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## ARE YOU A 'SHARENT'?

### 5 THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE POSTING ABOUT YOUR KIDS

Last year, when most activities were off-limits because of the pandemic, I started doing what we all did during our months stuck indoors — scrolling through social media. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter became the No. 1 way to stay in touch with friends and family. If you're a parent and the same thing happened to you, keep reading!

Social media platforms have a lot of perks for parents. They're quick and easy ways to connect with people, you can join parenting groups, and you can keep your relatives in the loop on how your kids are growing and what they're up to. Plus, kids are hilarious and adorable, and pictures of them get tons of likes! But that begs the question: Do those pros outweigh the cons of putting our children's lives online?

One article on Vox claims that today's kids will have their faces posted in more than 1,000 pictures on social media before they're 5 years old. That's crazy to me! It also explained that becoming a "sharent" — a parent who posts information about their kids online — comes with risks. Here are just a few of them:

- 1. IDENTITY THIEVES** According to Vox, kids are particularly prone to identity theft because they don't have credit cards and other commitments that use their Social Security numbers. If you're a "sharent" and someone accesses your child's Social Security number through a data breach, they can then go to social media to get vital details like their birthday and home address, leading to total identity theft.
- 2. PORNOGRAPHY** Leah Plunkett, the author of "Sharenthood: Why We Should Think Before We Talk About Our Kids Online," says photos of kids on social media are sometimes stolen by child pornographers. Plunkett told Vox, "A number of the images that

are pornographic of children are pictures of real kids that are taken offline and photoshopped or otherwise retouched." Yikes!

- 3. KIDNAPPERS AND BURGLARS** If you like to post on social media about where you and/or your kids are, you could be tipping off potential kidnapers and burglars. When you post about your kids' day care, you're letting the whole world know where to find them, and by sharing details about a vacation, you're broadcasting that your home is empty. There's also an odd phenomenon called "digital kidnapping," where strangers steal photos of children online and repost them as their own, role-playing as the parent or the child.
- 4. SCREENSHOTS** Identity theft, child pornography, and other criminal activity is possible even if your social media accounts are private. If someone you trust screenshots one of your posts, they can post it anywhere and share it with anyone, including total strangers and, if their accounts are public, criminals.
- 5. PRIVACY AND CONSENT** Apparently, cute little kids grow up to hate the naked baby photos their parents post. According to Quartz, one survey of UK-based kids aged 12–16 revealed 70% of them "felt their parents didn't respect their online privacy." Our decisions now — especially if our kids are too young to give a thumbs up or down to what we're posting — can cause conflicts and resentment later.

Since reading up on these issues, I hope we'll all think twice before posting on social media. If you've found yourself in "sharent" territory lately, I hope you'll do the same! Our kids are counting on us, even if they don't know it yet.

*-Greg Herrman*

P.S. The Vox article is based on an episode of the "Reset" podcast called "Sharenting: How Much Should You Share About Your Kids Online?" If you want to learn more, you can check it out on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, or Spotify.

# GOODBYE, SHOE CHAOS!

## 3 STORAGE IDEAS THAT WILL SAVE YOU FROM TRIPPING

It's that time of year again: The kids are charging inside, kicking off their shoes wherever they please, and tearing into the house! If you've already tripped over a dozen pairs of sneakers, it's time to create and enforce a better shoe storage solution. Here are three functional and attractive methods to try.

### 1. THE DIY PVC PIPE SHOE CUBBY

This shoe storage project is all the rage on Pinterest! It turns out that when you cut a large PVC pipe into sections, paint them your preferred color(s), and glue them together with PVC glue, the honeycomb effect looks both fun and elegant. You can try this in your mudroom or in your kids' rooms to make putting away their shoes feel like a game. Check out the video "PVC Pipe Shoe Rack" by Home Made Simple on YouTube for a step-by-step guide to building a floor rack or Instructables.com for tips on mounting your rack to the wall.

### 2. THE OVER-THE-DOOR SHOE BAG

If you don't have the floor space for a traditional shoe rack, consider investing in an over-the-door shoe bag. These fabric, clear plastic, or upscale mesh bags hook over the top of a door and are covered in pockets for shoes. Many can hold up to 36 pairs! Best of all, when they're hanging on the back of your mudroom or closet door, your shoes will be both easy to access and tucked out of sight. You can

find affordable racks on Amazon.com for less than \$10 or fancier models at Walmart for under \$20.

### 3. THE HANGING CLOSET 'SHOE FILE'

Speaking of closets, the "shoe file" is the perfect storage solution for a coat closet or any other closet near your main door. Instead of hanging on the door, this pocket-filled organizer cascades from a hanger! Many of the pockets are conveniently located at eye level; you can load up your closet with as many files as you need, and each file can hold up to 18 pairs of shoes. ContainerStore.com sells elegant shoe files starting at \$12.99.



"I would like to thank the Herrman & Herrman team, especially Mr. Jonathan Garza. Never thought it could happen to me, but I was involved in a bad accident caused by a 53-foot truck/trailer.

"I remember waking up in the ambulance and thinking that I did not want to go to the hospital, even after the EMS personnel told me that I had suffered many injuries.

"All I could think about was how I was going to be able to afford the hospital and doctor bills, which were piling up by the minute. As I lay in the hospital, the staff told me all that they had done to me, and everything that was still to be done. Among other things, therapy would be needed to get me walking again. I was more and more concerned about the financial burden that was surely coming my way.

"It was then that a friend recommended Herrman & Herrman and asked me to speak to them to see if anything could be done about helping me with my case. I was very fortunate

to speak to Mr. Garza that same day, and after a quick meeting (with me still in the hospital bed), Mr. Garza and his team at Herrman & Herrman took over my worries.

"I did not have to be concerned about any of the medical bills, which were very expensive. Not having to worry about the financial burden or look for help from many doctors' offices definitely helped me focus on getting better for my kids and family.

"I am very thankful for Mr. Garza and the Herrman & Herrman team coming through for me in the most professional and humane way. I am also very thankful with them for the end result of my case. I am looking forward to living my new life pain-free for many years to come and highly recommend this team of professionals."

*-Humberto G.*

# REMEMBER THE 'MCDONALD'S HOT COFFEE' LAWSUIT?

## IT WAS JUSTIFIED ALL ALONG

Back in 1992, an elderly woman named Stella Liebeck sued McDonald's in what became known as the infamous "hot coffee lawsuit." The public relations team at McDonald's has made sure the case is remembered as frivolous, but, like the third-degree burns Stella Liebeck suffered from a cup of McDonald's coffee, her lawsuit was dead serious.

The facts were simple: Mrs. Liebeck used the drive-thru with her grandson, who was at the wheel. Once the car stopped moving, she placed the cup of coffee she'd just ordered between her legs and tried to add some creamer. The cup tipped over, dumping the contents into her lap, causing third-degree burns over 16% of her body.

She required hospitalization for eight days. Whirlpool debridement of the burns and skin grafts followed. She was at least partially disabled for more than two years, and that's to say nothing of her pain and suffering.



For all of this damage, Mrs. Liebeck asked McDonald's for \$20,000 — arguably not even enough to pay her hospital bills.

When McDonald's refused to pay more than \$800, the case went to court, and it came out that they'd known for at least 10 years about the dangers their hot coffee represented, with over 700 recorded burns and several lawsuits. But in 1992, their policy was to store coffee at 180–190 degrees F, which is almost the boiling point! Furthermore, McDonald's higher-ups testified on the stand that no matter what happened,

they had no intention of changing their behavior. Unsurprisingly, at the end of the trial, McDonald's was hit with a \$2.9 million penalty.

Although the penalty was later reduced, McDonald's still dragged Mrs. Liebeck's name through the mud in the press, with their version of the story being the one that stuck in the public consciousness. But it wouldn't change the fact that they had to pay her around \$700,000 at the end of the day — or that their coffee is now being served at a reasonable temperature.

## ONE-PAN APPLE CIDER CHICKEN

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1 tsp salt, divided
- 1/2 tsp black pepper, divided
- 1/2 cup apple cider
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 4 tsp olive oil, divided
- 3 sweet apples, cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 2 tsp fresh rosemary, chopped, plus more for garnish

### DIRECTIONS

1. Sprinkle chicken with 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper. Set aside.
2. In a small bowl, combine apple cider and mustard. Set aside.
3. In a large skillet over medium heat, warm 2 tsp olive oil. When shimmering, add chicken thighs top-side down. Cook for 4 minutes, then flip and cook for 4 more minutes. Transfer to a plate and cover with foil. Wipe the skillet clean.
4. Heat the remaining oil in the skillet, then add sliced apples, remaining salt and pepper, and rosemary. Cook for 5 minutes.
5. Return the chicken to the skillet and add apple cider-mustard mixture. Cook for 5 minutes, then serve sprinkled with rosemary!

Inspired by WellPlated.com

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## WILLIE THE PARROT: THE ULTIMATE DANGER ALARM

Willie the Quaker parrot was a pretty remarkable bird. Like many parrots, he had a knack for mimicking certain sounds and words, including barking dog noises, human kissing noises, and a fair share of swear words. However, what made Willie a hero one day was not just what he said, but also when he said it.

Meagan Howard, Willie's owner, brought him over to her friend Samantha Kuusk's house while she babysat Kuusk's little daughter, Hannah. Hannah and Willie were both in the kitchen while Meagan prepared a Pop-Tart for Hannah's breakfast. After placing the Pop-Tart on the table, Meagan stepped away to use the bathroom.

While she was away, however, Hannah got her hands on the Pop-Tart and began to scarf it down, lodging a piece in her windpipe. She started choking and was unable to signal to Meagan that something was wrong. Luckily, Willie came to the rescue.

Willie began squawking and shrieking, saying the words "Mama! Baby!" over and over again. In a matter of moments, Meagan knew something was wrong. She rushed to the kitchen to find a very frantic Willie and a very blue Hannah. Meagan jumped into action. She grabbed Hannah and



performed the Heimlich maneuver until the Pop-Tart piece dislodged itself and shot out of her mouth.

Meagan may have been the one to stop Hannah from choking, but she insists that Willie was the real hero of the story. If he hadn't used his unique mimicking skills to get Meagan's attention, she doesn't know what would have happened. It's worth noting that before that incident, Willie had never used the phrase "Mama! Baby!" before. He knew something was wrong, and he knew how to get help.

Shortly after the incident, Willie received the local Red Cross chapter's Animal Lifesaver Award for his heroic actions.