed uninhabitable, so they allowed him to continue living in the shed, offering him the position of grounds caretaker as a way to earn his keep.

With the impending removal of the shed, Hitchen was relieved when he visited Petrie one day only to find his sister there, talking to him.

“Both of them were almost in tears,” Hitchen said. “Gordon was like, ‘Bruce, you won’t believe who is here. This is my sister.’”

Petrie said the visit took him completely by surprise.

“I heard, ‘Gordon, is that you?’—just like my mother used to say,” Petrie said. “It took me a couple seconds to realize what was going on. Then she popped around the corner and I just lit up.”

Soon thereafter, an outreach worker set Petrie up with a hotel room that was being leased for social housing during the pandemic.

Zemlak visited more than once, stocking her brother’s cupboards with groceries and celebrating with him on his 51st birthday.

Petrie was overjoyed to reconnect with his sister.

“I will always be in his corner and I will always be on the other end of the phone,” she said. “He’s my brother.”

Now that the siblings have reconnected, they’re determined not to lose touch again. Zemlak stressed to the Catholic Register, “Drug addicts are people just like you and me and each of us needs a purpose to our days and Gordon found his at the church. He took great pride in showing me all of his meaningful work and the shed that he called his ‘home.’”



In the past, girls—and their peers—might have self-diagnosed as bulimic or anorexic. Now they may be convincing themselves that they have gender dysphoria when they do not. Social media has amplified the reach of this phenomenon.

# 2020 Holiday Gift Guide

BARBARA DANZA

**J**oy to the world! The holidays are here. After a trying year, I hope you and your family enjoy all the magic the holiday season has to offer.

As you think about your loved ones, looking for just the right gift for each, some advice: Focus on simple pleasures and quality craftsmanship, and avoid "made in China."

You might be surprised by what enjoyable, lovely, and special gift options you'll find keeping these criteria in mind.

## Gifts for Kids

COURTESY OF UNCLE GOOSE



Uncle Goose blocks.

### Blocks

Blocks are fundamental toys every child should have for imaginative and constructive play.

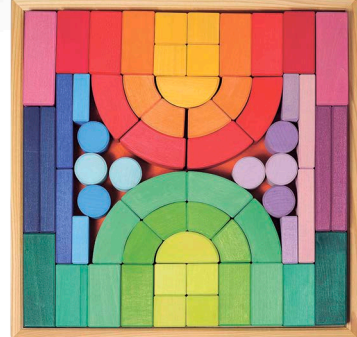
Wooden blocks like those from Uncle Goose (UncleGoose.com) or Grimm's Wooden Toys (Grimms.eu) are well-made classics.

GeoMag's MagicCube Sets (\$49.99) feature magnetic blocks and clips that help a child

stack, build, and either spell or practice math skills. GeoMag-World.com

Another fun twist on building is a marble run like The Hubelino Pi marble run system by HABA (\$79.99). The magnetic pieces and steel marble make building racetracks a fun exercise in physics. What's more, the pieces are compatible with other brands such as LEGO. HABAUSA.com

COURTESY OF GRIMMS



Blocks by Grimm's Wooden Toys.



Hansa makes high-quality stuffed animals.

### Dolls

What could be more delightful than a beautiful or cuddly new doll or a snugly stuffed animal under the Christmas tree? Finding those not made in China can be a challenge, but if you know where to look, you can find ones of excellent quality.

Hansa stuffed animals are lifelike and beautifully made. With a wide variety of options, the brand has something special for every child on your list. HansaToyStore.com

For a more economical option, take a look at Aurora stuffed animals. Many (but not all) of them are not made in China, and they're adorable. Shop.AuroraGift.com

Some brands of dolls not made in China include Llorens (m.Llorens.es) and Berenguer (JCToys.com) from Spain, PetitCollin (PetitCollin.com) from France, and Käthe Kruse (Käthe-Kruse.de/en/) from Germany.

### Gardening

Actress Audrey Hepburn once said, "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." For something different, and a gift the whole family can enjoy, check out Back to the Roots. It offers a variety of gardening kits and products that can be enjoyed indoors—and will provide lessons galore—perfect for the times we're living through.

All its products are made in the United States. The Water Garden Mini Ecosystem (\$99.99) features an especially fun concept where families can hydroponically grow herbs and microgreens with the help of a betta fish. BackToTheRoots.com



Back to the Roots' Water Garden Mini Ecosystem.

## Stocking Stuffers

Remember MadLibs? Well, they're still at it. Check out the Merry Merry Mad Libs boxed set (\$24.99) and start Christmas morning off with giggles. MadLibs.com

Piggy Paint is nontoxic, scented nail polish for kids, available in a variety of fun colors and scents. You won't need to worry about dangerous ingredients when painting little piggies. A gift set like Santa's Sweetie (\$14.99) would make the perfect stocking stuffer for a little miss on your list. PiggyPaint.com

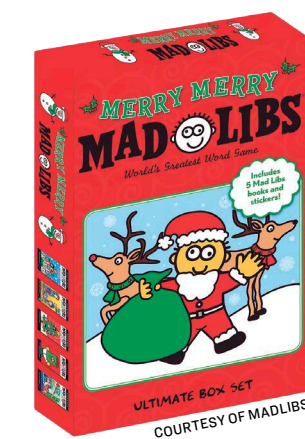
From the same company, Rock the Locks is a brand of safe and natural hair care for kids. With products like Shake & Shimmer Glitter Hairspray and Not So Knotty Conditioning Detangler, these fun items make perfect stocking stuffers that will prove practical as well. RockTheLocks.com

What everyone needs these days, hand sanitizer from Noshinku (\$10) is a discreetly packaged spray featuring organic ingredients that protect and moisturize. This would make a great stocking stuffer or an add-on to a more substantial gift. Noshinku.com

Tentera's single-serving, pour-overs (seven for \$16.45) offer convenience for coffee lovers without sacrificing a quality cup. Your loved one may find themselves ditching coffee pods forever after discovering this in their stocking. TenteraCoffee.com



Tentera's single-serving, pour-over coffee.



MadLibs.



Rock the Locks, a hair care line for children.

## Gifts Anyone Would Love

### Self-Care

For the lady on your list, give her a spa treatment at home with products like Olga Lorencin's Red Carpet Facial in a Box (OlgaLorencinSkincare.com, \$109) or Lilah B.'s Aglow Skin Prep Discovery Set (LilahBeauty.com, \$42). While many women are forgoing their salon manicure these days, they may appreciate a nail kit like Dr.'s Remedy Everlasting Evergreen Gift Set (\$75). It includes three festive polish shades, a base coat, gel finish, cuticle oil, and pol-

ish remover—all with formulations that are healthy and nourishing for nails. RemedyNails.com

Other self-care products she may like include the Moisturizing Sugar Polish from South of France Natural Body Care (SouthOfFranceBodyCare.com, \$9.99), Foster's Lab Anti-Tech Serum (FosterLab.com, \$68), or Travertine's Eucalyptus Steam Shower Spray (TravertineSpa.com, \$28), which makes an everyday shower feel like a day at the spa.



COURTESY OF DR.'S REMEDY

Dr.'s Remedy's Everlasting Evergreen Gift Set.

Moisturizing sugar polish from South of France Natural Body Care.

COURTESY OF SOUTH OF FRANCE



Foster's Lab Anti-Tech Serum.

### Plants

Bring new life to 2021 with the gift of plants. FlowerFix is a flower subscription company offering both flower delivery and wreath delivery. Give a loved one the gift of fresh flowers or seasonal wreaths all year long. You can also opt for a one-time purchase. FlowerFix.com

If you'd prefer to give a potted plant, consider Outside In, offering a wide variety of beautiful, carefully delivered house plants. The joy of a lovely plant will spruce up your loved one's home environment. OutsideInCo.com

COURTESY OF FLOWERFIX



FlowerFix wreath.

## That's a Wrap

Finally, wrap up your fantastic gifts with environmentally-friendly Wrappily, which makes beautiful and sustainable gift wrap you'll feel great about using. Wrappily.com



Wrappily's gift wrap.



COURTESY OF SHEN YUN DANCER



COURTESY OF COVERED IN COTTON

### Throws

Speaking of cozy, who wouldn't want a soft, warm blanket for the season ahead? A really special option, Covered in Cotton's blankets come from a family of cotton farmers in South Carolina who make beautifully made hand towels, baby blankets, and throws such as The Tobin model (\$90), which would complement just about any space. CoveredInCotton.com



COURTESY OF TERTILL

### Robots

Check out Tertill, the solar-powered, weeding robot that is bound to make your loved one's life a little easier. This interesting innovation is reminiscent of the popular robot vacuums, but instead of sucking up dust indoors, it's identifying weeds in the garden and eliminating them while you put your feet up and relax. If you've got a gardener on your list, this may be just what they didn't even know they most wanted. Tertill.com

### An Elegant, Casual Jacket

Shen Yun Performing Arts, the world's premier classical Chinese dance company, launched this year its own brand of active-wear and casual wear. Shen Yun Dancer, which beautifully balances aesthetics and functionality. The Imperial Jacket by Shen Yun Dancer provides warmth without bulk, offering both easy comfort and casual elegance (\$150-\$180). ShenYunDancer.com



COURTESY OF RODE

### Mics

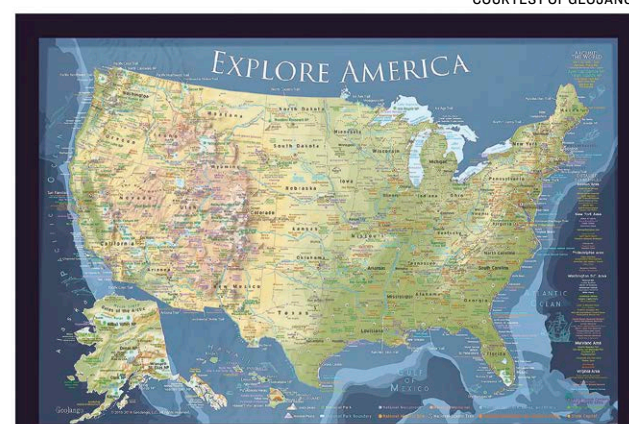
Tap, tap. Is this thing on? One practical idea for the loved one who's been working at home is a mic upgrade. Now that online meetings are a regular part of many of our lives, an upgrade in gadgetry may be just the thing to start the New Year off fresh. Try RODE's NT-USB Mini (\$99.99). Made in Australia, it offers studio-quality sound and is easy to use. Rode.com



COURTESY OF JAF

### Teas

When you don't know what to give, consider a lovely box of high-quality teas like those from JAF. It offers enjoyable gift sets like the Pure Teas & Infusions Tea Sampler (\$29.99). JAFTeaUSA.com



COURTESY OF GEOJANGO

### Maps

Encourage your loved ones to reminisce about past adventures and dream of future travels with wonderfully detailed maps by GeoJango. Featuring a wide variety of styles and themes along with expert cartography and design, GeoJango's world and USA maps could be the "wow" gift you're looking for this year. Customizable and made in the United States, they're gorgeous conversation pieces you won't find elsewhere. GeoJango.com

### Candles

When it comes to candles, simple design, natural ingredients, and seasonal scents make for great gifts. Check out the lovely soy creations by Antique Candle Company featuring classic farmhouse designs. The company's soy candles and melts smell delicious, and its customer service is excellent. AntiqueCandleCo.com

Another great source for candles is Etsy. There, makers such as Buckeye Candle Company offer homemade candles that will provide the coziness we all need throughout the winter. Etsy.com/shop/buckeyecandlecompany



Buckeye Candle Company.



COURTESY OF THE SPICE LAB

### Spices

Spice things up for the home cook on your list with The Spice Lab's curated collections (\$29.95) of handcrafted spices. Varieties include the Mediterranean Collection, Taste of America, and Barbecue Seasoning. Spices.com

### Planners

Odds are you've got one of those planning types on your list. Planners are well-timed as holiday gifts to kick off the New Year with fresh supplies. Erin Condren offers a wide variety of beautiful and customizable planners, notebooks, and accessories for the recipients on your list who like to stay organized. Personalization would add a special touch for the holidays. ErinCondren.com

ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADIEMUS/SHUTTERSTOCK

# Teaching Our Children the Values of a Free Society

A conversation with ‘Tuttle Twins’ author Connor Boyack

BARBARA DANZA

Connor Boyack is a speaker, podcaster, and author of 22 books, including the popular children’s series, The Tuttle Twins. Through entertaining stories, the series teaches kids the values and concepts that are fundamental to a free society.

Each book focuses on a singular idea, addressing concepts such as individual liberty, free markets, and the golden rule.



Author Connor Boyack.

I recently spoke to Boyack about his books and how families can navigate the current tumultuous climate.

**The Epoch Times:** You wrote your first “Tuttle Twins” book back in 2014. What inspired you to write that first installment?

**Connor Boyack:** I founded a think tank, Libertas Institute, and spend my days fighting to limit government. When my children were younger, I found myself wanting to share with them what I did all day, but I didn’t have the vocabulary to simplify it for them. I turned to Amazon, hoping to find a book to introduce ideas like free-market economics, property rights, or individual liberty, but couldn’t find anything.

So I partnered up with my friend Elijah, the illustrator and a dad himself, to set out and create our own books to give parents and children this vocabulary to have some amazing discussions about the way the world works.

**The Epoch Times:** You’ve lamented the fact that basic ideas of a free society are not taught in our public schools. Why do you think that is? What impact is this omission having on our kids today?

**Mr. Boyack:** Public schools are inherently socialist; they are funded by the many to benefit the few—ostensibly to then benefit the many. A socialist system will not teach children the problems with socialism. Government schools won’t point out the problems with government. This duty falls to parents as the natural educators of their children, but many parents don’t know these issues themselves, let alone how to discuss them with young children.

As the saying goes, those who don’t learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. History offers countless lessons about the problems with authoritarianism, socialism, collectivism, and the like—yet the rising generation are deprived of these lessons and therefore find themselves embracing the same mistakes of the past.

**The Epoch Times:** Many young people today see socialism as a benign philosophy. How can parents teach kids



the difference between socialism and freedom?

**Mr. Boyack:** The main problem parents have is that they themselves did not learn, and do not understand, the dangers of socialism—its history and its effects. They therefore feel inadequate to convey such information to their children, and thus delegate the task to schools that are not equipped to do so.

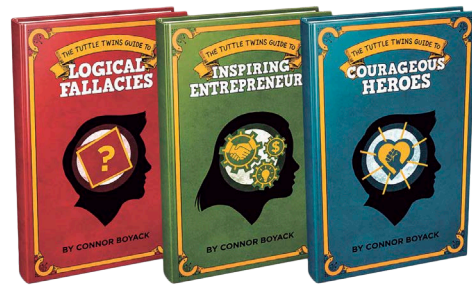
The value proposition of the Tuttle Twins is that we help parents learn alongside their children about these ideas and then discuss together how they are relevant and why they are important. It’s a very non-threatening way for parents who aren’t well versed in these concepts to get up to speed quickly.

**The Epoch Times:** Many parents have also gone through the public school system. Have you received feedback from adults who’ve found your books enlightening as well?

**Mr. Boyack:** We set out to create books for kids, yet it was surprising to us to see such a strong secondary audience emerge: the parents! We did not anticipate that so many parents would be learning new things

**A socialist system will not teach children the problems with socialism. Government schools won’t point out the problems with government.**

The latest “Tuttle Twins” books.



alongside their children. We receive multiple messages each day via email and social media from parents who share how much they enjoyed learning new concepts in our books.

This is likely a testament to the fact that schools have utterly failed to equip people with information about free markets, classical liberalism, and the ideas of a free society. Parents have long failed to convey this information on their own, and since schools aren’t, it has left a massive void. That’s the precise void the Tuttle Twins exists to fill.

**The Epoch Times:** Though our society seems so ideologically divided today, most parents want their children to grow up with a high moral standard and good character. What values do you hope to inspire in readers of The Tuttle Twins?

**Mr. Boyack:** Any good parent teaches their children some fairly common ideas: be nice to others, don’t hurt others, don’t steal, etc. It’s only as adults that we add all kinds of exceptions to this list when it comes to the government, voting, taxes, etc. Our books essentially affirm that those time-tested ideas long taught to children are equally relevant to adults, and that a free society requires that we go back to those childhood lessons and practice the Golden Rule.

**The Epoch Times:** There is an onslaught of false information and propaganda in the media today. What can parents do to help their children learn to discern truth from lies?

**Mr. Boyack:** Parents who can’t discern between truth and lies will not be able to teach their children to do so—and most adults really struggle with this. Parents and children alike need to develop a certain amount of skepticism when it comes to official narratives and media claims, since history has shown that the public is lied to time and again.

We also must seek out information from non-traditional sources including foreign media outlets and independent journalists, since the “mainstream media” is corrupted and incentivized to “get clicks” and generate controversy instead of educating and informing.

**The Epoch Times:** Since 2014, The Tuttle Twins series has enjoyed increasing popularity and an animated series is on the way. To what do you attribute this success?

**Mr. Boyack:** Families are starving for good content that helps teach sound principles. This is the clear message we have received from our community of over 250,000 families worldwide, with many hundreds being added each day. Many parents frankly feel like their families are under assault by those advancing socialism and trying to attack the foundations of our society. They want a shield to protect their family, and many turn to the Tuttle Twins for that reason.



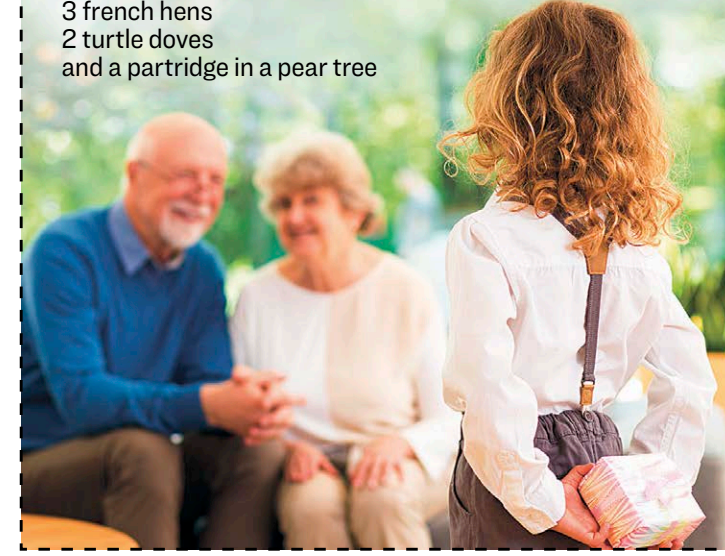
## FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

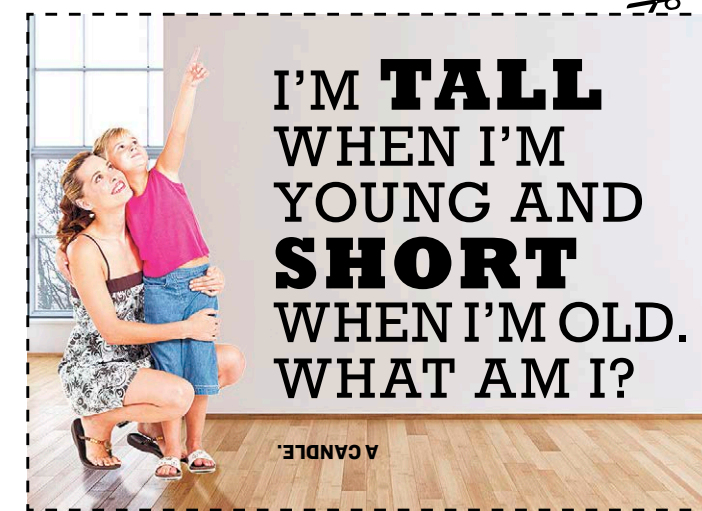
### FROM “The Twelve Days of Christmas”

traditional Christmas carol

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me—  
12 drummers drumming  
11 pipers piping  
10 lords a-leaping  
9 ladies dancing  
8 maids a-milking  
7 swans a-swimming  
6 geese a-laying  
5 gold rings!  
4 calling birds  
3 french hens  
2 turtle doves  
and a partridge in a pear tree

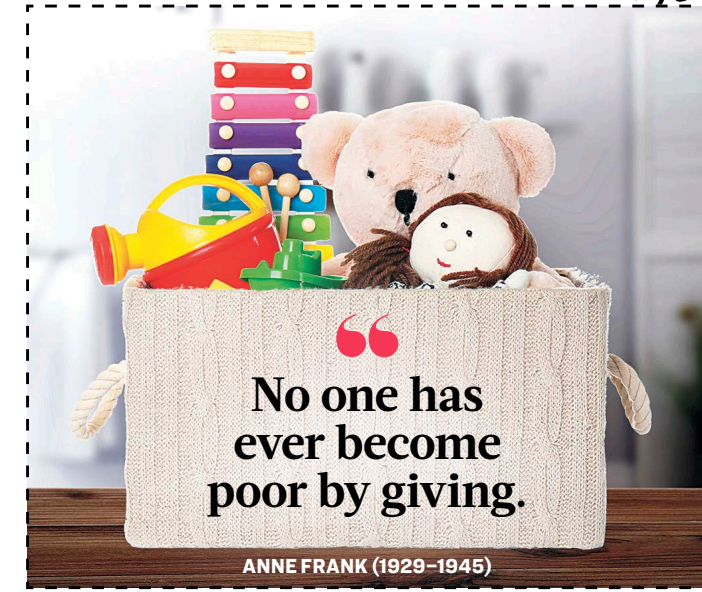


PHOTOGRAPHEE.U/SHUTTERSTOCK



I’M TALL WHEN I’M YOUNG AND SHORT WHEN I’M OLD. WHAT AM I?

MICHAELJUNG/SHUTTERSTOCK



No one has ever become poor by giving.

ANNE FRANK (1929–1945)

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

## This Week in History

James Knox Polk (1795–1849), the 11th president of the United States.

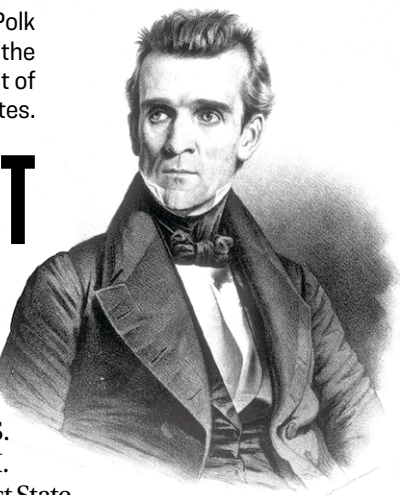
### MANIFEST DESTINY

On Dec. 2, 1845, U.S. President James K. Polk issued his first State of the Union Address in which

he supported Manifest Destiny—proclaiming that the United States should expand west and stretch “from sea to shining sea.”

The concept of Manifest Destiny was the widely held belief that the expansion of the United States across the continent was fated by God and inevitable.

He ended his address saying, “It is to the enterprise and perseverance of the hardy pioneers of the West, who penetrate the wilderness with their families, suffer the dangers, the privations, and hardships attending the settlement of a new country ... that we are in a great degree indebted for the rapid extension and aggrandizement of our country.”



MP/GETTY IMAGES

By Aidan Danza, age 14

## DUCK IDENTIFICATION PART II: DIVING DUCKS

### his time of year, we start to see more migrating ducks!

In my experience, the dabbling ducks (the ducks that tip forward, head down, bottom up) arrive first, in October and November, and the diving ducks, the ducks that dive for their food, arrive second, in November, December, and January.

#### SCAUP

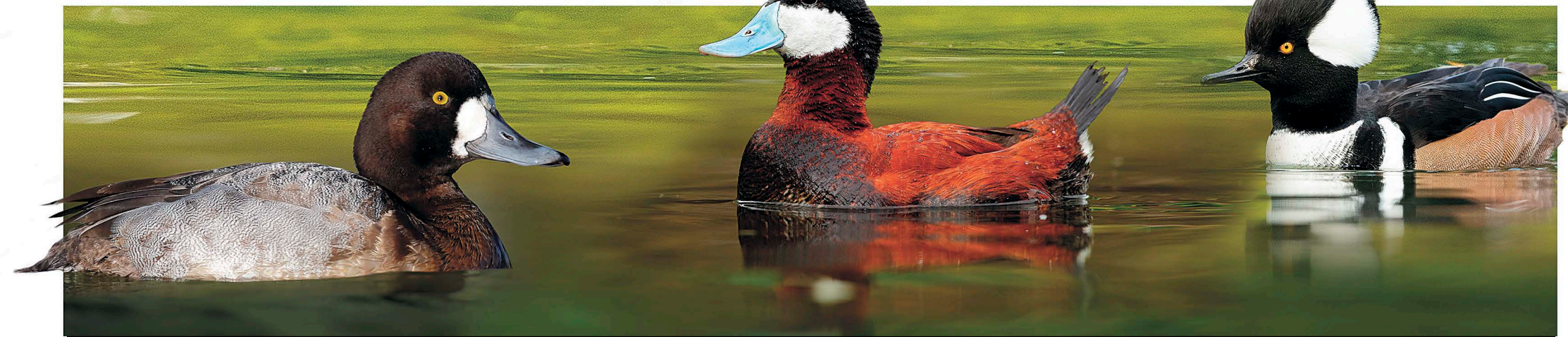
There are two types of scaup: the greater scaup and the lesser scaup. Males of both species are generally the same. They have a dark, shiny head, a black chest and rear, white sides, and a vermiculated back, meaning that the back is white, with thin black lines penciled in, as pictured. Females are mostly brown, with a white patch near the bill. The differences between the species are very subtle but detectable: they lie mostly in the shape of the head. Where the greater’s head is more round and fat, the lesser’s head is more triangular. The head color, while variable in both species, is generally purple for the lesser and green for the greater, but this varies.

#### RUDDY DUCK

These are the smallest and one of the most common diving ducks. They usually travel in flocks. In the winter, males have a black cap, bright white cheeks, and a dirty brown neck, chest, belly, and sides. The wings are a darker brown, and the tail is stiff and black. They will either drag it low in the water, or hold it high up in the air when alert. Females are all brown, all year, except for the white cheeks, which have a prominent brown line through them, unlike the male. They are small and stocky, with a very large bill compared to their head. They sit very low in the water and have short necks.

#### HOODED Merganser

Hooded mergansers will show up in ones and twos in many habitats. Males are overall black on top. On bottom, they have brown sides and a white chest. The head is adorned by an enormous crest, which is mostly white with black edges. The bill is small and thin, like a nail. It is suited for catching small aquatic animals. Females are all brown, but they still have the male’s large crest, only it is rusty now instead of black and white, and often shaggy.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

## How to Bring More Peace Into Your Days

BARBARA DANZA

It has been quite a year. As the holiday season gets underway, who among us isn’t wishing for a bit more peace?

While events in society at large may be mostly outside of your control, you do largely have control over the peace within your home and heart.

Here are 11 simple ways to bring more peace into your days.

#### Reduce Screens

Between the computer, phone, television, and any other screen we may view on a daily basis, for most of us, the amount of inputs our brains are processing during our waking hours is excessive. Even if the inputs are all rainbows and unicorns, the constant stimuli and unnatural nature of constant digital engagement are not healthy. And, of course, it’s not all rainbows and unicorns.

If you find yourself itching to check a screen when you’re away from your device, that’s a clue to reduce your screen use as much as possible. Don’t give in. The more you can enjoy the real world right in front of you, the more relief you’ll feel from breaking away from your screens.

#### Step Outside

Since you’re no longer staring at a screen, lace up those shoes and head out the door

for some fresh air. (Leave those earbuds at home!) Allow your five senses to take in the slow pace, simplicity, and utter beauty of the nature around you. Whatever environment you’re blessed to be surrounded by, enjoy it. Notice details. Breathe.

#### Eat Well

Move away from artificial, processed foods and make sure you’re nourishing your body with real foods. Cook at home. Choose whole, clean ingredients. Take your time in the kitchen, and enjoy the process of making a simple cup of tea or an elaborate dinner for your family.

#### Connect With Loved Ones

Even the most introverted introverts need connection. Pick up the phone and call a loved one you haven’t spoken to in a while. Send a lovely card to a faraway relative. Share a picture with a friend from the good old days. Make an effort to get together regularly with those closest to you. Don’t wait for an invitation, make connections happen.

#### Declutter

The stress that mess can induce is an interesting phenomenon. Our outer environment has an impact on our inner peace. Take time to tidy up, donate unused items, clear surfaces, and make consistent, incremental improvements to

your home and work environment—and notice the peace that comes over you in the process.

#### Stop Procrastinating

Tasks hanging over our heads torment us until they are done. Rather than put off what can be done today until tomorrow, do it today. Sometimes we even procrastinate on the smallest of tasks, wasting more time thinking or worrying about them than it takes to complete them. Kick the habit of procrastination to feel more on top of things and more at peace.

#### Let Go of Resentments

If you’ve been harboring anger or resentment, it’s likely doing you a great deal of harm. Do the inner work necessary to be able to let go of toxic thoughts and feelings that aren’t serving you. Find forgiveness, understanding, and compassion in your heart. You can do it. You’ll be so glad you did.

#### Apologize

If you are plagued with guilt about something, peace is difficult to find. It’s an honorable quality to admit one’s mistakes, own up to them, not make excuses, and apologize. Find the courage and the humility you’ll need to make things right. The weight that will be lifted off your shoulders will be well worth the effort.

#### Give

What better time than the holidays, especially in a year that has been challenging to so many, to practice generosity? Check local groups on social media or contact local charities to see what needs exist. Bless people you know with acts of love or gifts they truly need. Perform random acts of kindness in your community. Donate to your favorite charity. Volunteer your most precious resource—your time.

#### Honor Traditions

The holidays are also a time to honor traditions. There are bound to be special traditions your family has honored, perhaps for generations, during the holidays. Continue to share them with your children and grandchildren.

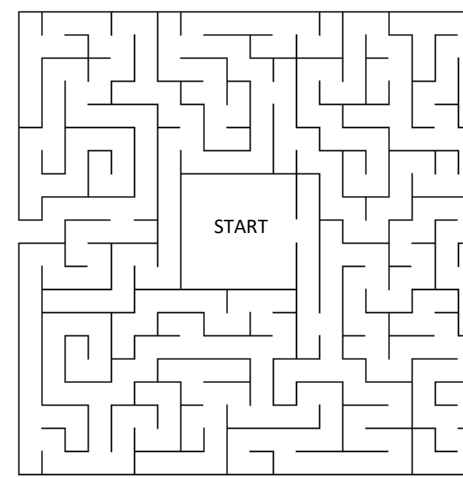
What’s more, holiday traditions are imbued with deep inner meaning. Ensure that your children know them and understand the values you’re hoping to instill in them.

The comfort, familiarity, and inner meanings of tradition will bring you peace.

#### Pray

Look to higher wisdom for the ultimate sense of peace. Seek answers to life’s bigger questions. Calm your thoughts, your desires, your worries, and your strife. There’s more to life than meets the eye. Get quiet. Ask for wisdom. Find peace.

## AMAZING ESCAPES!



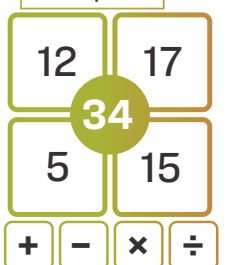
USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one “unique” solution but, there may also be “equivalent” solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1 + (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1



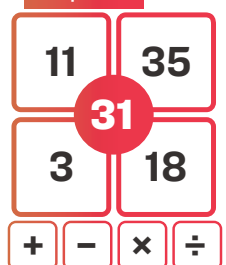
Solution For Easy 1  
(1 + 7) + (2 - 6)  
1 + (1 - 2 - 6)

Medium puzzle 1

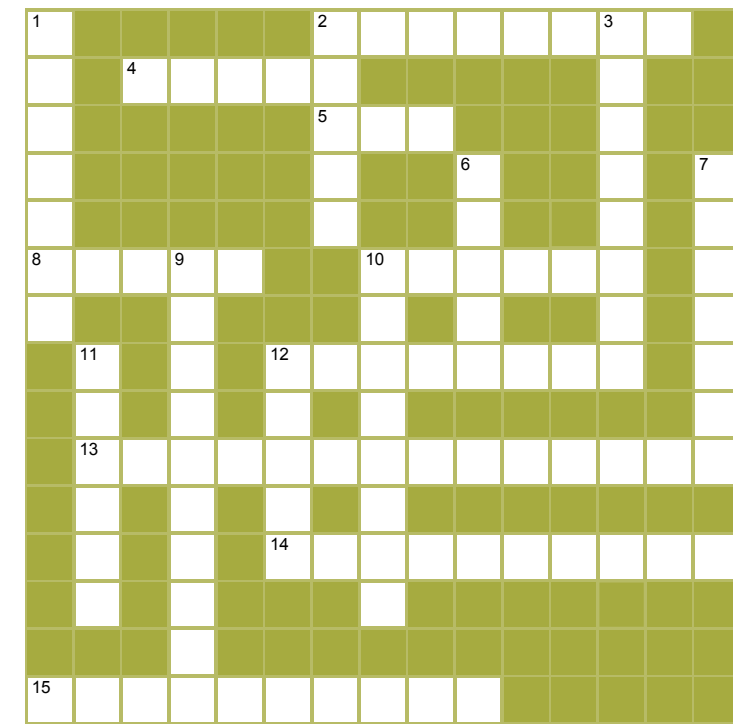


Solution for Medium 1  
11 + (61 - 9 + 21)  
(61 - 11) + (9 + 21)

Hard puzzle 1



Solution for Hard 1  
81 - 6 + 11 + 9C

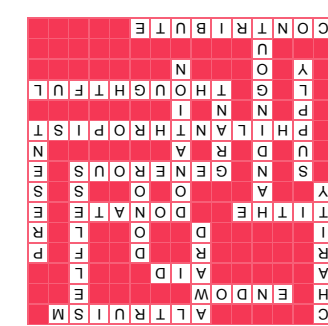


#### Down

- 1 “\_\_\_” begins at home” (7)
- 2 Give a prize to (5)
- 3 Altruistic (8)
- 4 Philanthropist (5)
- 5 Give a gift (7)
- 6 Distributing (7,3)
- 7 Act of philanthropy (8)
- 8 Provide free (6)
- 9 Make a wish come true (5)

#### Across

- 2 Unselfishness (8)
- 4 Give, in a way (5)
- 5 Helping hand (3)
- 8 Church donation (5)
- 10 Be generous (6)
- 12 Giving (8)
- 13 Benefactor (14)
- 14 Considerate (10)
- 15 Chip in (10)



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# 'You and I have a rendezvous with destiny'

— Ronald Reagan

**A**s a nation, we are once again facing the same darkness that President Reagan faced decades ago, one that we thought that we had fought off—the specter of communism.

We at The Epoch Times are far too familiar with this beast. Many of us are survivors of communist regimes and know their methods well.

This is why we've been able to keep going for two decades, despite being one of the Chinese Communist Party's biggest media targets. We work for nobody and nothing other than our readers and our mission of Truth and Tradition.

Now, when the United States has once again reached a point of decision, of whether we shall preserve the last best hope of man on earth or take the first step into a thousand years of darkness, we at The Epoch Times want to give you more than just-the-facts journalism. We want to make sure we are all on the right side of history.

As history has shown time and time again, the truth will always prevail, regardless of how many attempts there are to cover it up. **With you by our side, we will bring the truth to**

**light and see justice restored in our nation.**

**In history, communist regimes have fallen** because their people ultimately decided that they had had enough. There's no reason to believe that the socialist forces we see in America today won't be defeated in the same way.

**We at The Epoch Times want to give you more than just—the-facts journalism. We want to make sure we are all on the right side of history.**

The Epoch Times will continue to report as we always have—with integrity and the best interests of our readers in mind. It is our duty as Americans to preserve the best of the country that has given us so much.

Now, we'd like to ask for your help in getting our reporting in front of more Americans so that they can also have the truth at such a critical juncture in our history.



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