

# NANNY MAGAZINE

teach | play | love

*articles and essays to  
energize and inspire*

**SPECIAL ISSUE: WINTER 2017**

**Contracts,**

**Bad Press,**

**& Why You Should**

**LOVE YOUR JOB**



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**Our First Ever  
#NannyLife  
Special Issue:  
Articles and  
Essays to  
Energize and  
Inspire**

**for nannies,  
by nannies**

NANNY MAGAZINE

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# NANNY MAGAZINE

teach play love



Nannying: nobody said it would be easy... but it definitely rocks.

## Editor's Note

Hello, dear readers. Welcome to this special issue of *Nanny Magazine*, the first of its kind. I don't need to tell you that nannying is hard work, whatever the age of the children in your care. You, Nanny, are so many things. You are a personal chef for the world's pickiest eaters, a sounding board for your peers and the parents who employ you. You are a cheerleader even when you have spit-up on your favorite shirt and a mile-long to-do list. You are playing a huge part in shaping the future generation of citizens of our world, and we think that's great. You are emotionally invested in all aspects of your career. It is often thankless work. You may work in isolation and feel that nobody else could possibly understand just what it is you go through on a daily basis because really, how could someone who has never been a nanny truly get it? We get it.

Because some of you are new around here, I'd like to take a second to introduce you to *Nanny Magazine* and share what's so special about this issue. *Nanny Magazine* is all about you, published for nannies by nannies, covering all aspects of the nanny life you love so much. But enough about us. What's more important to our staff with this issue is what it can do for you. We want this collection to serve as an inspiration, a jumpstart, an echo. Read it when you want to be reminded about just how awesome you are for choosing to be a nanny. The work you are doing is important and valuable. Nobody knows that like we do. Enjoy our Very Best #NannyLife Reader and we hope you carry the message with you all year long: the #NannyLife is the best life.

Love,  
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# Dear Jackson

## A LETTER TO MY CHARGE ON THE EVE OF MY LEAVE

By Elizabeth Conner.

Dear Jackson,

As I sit down tonight packing my bags to move across the country, you are packing your bags to start middle school; I can't help but think of the first night we met. Your parents were taking a much deserved date night, your brothers were both in bed, and you, my little man, were screaming your lungs out with the new nanny who was trying to put you to sleep. As I stumbled into your room I couldn't turn on your lamp; your family just moved in and must have forgotten to put a new light bulb in it. On top of that, in the dark I couldn't figure out the dang sound machine that was the trick to calming you down. So with no other hope I staggered to the rocking chair. As we rocked you calmed down and eventually fell asleep. With you lying so sweetly in my arms, not knowing that one night would turn into 11 years, I began to pray for you and the man you would one day grow up to be.

Now as life and circumstance is about to put a whole country between us, I want to share some final words to carry you into the next season of your life.

Jackson, always remember who you are: As you enter middle school and then high school you will grow from a boy into a man. Your peers, educators, co-workers, team mates, and pretty much everyone else you meet will try to tell you who you are and who you need to be. Remember your roots, remember your faith, and remember your morals. Don't give into peer pressure; stay the fun-loving, joy-filled person you are. Grow into who you are, not into who people think you should be.

Remember your parents are on your side: Having known your parents for over 12 years, and half of them as a teenager, I can honestly say you have some of the most down to earth, realistic, and caring parents out there. They are understanding and truly want what is best for you. Don't lie to them, don't break curfew, and please don't ever think you can outsmart them. Your dad is one of the best tech geeks out there and your mom a social butterfly – between those two ends, any deception doesn't stand a chance. Be open and honest with them and you will have the best allies you can imagine in your parents.

Forgive and move on: Nothing that happens to you in the next 7 years is worth staying mad for. No matter what someone says to you or about you – it is not worth years of anger. You will have to live with your schoolmates for the better part of your foreseeable future so it is not worth holding grudges. Be the bigger man: forgive and move on. The hate you could hold onto will harm more than help. Forgiveness is freeing. In the end if you don't forgive, you are the only one losing out as I guarantee you the other person has no idea they hurt you that much.

You don't have to be friends with everyone but be kind to them all: You will meet people in life that you don't like, that you loathe, and that you just don't click with. You will meet people that you genuinely like and then those few rare friendships that will last a life time. So whether you meet your best friend or your worst enemy, be kind! You don't know their story, you don't know where they came from, and you don't know what their parents or nannies have taught (or not taught) them. Their home lives could suck - they might not have food at home, clothes that fit, or anyone that loves them. They might not even have a place to call home. Whatever it is, remember how well you have it in life. You have parents that love and adore you, two big brothers who will always have your back, and more food, toys, clothes, games, and electronics than some people will see in a life time. You are incredibly blessed – being kind to others is a small way to share your blessing.

Finally Jack, love with all you have! Tennyson said it best in saying “'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all”. The “selfless, lasting, always forgiving, best friend, I got your back” kind of love. Some of the best love I have ever experienced was from a sweet little boy who just wanted to be near me. That little boy was you, Jackson. After going through one of the most painful experiences of my life, you wrapped your little hands around mine and told me it would be okay. When I needed a hug you were always right there without being asked. And the laughter you have brought into my life – my little man, I swear I have spilled more tears laughing with you than crying over a broken heart. The love you have to offer others is pure and sweet, it comes in all shapes and sizes. Love others - your parents, your friends, your brothers, your teachers, the kid that no one likes, and someday down the road that special girl that walks into your life. Love with all you have!

Jackson, as we laugh together tomorrow for one last time know that it won't be my last day with you because you are a memory in my life. You, my little man, have a piece of my heart that will always belong to you. The night your parents asked me to be your nanny none of us could have known that we could become so much more. You aren't just the little boy who I took care of through the years – you have become the little brother I never had.

I will miss you and love you,

Yours Always,

Your Nanny

# Why Do We Even Care?

By Stephanie Fassler.

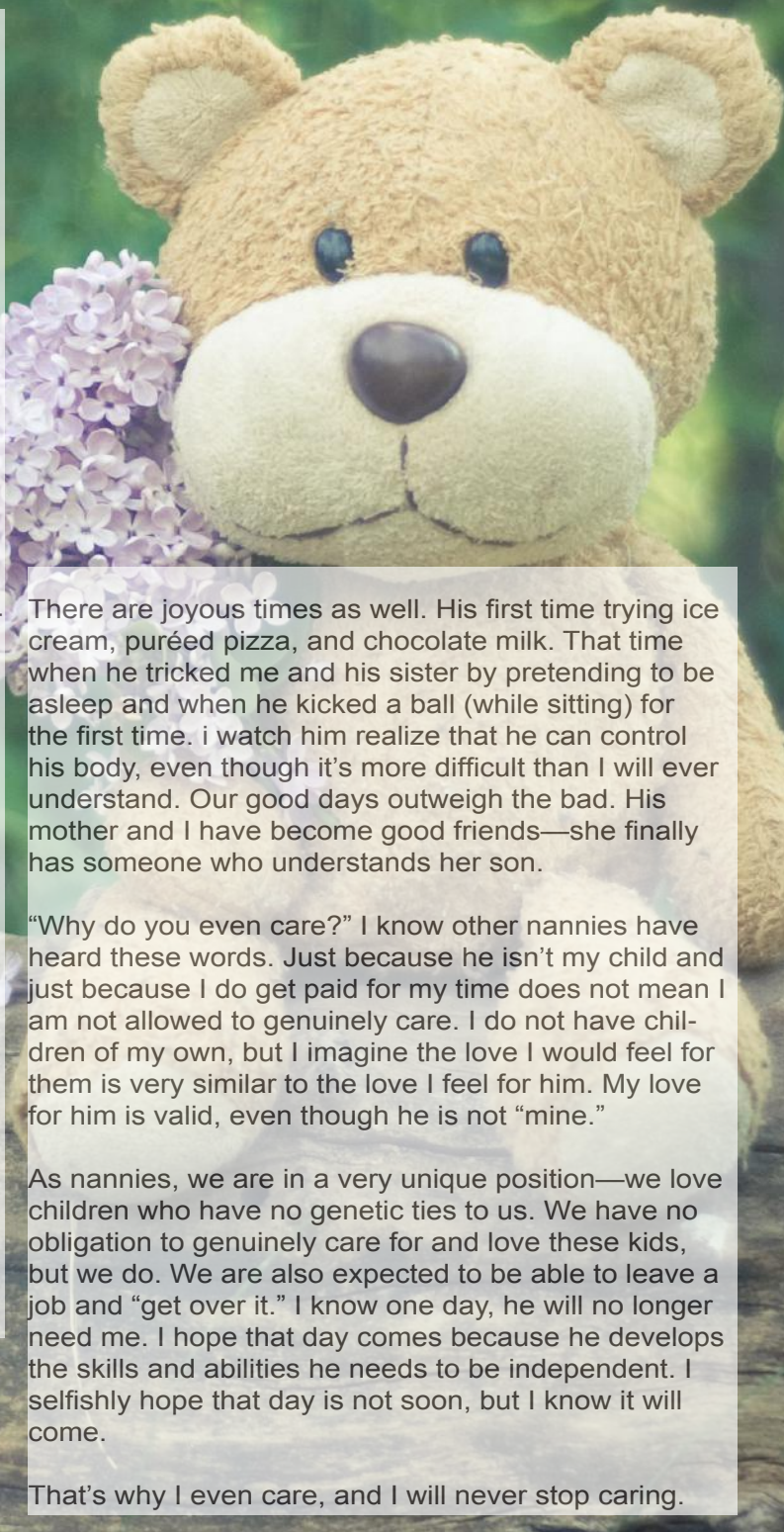
## “Why do you even care? It is not like he is your child...”

The words pierced me. I know he isn't mine. Of his entire three and a half years of life, I have only known him nine months. But the moment the words came out of her mouth, it cut deep. It was someone in my personal life who said that to me. In the moment, all I could do was walk away. After I did some soul searching and nap-time snuggles, I have a response.

I care because I love him. I spend 49 hours a week with him. I have been with him for nine months; that's a total of over 2,400 hours of my life dedicated to this sweet little boy. He is more gentle than most little boys because his abilities are different. Doctors are not able to tell us if he is cognitively aware or if he will ever crawl, walk, or speak. I believe he will, though. Our days consist of hustling from one therapy appointment to another. Our conversations are one way. Our bond is deep.

How could one not care? On my days off, he comes to mind a few times. I'll be out with my husband and remember something sweet the little one did. Thankfully, my husband tolerates me constantly doting over other people's babies. I care because I have had to use CPR to sustain his little life while waiting for what seemed like an eternity for paramedics. I care because he needs an advocate. His parents have full-time jobs and another daughter, and they are very busy. He needs me to fill the gaps.

I need him too. He has taught me to see the world in a different light. I am more creative now. I can change him while he lays on my lap because public changing tables are too small for him. I can climb six flights of stairs while carrying a thirty pound child, a bag, and two oxygen tanks. I can remain calm during seizures and recite his (long) list of medical conditions to medical professionals.



There are joyous times as well. His first time trying ice cream, puréed pizza, and chocolate milk. That time when he tricked me and his sister by pretending to be asleep and when he kicked a ball (while sitting) for the first time. I watch him realize that he can control his body, even though it's more difficult than I will ever understand. Our good days outweigh the bad. His mother and I have become good friends—she finally has someone who understands her son.

“Why do you even care?” I know other nannies have heard these words. Just because he isn't my child and just because I do get paid for my time does not mean I am not allowed to genuinely care. I do not have children of my own, but I imagine the love I would feel for them is very similar to the love I feel for him. My love for him is valid, even though he is not “mine.”

As nannies, we are in a very unique position—we love children who have no genetic ties to us. We have no obligation to genuinely care for and love these kids, but we do. We are also expected to be able to leave a job and “get over it.” I know one day, he will no longer need me. I hope that day comes because he develops the skills and abilities he needs to be independent. I selfishly hope that day is not soon, but I know it will come.

That's why I even care, and I will never stop caring.

# Come again?

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# DEALING WITH THE INDUSTRY'S BAD PRESS

By Glenda Propst.

## **Doesn't it seem like the only headlines you ever hear in the news about nannies or other childcare workers is negative?**

We seem to hear only about those stories where the nanny runs away with her DadBoss or suffocates her charges, leaving the families that hired them in ruins. Stories like these give nannies a bad rep. They can make us feel bad and sick inside, and when it comes to the public, these stories do nothing to improve their opinion of our profession. How do we as an industry and as individuals deal with negative press?

## **Are We Powerless?**

Can we control the choices of a few bad nannies who make the word 'nanny' sound like a four-letter word? No. Can we control what

the news anchors choose to report on television? No. Can we help it that there are bound to be bad apples in every profession? Certainly not. As individuals we don't have a lot of power in determining what happens in the world around us and what is labeled as newsworthy to the press, but we can help how we respond to these messages.

To put it simply, the general public doesn't understand what nannies do. The misconceptions are farfetched (nannies are only for the very wealthy) and misguided (nannies are only nannies because they can't find 'real' jobs). Sadly, the people who hold these opinions about our profession are simply uninformed, and the mass media's biased reporting does nothing to make this better. And so it's up to us as nannies to pick up the slack.

So what can you do as an individual about negative press? You may think there's no recourse. But there is something you can do. There is actually a lot you can do, but you have to be willing to step out of your comfort zone, come out from behind your computer, and find your voice.

## **Crusade for Education**

Don't complain because we don't have standards; work to educate parents, nannies, and agencies about what sets nannies apart among other childcare choices. We need to find our voice and speak out about the issues in our industry that impact us the most. Show your nanny pride by correcting people whenever they make an unfounded assumption about your job. People who work outside of the nanning industry rarely understand the responsibility our jobs come with.



It isn't all coloring and singing and seducing DadBoss. Shaping the next generation of upstanding young citizens is not a walk through the park. With lesson plans, carpooling, nutrition planning, and so much more, nannies have their work cut out for them; there's hardly any time to seduce DadBoss anyway.

## **Be the One**

Don't say, "Someone should do something about this problem." Rather, be the "someone" who takes action to set the change in motion. We need to stop expecting someone else to pave our way and learn to pave our own way instead.

**“Sadly, the people who hold these opinions about our profession are simply uninformed, and the mass media’s biased reporting does nothing to make this better.”**

## **Check Your Online Presence**

With people today increasingly living their lives online, anything negative you say on the Web can and will come back to haunt you. Stop being catty. Stop picking fights. Stop portraying yourself in a way that anyone could perceive as being negative. The nanning profession will thank you. We need to stop criticizing each other and start reaching out to new nannies to mentor them and encourage them. We need to find ways

to focus our energy on effecting positive changes within our industry. Start by being nice to people online. If someone unfamiliar with the nanning world stumbles upon your social media profile in which all you do is bash your MomBoss, tear into other nannies, or make fun of your charges, what will you make them think about nannies at large?

## **Join Forces**

There is strength in numbers. If you don't have one, start a local nanny support group, mentor a nanny, join a national organization like the International Nanny Association or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), or attend Nannypalooza. Get involved with planning an event for National Nanny Recognition Week or National Nanny Training Day. These are just some ways you can get involved with other likeminded nannies.

Start in your community and then reach out beyond. It's great to network online, but you never really know someone until you meet them in person, have a heart to heart, and learn something new together or share a meal.

Go to a conference. Join INA, NAEYC, or your local NAEYC affiliate and attend their conferences and local workshops. Keep educating yourself, stay abreast of what is going on in the world of child development, keep learning, and never stop growing. What you give will come back to you 100 fold (sometimes) and sometimes it might come back to smack you the face (ouch), but keep reaching out and keep giving back and keep working to make a difference in the way the public perceives us and our career choice.

## **Make a Difference**

If we as nannies don't do it, who will? And if we as nannies don't do it, who has the most to lose?

I challenge you to start today and decide what you can do to change the face and the future of our profession. Don't expect to see this change immediately. It won't happen instantly, but in the last 30 years I have seen a lot of positive changes. It's really up to you and me to be the change in this industry because if we don't do it, who will?

## **Start Making Positive Waves**

Not all news is bad news. Do something amazing with your life and your career and inspire other nannies to do so as well. Let the media catch wind of your accomplishments and we can collectively get nannies the positive recognition in the news that we all deserve! Together we can inform the media that we're not all husband-stealing baby-killing psychos, and that our career choice is valid and stems from a place of love.

## **Stay Alert and Brush Your Shoulders Off**

Understand that the negative press about our profession isn't going to stop overnight, but don't let it get you down. Just keep being the best nanny you can be and realize there are rotten apples in every profession. And remember, if you see something, say something. If a nanny on your block is acting strangely or in a way you feel is threatening toward the charges in his or her care or the family, say something. It could just save a life and spare another negative news article from ever getting published.

This article originally appeared on [nannymag.com](http://nannymag.com) and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author. Photo via Pexels.

# Loving a Child Who Isn't Yours

By Michelle LaRowe.

When you sign up to be a nanny, it's the only job you go into where the ultimate promotion is being let go because you're no longer needed. If you've done your job well, that is. And anyone who's ever been a nanny for any significant amount of time knows that you simply can't do the job well without investing your time, your energy, your talent, and most importantly, your heart.

But putting your heart into your work isn't such a new concept and it's not one unique to nannies. Consider Michelangelo. You can't look at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and not see his heart poured out in paint. And you can't read Christopher Marlowe's "A Red, Red Rose" without feeling his heart beat for the one he adores.

These creations are expressions of the creator's love, without question, and they've become gifts to the world. It's not so different from the children nannies care for, in a way: creations born out of expressions of love, gifts given for the world to admire.

But unlike these masterpieces, the children nannies care for are living, breathing beings and they love back.

And they are not the nanny's creation.

## Is Loving Someone Else's Child Really Possible?

Sure, people love the works of a great artist, but can they love the artist's creation as much as the artist himself does?

There are different types of love: agape (unconditional love), philea (friendship), eros (romantic love), and storge (familial love). But can any of these types of love be measured? Does it have to be?

A biological mother loves her biological children. The birth of the child doesn't define or cause the love; the love flows naturally from the parents' hearts and they choose to embrace it.

The adopted mother loves her adopted children. A piece of paper doesn't define or cause the love; it flows naturally from the parents' hearts and they choose to embrace it.

The nanny loves the children she cares for. A paycheck doesn't define or cause the love; it flows naturally from her caregiver's heart and that person chooses to embrace it.

Love isn't measured by miles. There's enough to go around. And love isn't required. It's a choice.

Colleen Jones, an occupational therapist in a small-town public school system, former nanny, and mom to three boys adopted from Ethiopia defines the love she has for her children as being the same kind of love she has for her biological family.

But for some people, loving other people's children may not come so easily. "Some people may not have the capacity to love and care for other people's children. I love the children I nannied for. I love the children in my school. It's just different, mostly because of the long-term responsibility. I think some people are just capable of loving all children and others really just aren't," Jones says.

And that's what makes nannies different. Good nannies have the capacity to love children and the desire to put that love into practice. While it takes more than the love of children to be a good nanny, that's just where it all starts.

## Getting Paid to Love

All parents want their children to be well cared

for. One of the things parents want most is to have a caregiver who is excited about spending time with their child. And that excitement is something that good nannies can't fake.

No nanny shuts her love off for the children when she's off duty. In fact, nannies go on to love the children they've cared for long after they've left a position. You either love the children or you don't, and when you do, that love is long lasting and far reaching.

"When you shut the lights off at the end of the day you don't turn your heart off too," said nanny Gael Ann Dow, a Massachusetts live-in nanny with over 28 years of experience. After spending 8 years with one family in a position that ended in 1998, she still celebrates holidays with her former charges. "I've spent 22 years celebrating Christmas with their family, more Christmases than I've spent celebrating with my own. Over the years I went from nanny, to favorite aunt, to friend. We have grown like a family and I love them like my own."

## Dealing with Parental Jealousy

Children and nannies who share a healthy long-term relationship have something important in common. They have parents who welcome their nannies into their family and encourage the development of a healthy bond. "Parents deserve credit for setting their hearts aside and allowing other people to love their children" Dow says.

Dr. Jeanne Segal, author of *The Language of Emotional Intelligence* and cocreator of [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org), seems to agree that welcoming their nannies into their family and encouraging them form a healthy bond with their children is important. In a recent interview with [www.eNannysource.com](http://www.eNannysource.com), she shared that parents should not be threatened by the bond children and their nannies share. She says that they should thank their lucky stars that their nanny is helping to create a loving human being out of their child.

But sometimes dealing with jealousy is easier said than done. "You can call it jealousy or you can call it insecurity. A new mom who is not really 100% sure of what she's doing can be intimidated by an experienced nanny who can come in, take over, and have all the answers," says Glenda Propst, 1991 International Nanny

Association (INA) Nanny of the Year and founder of Nanny Transitions, a support network dedicated to helping nannies through the transition of leaving a family.

“Every woman and every mom is different, but in every position there is a line that nannies can step over from doing the job to threatening the mother’s role. With experience, nannies learn the boundaries, learn how to gauge mom’s reaction, and learn to develop a gentle approach,” says Propst.

Broaching the topic of jealousy during the interview can also help to get parents thinking ahead and help to set the tone for the relationship. “A mom who doesn’t really want to go back to work but feels she needs to in order to stay in her career may feel resentful of the time her nanny spends with her child and may be more threatened by her nanny than a mom who knows going back to work will make her a better mom,” Propst says. “When parents are presented with the opportunity to explore their feelings it gives them a chance to think about how they may feel rather than simply reacting when they experience a new feeling.”

But sometimes nannies can get jealous too. “Sometimes nannies spend so much time with the children they desire to be loved more,” cautions Marcia Hall, 2011 INA Nanny of the Year, adoptive and foster mom, and owner of Strong Roots Family Coaching. “A nanny’s role is really to encourage the parent relationship and to reassure the parents that she wants what is best for the child, and that loving her parents most is best,” she continues.

“And it’s okay for moms to be jealous. As a mom, I know it’s normal. Nannies can help ease feeling of jealousy by encouraging the parental relationship and by helping

moms to feel confident.”

Propst agrees. “Asking the mom how she thinks a problem should be solved and presenting possible solutions using resources like articles can help parents to feel more involved and secure in the role.” Sometimes it’s easier for a mom to swallow advice given in an article than spouted from the mouth of a nanny who appears to have all the answers.

### *Nanny Turned Mom*

The art of being a nanny is loving the children like they are your own while knowing that they aren’t. “As a nanny you learn how much you can love the children in your care without being devastated when the job inevitably ends. I still think of those kids as ‘my kids’ but now I have my own family, so it’s a bit different,” Hall says.

“I certainly love the children I’ve worked with, but being a mom is different. I can give my own children every single ounce of energy because I know they won’t be leaving me.”

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*actually  
hilarious  
things your  
charges have  
said*

**As nannies we are around our charges most of the day so we get the pleasure of hearing all the funny things that come out of their mouths. Now try not to laugh out loud during nap-time!**

#### *Jack and the Beanstalk*

“The four-year-old and I were playing Jack and the Beanstalk and I was the giant. When the boy came close to me I’d say, ‘Who disturbs my slumber?’ When the boy asked to be the giant, I snuck up on him and he yelled, ‘Who deserves my lumber?’ It was cute!”

-Rie in Michigan

#### *Like Mommy’s?*

“The other day I was sitting at the breakfast table with Big Brother and Baby Brother. Big Brother is sitting in his underwear and he looks and he points to his nipples and says to me, ‘Do you have these?’ and I said, ‘Yes, I sure do.’ And he says, ‘Oh, are they big like Mommy’s?’ I said ‘I don’t think so.’ Then he said, ‘Oh, because they have to grow more?’”

-Ally in California

# Don't Eat Me, I'm Not Kosher

By **Kassandra Polowski.**

## *Babies and Pickles?*

"One of my charges was explaining to me that she wanted her mother to have a baby and she knew how to make that happen. I reluctantly asked her how and she stated she would 'trick Mom into eating pickles and ice cream!' I couldn't help but laugh!"

-Amber in Pennsylvania

## *Surprisingly Kosher*

"I was teasing a three-year-old girl I was watching with 'I gotcha where I want you and now I'm gonna...' when she screamed, 'Don't eat me! I'm not kosher!'"

-Kathryn in Washington

## *Passing Gas*

"A five-year-old boy was sitting on the couch and passed gas. He yelled to his brother, 'My butt just burped!'"

-Lora in Ohio

## *Hot Gym*

"I am going through menopause and I guess I haven't been discreet when I have a hot flash. One of my seven-year-old triplets told the gym teacher that she was having a hot flash after a rigorous game of kickball. The gym teacher told me he laughed all day about that one."

-Denise in New Jersey

## *From Behind*

"My sister nannies a ten-year-old boy. The other day he was trying to hit her with a ball and ended up throwing the ball and hitting the wall. Then the ball bounced off the wall and hit my sister and he yelled, 'Oh my God, I hit it from behind!'"

-Sarah from Minnesota

## *I Can Handle It*

"The boys I nanny for are four-year-old twins. Well Kid 2 was calling Kid 1 names in the back seat. We were all telling him he wasn't being nice, but he wasn't listening. Then Kid 1 said, 'You are a great big bully!' Kid 2 instantly started crying and Kid 1 said, 'I guess I handled that one, guys.'"

-Amber from Michigan

## *Batteries Not Included*

"One of my little boys a number of years ago was about two and a half years old when his five-year-old sister told him to turn on his listening ears. He promptly replied, 'I can't; they need new batteries.'"

-Stacie from New Mexico

## *Angel Feet*

"I was sitting on the couch the other day drinking a bottled water when my charge, who is two years old, said, 'Nanny,

what are you drinking? Is that soda?' I said, 'No, it's water.' He then says, 'Nanny, you can't drink beer.' So I said, 'No, Nanny doesn't like beer. Where did you hear about beer?' To which he replied, 'Daddy drinks beer and it makes his face smell like angel's feet.' Angel is his dog. I about died laughing after this."

-Kimberly from Massachusetts

## *Tiny Home*

"I once was taking my charges to the botanical gardens, and there was a cement enclosure at the entrance where a man was taking tickets. My three-year-old charge looked in and said, 'Sir, your house is so very small. Where do you sleep?'"

-Cindy from Colorado

## *Jesus Is Santa*

"My charge was talking about wanting a new toy. We were in the car when he said he was going to wish Jesus would bring him one. I said, 'Jesus isn't Santa. You can't ask for toys from Jesus.' Then he says, 'I wish to Santa Jesus for him to bring me the toy, amen.'"

-Lindsey from Michigan

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I am a nanny. People tend to think I sit on the couch and watch TV all day while the kids do their own thing. They urge me to get a real job. They assume I'm just an overpaid babysitter who keeps the kids alive while the parents aren't there. According to them, I have one of those easy jobs where I really don't have to do anything. In reality, their ideas of what I do are far from the truth. So what is the truth? What does it really mean to be a nanny?

As a nanny, I am trusted to love and care for my charges just as their parents would if they were home. I am a part of a parenting team where I am responsible for making daily decisions regarding health, diet, and educational

while she is at work. Finally, I am a caregiver who knows just what the children need from her when they are missing Mommy and Daddy.

I nanny for two girls, ages 5 and 2. I've devoted the past two years to learning how to be the best nanny I can be for these girls and their family. I've learned to understand what they need. For instance, the 2-year-old girl needs to carry around her own backpack while her sister gets ready for school in order to be comfortable with her sister leaving for the day without her. I discovered quite quickly that the 5-year-old girl is not a morning person... unless there is baking involved. I've learned that children need you to be honest with them just as much as we need them to be honest

when we wrap up our freshly baked cookies and I watch the girls place them in containers with big smiles on their faces. They carry the containers as we go around to deliver treats to our friends, and the girls were able to learn what it means to give to others. Those smiles on their faces and thank-you notes we get are what make the baking messes worth it.

You see, my job is real. I have a hand in raising the children who are our future, a hand in teaching them right from wrong. When these little people are grown and are doing their part to influence our society, I can say that I had a part in influencing them. Being a nanny means I haven't gone a day without thinking of these kids since the moment we met. Their smiles are contagious.

They are a part of who I am. This job is a significant part of my life, and I truly cannot imagine doing anything else.

# What It Means to Be a Nanny

activities. I work ten-hour days with no breaks, and if I do find myself watching TV during the day, it is likely to be the newest taping of Peppa Pig or Dora the Explorer.

So when people tell me I should get a real job, I like to remind them that I do I have a real job. I actually have many. I am a teacher who knows how to hide lessons in all of my charges' favorite games and activities. I am a nurse who knows which kind of straw will get her charges to drink the most fluids. I am a chef who knows that it is relatively impossible to hide vegetables in mac and cheese, a stylist who knows exactly where each child's favorite outfit is at all times, and a photographer who keeps mommy up to date on all of her kids' daily activities

with us. I've learned to protect them without being overbearing and to love them as if they are my own, even though they aren't. They have taught me that specific mixture of happiness, sadness, excitement, loss, and gain that comes with watching the children you love grow and change. I've learned just how fortunate I am to be a part of these girls' childhood and to be a part of the memories they will cherish forever.

Every day is not all fun and games, this much is true. There have been those mornings when the girls are crying on my shoulder, wishing Mommy could be home today. Times when raw eggs are on the floor and the bag of flour is upside down on the counter while the youngest is licking granulated sugar out of her dirty hands, and I wonder why I ever thought baking with two kids was practical, until later that day

By Brooke Baker. This article originally appeared on [nannymag.com](http://nannymag.com) and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author. Photo via Pexels.



A Nanny  
Magazine  
favorite

# I'm a Nanny, Not a Babysitter

*(Yes, There's a Difference)*

By Amanda Duniak.



Go ahead,  
tell me my job  
isn't real...

When I was much younger and just starting out as a nanny, if someone were to call me a babysitter I would not have been offended. I didn't realize, at the time, that there was a difference between the two titles. If someone were to call me a babysitter now that I've been in the field for 15 years, I can guarantee they would get a dirty look from me. You know the kind... when you tell a two year old it's time to stop playing with his favorite toy and take a nap. One of those looks.

My job as a nanny is my career. It is my passion. Using the term "babysitter" to describe what I do on a daily basis borders on degrading for many reasons. Now I understand that some people just really do not know the difference. It's all the same to them. I'm watching kids, therefore I am a babysitter. I don't know about you, but my job as a nanny almost never entails sitting of any kind and it is so much more than

just watching the children! There have been numerous occasions in which I had to describe to a person exactly what it is I do as a nanny, and more often than not, I have found myself trying to sell this person on my career choice. When I sit back and think about it, I shouldn't have to prove to anyone that my choice to be a nanny is indeed a valid career choice! I don't question teachers about why they teach or whether or not it's worth it. I don't question the bank tellers, the sales associates, or the gas station attendants, either! But why is it that people are always questioning me on my career choice? Why should I be questioned?

It does happen, though, and through all of the various jobs I have held over the years, being a nanny has been the least stressful and most profitable, and it's been the only job with which I have truly been happy. In my opinion, it is one of the best career choices for someone like me who has always

worked with kids, who has wanted to be a teacher and went to school for education, who likes to be outgoing and creative, and is just an all-around loving person. The next time someone calls you a babysitter or asks what the difference is and how you can survive on a nanny's salary, you can call upon some of the facts below:

*"Why is it that people are always questioning me on my career choice?"*

A babysitter is someone who comes on occasion or on an as-needed basis to watch the kids. It is usually for a short period of time and the pay is on an hourly basis, whereas a nanny can be paid hourly as well but usually with a specified or guaranteed number of hours to ensure consistent pay. A nanny may have a contract with benefits or sick/personal/vacation days built in. A nanny can be full time or part time, but there is usually a set schedule and a certain number of hours per week that a nanny works. A babysitter can be any age from teenager and older. While a nanny is not necessarily required to have a college degree, a college education as well as experience and training can help.

According to the 2012 International Nanny Association Salary and Benefits Survey, the author banner ad for website jpegnational average gross weekly salary for a full-time nanny who does not live with the family is \$705, and for live-in, \$652 (lower due to room and board being provided). This varies by location and many other factors, of course. I don't know about you, but when





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I worked as a preschool teacher in a daycare or as an instructional aide in a public school, I made far less than that on average per week. And I was miserable and treated poorly, to boot! I know it has been said by many an educator or childcare provider that you are not in these professions for the money, and that is the truth, but if I had to choose where I wanted to dedicate my childcare services, I would pick being a nanny based on salary in addition to all the other good things that come along with it! While there are certainly classes for babysitters to take, there are many resources available to nannies for professional development. There are certifications available and wonderful things like Nannypalooza for us to attend! All of this certainly helps in our profession and can also help our résumé when searching for a new position. A nanny may be expected to clean, cook, do laundry, transport the children to activities, teach and do art, possibly run errands and go grocery shopping,

as well as being responsible for the well-being of the child(ren). A nanny becomes a part of the family and helps to raise the children and guide them toward becoming polite, caring, and well-behaved little people (or so we can hope). When it comes down to it, nannies can be offered many of the benefits and securities enjoyed by people in other fields of employment. We still have bosses to answer to. We still have to pay taxes and act professionally. A career as a nanny (or in childcare in general) is certainly not for everyone, but there is no reason why anyone should have to argue that being a nanny is a reputable and rewarding career choice. In my personal career, and with many of the nannies that I spoke to regarding this topic, we all go above and beyond for our jobs. But the most import-



ant underlying theme with so many nannies is how much we love our jobs, our nanny families and charges, and how incredibly rewarding it is to be a nanny. I believe any job that can make you feel that way is a job worth

having, don't you agree?

*This article is available in Spanish / en Español at [www.nannymag.com](http://www.nannymag.com).*

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# I Love Being a Nanny Because...

By Jennifer Kuhn.

The nanny life is often thankless. Long hours working in nearly complete isolation and the fact that we can never be paid enough for our toiling are just a couple of reasons that make this a tough job. But this week, in honor of Valentine's Day and all things love, let's bask in a few of the top reasons that this job is totally the best.

I love being a nanny because I am truly making a difference in the lives of my NannyFamily. I'm not just a clock-watcher, a time card-puncher, a faceless name at some big company. I matter. I am my charge's everything while Mom and Dad are gone. And in ten years, after I'm no longer on their payroll, they're still going to remember me and look back with fondness on our bond.

I love being a nanny because I get to make a mess. No neat and tidy business suits for me. I wear what I want and show up at work in the morning prepared to get messy. Modeling clay? Watercolors? Baking up a storm? Bring it!

I love being a nanny because every day is different. While we do have routines, I love the flexibility to be able to go out on a new adventure every day. Learning and exploring the world through the eyes of a child are truly the best, and no two days of growing are the same.

Why do  
you  
love being a  
nanny?

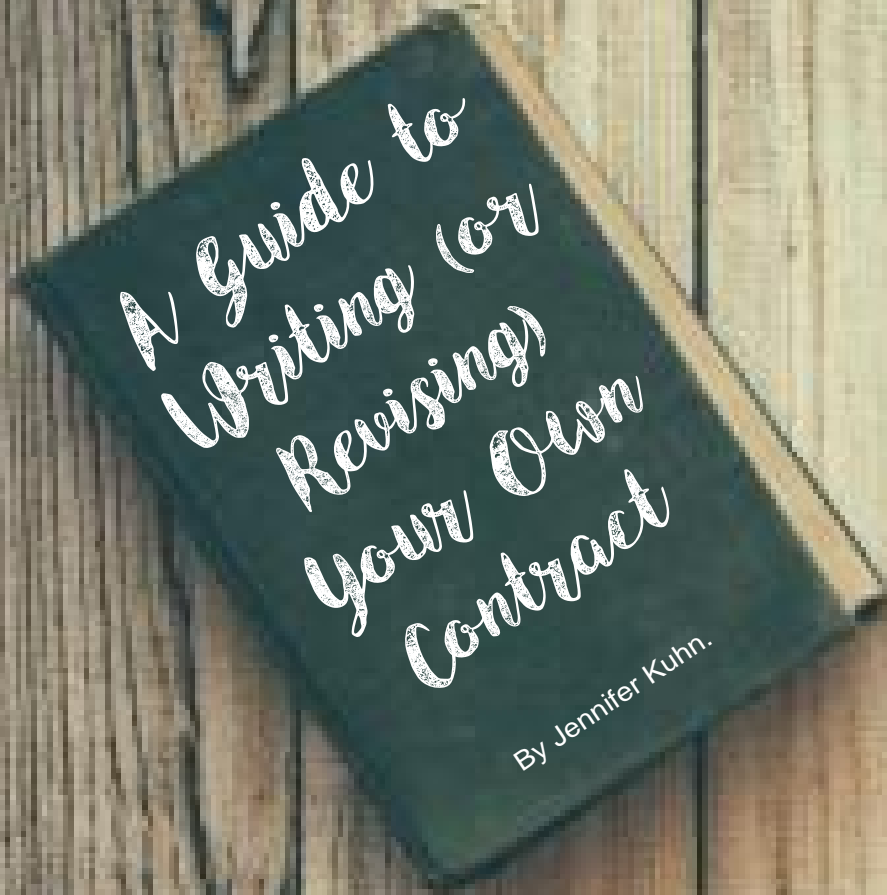
I love being a nanny because I'm shaping the future of my community. I work alongside my employers to establish positive growth and development in my charges, knowing that one day they will cycle their positive energy and kindness back out into the world. Children are the future, and I take pride in my responsibility of shaping the next generation into upstanding citizens.

I love being a nanny because I have a lot of trust invested in me. I've seen MomBoss's bra and DadBoss's medications, but I would never utter a word about this to anyone else. I value the respect my NannyFamily has for me and know that they let me into the privacy of their home knowing that I am there for them as a resource, not as a gossip mill. I love being trusted with the safety and wellbeing of the children, their most precious possession.

I love being a nanny because I don't have to sit in a cubicle all day. I get to chase after kiddos, stay fit and active, and have fun.

I love being a nanny because I'm getting paid to interact with kiddos, and let's face it, kids are way more fun than adults (most of the time, until your toddler charge throws the nissy fit of the century because she wants ice cream for breakfast).

I love being a nanny because it's the only job for me! I seriously could never imagine having any other career!



*Few problems in the nannysphere bother me as much as hearing from hard-working nannies who aren't protected in their positions by having a basic contract in place to serve as a basis for the work agreement with the NannyFamily. I'm often surprised when Nanny Magazine posts a question on social media regarding how nannies structure their agreements only to read comments from followers who don't have any semblance of a contract. All nannies need a contract to govern the work relationship between you, the nanny, and your employers, supporting the relationship that good intentioned as it may be could still go wrong in any number of ways. The short of it is that if you are a nanny and you don't have a work agreement in place, you need to get one. **Now.***



So many sources are already out there with fill-in-the-blank printable templates you can use for your contract. But with this being our DIY issue, in the true spirit of doing it yourself, I want to encourage you to write your own agreement... from scratch. Why? Because no two nanny positions are the same and no template in the world will capture the essence of what you will be doing in your role. Creating your own agreement gives you the opportunity to truly reflect your unique responsibilities on paper.

### **What Should Be in Your Nanny Contract?**

The basics in every nanny contract will cover the number of children in the nanny's care, the hours worked, the pay rate and frequency, raises, sick and vacation days, length of the agreement, termination notice, and holiday and overtime pay. Most of these are standard elements of any

employment contract and are not necessarily specific to the nanny world.

Other nanny-specific items are listed out below to spark your thought process.

- Whether or not the nanny is to accompany the family on vacations (and if so, what the rate of pay is, what sort of travel is covered, and what the accommodations are)
- Food considerations. Does your charge have any known allergies? Are you required to bring your own lunch? Should you be cooking for the entire NannyFamily?
- Communication methods (for instance, does MomBoss like to have a written log left on the kitchen counter or does she want you to text her throughout the day?)
- Medical authorization (what if your charge gets hurt while you're

on the clock?)

- Chores. Here's a big area you'll want to get as tight as you can with, otherwise you run the risk of getting taken advantage of. Will you be doing grocery shopping? Running errands? Scrubbing toilets? Running the kids' laundry? Making beds? No detail is too small in this area, but no matter how long the list is, add in some language specifying that only the listed chores will be completed.
- New additions. In this line of business your workload can increase dramatically with the addition of a new baby. If that is a remote possibility, it should be written in.
- Life transitions. What will become of your position when your youngest charge starts going to school full time?
- Professional development and safety certifications. Your contract is the perfect place to spell out

what your expectations are in terms of continuing education. If your NannyFamily is on board with getting the most out of having a well educated nanny who is up to date on trends in the childcare industry and safety certified, then they'll be willing to pay for it and willing to write it into your contract. Here is the place to spell out that you want time off to attend Nannypalooza, want reimbursement for your annual subscription to Nanny Magazine, want your yearly membership to the International Nanny Association. A NannyFamily that is willing to invest in your professional development shows that they care about you not just as the wonderful person in their lives who is charged with looking after their most precious possessions, but that they care about you as an individual as well.

•Tuition reimbursement. Are you enrolled at the local university or looking to go back to school? Why not ask for tuition reimbursement for classes in your field? MomBoss and DadBoss will be familiar with the request, as it's likely something that's accounted for in their own employee handbooks at their jobs. Fair is fair!

### **Is a Contract More Important for Live-in Nannies?**

No. It is just as important for a live-out nanny to have a detailed and thorough contract as it is for a live-in to have one, but several additions and tweaks should be made to accommodate for considerations that are specific to the nanny who lives onsite. The live-in nanny should have a heightened awareness of when she's on the clock as opposed to when she's off duty, because your charge bursting into your bedroom for Saturday morning snuggles is one thing, but DadBoss asking you to watch the kids for a few hours when you're trying to catch up on Netflix is a totally different beast, and if you're not seeing extra green for that, then you're being taken advantage of.

Other things a live-in nanny should include in her contract include a detailed description of the living quarters she'll be assigned. It should be specified in the agreement that the quarters are to be hers and hers alone. Proper time for a transition out of the living quarters should be provided for, especially if the relationship turns sour and the employer tries to turn you out of the house with nowhere to go. Also ask about how your pay may change should you happen to take an outside apartment.

### **Negotiate, Negotiate, Negotiate**

Very often, the first time two parties see an agreement will not be the last iteration of it. If

you see a term written into the agreement that you don't like, say something. Get it changed, clarified, expanded, whatever you need the language to say in order to feel comfortable with it. Now is the time to make sure you're setting yourself up with terms for your employment that you can actually live with. Don't want to come into the home on Monday morning to clean up a sink full of dishes? Negotiate that into your agreement. Add in a fee if you must.

### **Before You Sign**

Whether you've drafted your contract yourself or one of your employers (perhaps even a lawyer) created it, make sure you review each draft and pore over it with a fine-tooth comb, reading every single line. Ask questions when you come to a term or clause that is not clear to you and keep asking until you get a clear understanding of what it means.

*If you see a term written into the agreement that you don't like, say something.*

### **Methods for Writing**

**From Scratch:** Sit down with a pen and notepad and brainstorm a list of every possible consideration specific to the position. Once you have your list, organize and arrange by category and start writing. If your NannyFamily is comfortable, ask them to have their lawyer review and approve the text.

**Half Scratch:** Not comfortable starting from scratch? Download your favorite nanny contract template from the Web and pull out what you like, cross out what you don't like, and add in what you need that isn't already in the template.

This article only begins to scratch the surface of the myriad considerations when approaching the topic of contracts. Remember that any contract you sign is a legally binding document. Make sure you've got it right and have everything you want written into the document before you sign it. If you can afford it, it's always a good idea to have an attorney look it over before you autograph it. Once the contract is executed by both parties, keep a copy in your permanent files.

# It Doesn't Ruin Everything

By Leslie Kendall Dye.

*How Being a Nanny Made Me a Happier Mother*

Yesterday, I took my toddler to a playground in Central Park. Spring had arrived late and the array of brilliant tulips and daffodils blinded us. I tried to make myself comfortable on the splintery ledge of the sandbox. Tulips or no, the playground is one of my least favorite places in the world. That is because for ten years, it was my office.

I worked as a part-time nanny in Manhattan for a decade. I am an actress and it made for a good side job. I stopped working after my first trimester, felled by relentless

morning sickness and early contractions. Caring for children, as any nanny knows, is a full-body sport, requiring both high-alert readiness and Zen-like patience. I was unfit for duty by 13 weeks of gestation.

I spotted a playmate of my daughter's with her nanny, whom I'd never met. I greeted her, identifying myself as a friend of the girl's mother. The nanny nodded politely but stiffly. Then I used my secret pass code: I added, "I was a nanny for ten years!" I watched her face brighten and a wave of relaxation pass through her body. The brick wall between us tumbled down. Once we started chatting, she asked me the question. Every young nanny asks me the question.

"Does it ruin being a mother?" she asked. "I'm not sure I'll want to be one after all these years of childcare."

We were speaking the same language. This was something I couldn't talk about with the other mothers. From the time our babies were newborns, none of the other mothers could believe how hard it was. I didn't relate.

There was plenty that was new to me, like nursing or not

being paid at the end of the day, or that there was no end to the day. But in general, nanny skills are parenting skills.

We learn to stay physically and emotionally attentive while finding a mental escape hatch during, say, a tea party more tedious than any grown-up can bear. We learn to be strong: heaving tired bodies in and out of strollers, bending to clean up spills with a child balanced on our hip, diaper-changing athletic squirmy toddlers. We let go of notions of achieving other tasks in a day. Dishes, laundry... we know that it will all be cared for at nap time (unless we need a nap ourselves, in which case these chores will have to wait). We know how to really enjoy a few minutes of quiet when the baby falls asleep.

I had spent so many nights stroking a child who was homesick for her parents, promising to stay by her bedside until their taxi brought them home, telling her stories to make the time go by. I had wrapped so many children in towels after bath time, combed so many curls, read so many stories, hunted for so many teddy bears lost in couch cushions. It was in my muscle memory to cradle my own child and assuage her anxiety from the moment she was born. The immediate engulfing love I felt for seven pounds of wet baby delivered into my arms one perfect autumn day: I was not prepared for that. I was prepared with the stamina to deliver on my promise to be there for her, to match that ferocious love.

I have made more friends of nannies since becoming a mother than I have of other mothers. I like them more, for the most part. I can't relate to someone who is shocked that one hour can feel like ten with a child. And to hear a mother complain about the cost of a nanny! After all their expressions of exhaustion, how can parents not know how hard a job their nannies have?

"No. It doesn't ruin it at all," I told this young nanny in the sandbox. "It makes it better. You have the stamina that your friends won't. You know what to expect. You will not be surprised by your day being dictated by the ups and downs of a child's moods. Then there's the stuff you won't be prepared for, and that stuff is even better. Nothing is more heavenly than curling up with your own baby after nursing her to sleep.

Compared to the uninitiated, she had nothing to fear, and so much to look forward to.



The author and her child. Photo courtesy Leslie Kendall Dye, used with permission.



## 1. We are invested.

I was with my previous nanny family for almost five years. When I had been with them for about two years, MomBoss made a passing comment about me not being as invested in decisions about the children's future because they're not mine. She meant well and had no idea that this comment would stay with me four years later, but it has; it got under my skin. I invest the majority of my time to ensure the little ones in my care are safe, happy, and healthy. It isn't a small task, and when you've been with a family for so long you do feel invested in their futures. Of course, it will always be different than the investment of a parent, but I for one would like moms to know that I am putting my all into ensuring that their children reach their full potential academically, socially, physically, and emotionally.

## 2. We are professionals.

I have a plan. I am not showing up in the morning with just the hope that we'll make it through the day. As professional nannies, we are educated in child development and more importantly, we have the experience to know what we need to do to meet our charges' needs. I plan specific activities to help them learn and grow through play and fun experiences. I am your child's teacher, nurse, friend, chef, cleaner, advocate, and more and I take this role very seriously. I do my best to remain positive and calm, as I know your job is stressful and that when you come home, you are coming home to your sanctuary. A lot goes into creating an environment where the children are ready for bed and the house is clean and tidy. It's not all part of my job, but I want you to know I do it for you because I care about your family. I don't need to be told how to steam broccoli or that the baby's diaper needs to be changed after his nap. However, when you do tell me these things, I will listen with open ears and an open heart, as I know they are your world and it is important that you feel a part of their daily lives.

# 5 things I wish moms knew about nannies

By Nicola Manton.

## 3. We have lives.

It never fails to surprise me when I'm nearing the end of an eleven-hour workday, and MomBoss texts to ask if I can stay a little later, saying, "I hope this is okay." It actually isn't okay. I love my charge like he is my own without question (see number 4!) from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and beyond, but at the end of the day I still have a wife to go home to, errands to run, bills to pay, an apartment to clean, and a cat to feed, among other things! Most of the time I agree to stay as a result of my nanny guilt; the feeling that my not wanting to stay will come across as an unwillingness to be flexible or a desperation to leave. I have been lucky enough to work for families who do respect my time for the most part, and I understand that things happen beyond your control and sometimes you are running late. However, it's nice to know that my time as a nanny is respected, and it's important for MomBoss to know that my desire to go home doesn't mean I love her son, or my job, any less.

## 4. We love your children and they love us, and that's okay.

It shouldn't need to be said, but we love our charges. I hope you can tell that my fondness is genuine by the way he runs to me in the morning, the way that we giggle when we play, and by the way he respects my word and responds to my hugs. He loves me too, and that's okay. He doesn't love you any less, even though it may sometimes feel that way after you come home and he's tired and cranky. You are his world and he loves you too.

## 5. We are human.

Sometimes I have a bad day. I'm tired when my shift ends, and it doesn't necessarily have anything to do with my charge. Sometimes he's fussy, tired, refusing to eat, or just generally having a bad day, too. The day is long and at the same time, too short to get everything done as any parent and nanny knows. There's laundry piling up, cooking to do, cleaning, shopping, classes to get to, and play dates to keep. Sometimes it can feel overwhelming. I am human. As professional as I may be, life is hard sometimes, but I know that tomorrow will always be better.



# Mom or Nanny?

By Nicola Manton.

So I'm in the playground with my 19 month old charge when a mom approaches us with her similarly aged son and strikes up a conversation. I've been here before; it's clear to me that this mom is looking for a mom friend, not the nanny. It's an uncomfortable feeling knowing that the person you're chatting with about sleep schedules and preschool applications is really not interested in getting your opinion on these issues. I always feel bad for destroying the illusion that they have found a fellow mom to befriend for playdates and coffee dates; to have someone going through the same thing as them in having their first child. They're not looking for nanny friends; not because they deem us as less than (not always), but because it's a whole different ball game when it's your own child and it helps to have people around you who are going through similar things. I get it. I'm not offended when that look of disappointment washes over their face when I answer, for instance, the question: "where do you guys live?" with "oh.. well [insert child's name] here lives downtown but I'm uptown". And there it is; the slap in the face they'd hoped wouldn't come. It happens a lot with my new charge as he could easily be confused as my son; we look similar and he is at the right age where he could legitimately be mine. A mom in our music class asked me to lunch one day. I knew she thought I was his mom and that she wouldn't want to have lunch once she found out I was his nanny; so I let her down gently, taking the pressure off her to reject me afterwards and not feel bad about it. It did make me realize that it must be a lot like dating, looking for mom friends. You put yourself out there not finding anyone you'd actually want to spend a significant amount of time with, then you do, you connect and it turns out they're married or live in Timbuktu. So here I am, apologizing to all you new moms just looking for other new moms to connect with. I'm sorry I'm not what you are looking for. I hope you find it.



A Nanny  
Magazine  
favorite



**RAISING KIDS TO BE  
CARING,  
COMPASSIONATE,  
& KIND**

By Amanda Duniak.

The news today is filled with terribly tragic stories. It saddens me that it seems like every day the news reports yet another incident of bullying, a school shooting, or of children hurting other people (A game of Knock Out, anyone? Sheesh!). I try to have hope and faith that an upcoming generation of children will be able to turn that all around. In order for them to do so, though, it is up to the parents, mentors, teachers, and caregivers to recognize the potential in children to BE the caring, compassionate, and charitable children that we know they can be!

Every day spent with my two-year old charges is a learning experience. I do my best to teach them how small things, such as manners and kind words, can make other people smile. But with each passing day that I turn on the news to hear these awful stories, I yearn to do more with them so that they can be the heroes in the world instead of the villains. There are many simple, obvious things that we can do with our charges to teach them how to care and “give-back,” such as gifting old toys, donating the money from a lemonade stand to charity, or cleaning up garbage at the playground. However, let’s dig deeper to see what we can do to teach kids of ANY age how to be a hero!

### **STARTING SMALL**

Where can we start? Emily Libby, Communications Coordinator for the non-profit Kids Included Together (KIT), suggests teaching children to, “Smile and say hello. Know that everyone is unique and has a story to tell. They may just be your next best friend. You will never know until you try and say hi.” This is certainly a good way to start, especially with younger children. Knowing that a smile can make a big difference in someone’s day is the perfect jumping-off point to teach children that we can care for others, even

people they don’t know, with even the slightest gestures. Jaime Reinwald of the non-profit For the Love of Jersey, an organization which has been helping the state of New Jersey recover in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, says you can teach smaller children to be caring and compassionate by doing something as simple as making cards for veterans. Another suggestion is to help your charges bring some of their gently used toys to a used toy drive, with their parents’ permission, of course. “Letting them choose what to give away and bringing them to drop it off is an excellent teaching tool.” Jaime also says that as the children get older, the best way to teach is to lead by example. “You can get in touch with a nursing home to visit on Grandparent’s Day (or any day!) to encourage kindness. The children can read to the elderly or even have tea parties!”

### **GROWING BIGGER**

With older children, there are even more opportunities to teach them to give back. “Around 8 years of age, you can start including them in more organized efforts of volunteer work, such as toy and food drives,” says Jaime, “It teaches them to give back as well as planning and responsibility, two very important building blocks to their future.” Melanie Pipkinkozel, a Media Relations Lead for the American Red Cross, contributes to the topic by sharing what the Red Cross feels is the best way to teach children to be compassionate and charitable. She says that a good way to start is to connect with your local American Red Cross chapter or club at your charge’s school. If there is not a Red Cross club at their school, you can help them start one! Then, you can help them to coordinate blood drives and host fundraisers to help their fellow neighbors when disaster strikes. Why is it important and beneficial for children, especially

middle and high school ages, to connect with the American Red Cross? Melanie says, “When you volunteer with the Red Cross, you’re supporting one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the world and making a positive impact on your peers and in your community. A person can also maximize their talent, learn new skills, improve their resume and meet new people all while making a meaningful difference in the lives of others!” And when it comes to the young ones, Melanie agrees, “Even something as simple as a lemonade stand can help to bring in donations to the Red Cross and make a difference in someone’s life!”

To find out how you and your charges can get involved in your community, use your online and community resources. Check for places or programs in your area that will accept donations or even a nice card to brighten someone’s day. You can ask your charge which organization they would like to help with or be a part of. At the youngest age, simply knowing that a smile or a card can help someone in need know there is another person out there who cares about their well-being is a step toward becoming a compassionate human being.

### **HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES TO HELP YOU AND YOUR CHARGES GET STARTED!**

- Kids Are Heroes - <http://kidsareheroes.org/>
- American Red Cross - <http://www.redcross.org/>
- Alex’s Lemonade Stand - <http://www.alexlemonade.org/>
- Traveling Postcards - <http://www.travelingpostcards.org/>
- Free Rice - <http://freerice.com/#/english-vocabulary/1516> (Play a game and for each answer you get right, Free Rice will donate 10 grains of rice through the World Food Programme to help end hunger!)
- Volunteer Match - <http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

# Things I Wish I Knew before My First Day as a Nanny

By Elizabeth Conner.

The week was over. I was falling onto my bed at 5:30 p.m. I laid motionless and exhausted, covered in everything from baby food, boogers, and formula to sweat and faint smells of the last soiled diaper of the day. My brain needed to be turned off, my body needed a massage, and my pride needed a shower but all I wanted to do was lay there enjoying 5 minutes of silence. I couldn't remember ever being this emotionally drained – even when working 60+ hours a week in the corporate world. That is when I knew:

**Being a nanny would be harder than I could have**

## **ever imagined.**

The next day my NannyFamily was heading down to the grandparents to celebrate DadBoss's birthday, so I opted to go with them. As the day wore on, Bear (1 1/2yrs at the time) missed his nap and dinner came and went with increasing exhaustion on his part. Finally he came over to me with his blankie and binkie, climbed on my lap, and sweetly fell asleep in my arms. Joy bubbled up within my heart and in that moment little Bear captured my love – he firmly held my heart in his tiny hand. And that is when I knew:


**Being a nanny would be one of the most fulfilling**

## **things I could ever do.**

Caring for kids has always come naturally to me and babies have always been able to tug at my heart strings. Entering the nanny field was more of a natural transition into who I am and have always been rather than a dive into a crazy kid filled world. But as natural as this job is, there are a few things I wish someone would have told me before I dove head first onto this Nanny Train.

## **You will be lonely.**

As a Nanny you have moved out of the world of adults, real conversations, and people who actually understand you. You are now in a world



*"You essentially become a semi-permanent member of a foreign family where you are raising kids that are not yours, and most people have no idea how to resonate with that."*

of bumbling toddlers, kids with attitudes, and voices that will do anything to be heard. You essentially become a semi-permanent member of a foreign family where you are raising kids that are not yours, and most people have no idea how to resonate with that. Make nanny friends quickly! Even if it is just through social media – they will be the few friends that get it and will make the days less lonely.

### **You will feel underappreciated.**

There will be days where you feel like you are the only one who cleans the house, picks up the toys, does the dishes, or washes the clothes. You will give parents advice that will go unheard. You will have moments of feeling like what you do doesn't matter and goes unnoticed. It is part of the job. There will be times you get introduced as "the nanny" and

*"You will laugh. You will get angry and frustrated. Your heart will melt. In other words, you will feel every emotion under the sun and most likely within a 20 minute time span."*

think man, is that is all I am? Those days will come - acknowledge how you feel and let it go because the truth is you are the nanny and that is what you get paid to be.

**You are a professional, don't let anyone tell you differently.**

We work with kids who tend to make everything less structured and we become an extension of the family we work with. Being an extension of the family is a double edged sword - on one hand it is great to feel the connection, trust, and comradery of family. On the other it is easy to be taken advantage of. The biggest complaint I hear among nannies is the "last minutes" that come up with MomBoss and DadBoss. Parents running late without telling you, asking you to stay late day after day, or requesting you to work a last minute weekend. If this is an occasional occurrence, no big deal. However, when it becomes habitual, things needs to be addressed because you are not family - you are a professional nanny. One way to keep it professional is to have a formal contract or written agreement between you and your NannyFamily. When you start to feel like you

are getting taken advantage of, go back to your contract.

### You will cry.

You will laugh. You will get angry and frustrated. Your heart will melt. In other words, you will feel every emotion under the sun and most likely within a 20 minute time span. Bear has a way of making me more frustrated than I have ever been in my life one minute and the next his cuddles melt all the anger away. Recognize the emotions, process them, and let them go. Getting angry only upsets kids as they feed off of our emotions.

### Kids are not robots.

Sounds obvious right? But in those moments when Bear is so focused on fixing the pillows in a certain way or Bug is trying so hard to reach the sippy cup instead of coming to lunch immediately like I asked, I need to remind myself that they are not robots. They are little people with brains that are growing and developing. When they get so focused on a something that their attention is impossible to reach, I need to give them a little space and a rea-

sonable amount of time to finish up what they are doing instead of getting mad.

### Your job is more important than you feel it is.

I was sitting with a group of friends sharing how I was struggling with finding worth as a nanny, unsure about how all the diapers, feedings, and hours with toys mattered in life. One of my friends stopped me mid-sentence saying, "You have one of the most important jobs ever, you are molding those boys into who they will be". Never forget this! We, nannies, are getting the incredible opportunity to mold, shape, and grow our charges into the people that they will one day become. We are trusted with someone



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*"Being an extension of the family is a double edged sword*

*— on one hand it is great to feel the connection, trust, and comradery of family. On the other it is easy to be taken advantage of."*

else's most precious possession — we really do have the most important paying job in the world. Never doubt the value of what you do!

This article originally appeared on [nannymag.com](http://nannymag.com) and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author. Photos via Pexels.

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# Follow the Yellow Brick Road: How to Love Your Nanny Job

By Ursula Ambrose-Simpson.

*Starting to feel the first subtle signs of career burnout? It's time to recharge your batteries.*

It is a handbag filled with granola bars. It is a coat of concern we wear home. We take our job with us everywhere. Nannying can be a hugely rewarding, wonderful, and unique career, but if we're not careful we can find it may blend into our weekends as well. Our days can also become repetitive as we can get sucked into the time loop of young children. The daily schedule looks the same because the all-important routine calls for it and we're in a constant state of déjà vu—didn't the hungry caterpillar eat the same thing for lunch yesterday?

*Add in Activities to Make YOU Happy*

If you're starting to feel like the repetition of your job is causing boredom, it's time to put some pep in your step by making the job more personally rewarding for you. This one is trickier with littles, but if possible research some crafts you yourself would enjoy do-

ing. A recent favorite of mine has been melted wax crayon canvases with my oldest two charges. Yes, it's always fun to help them finger paint, but a project you legitimately enjoy doing can help you feel reinvigorated about planning rainy day activities.

If you cook for or with the kids, then prepare recipes you would enjoy. There are only so many child-sized florets of broccoli and pasta shapes you can stomach. Involve the kids. With picky eaters make mini tester servings that can earn them dessert.

Getting outside every day is important. If you can exercise with your kids, even better, so that you and they alike can reap the health benefits of an active lifestyle. Our schedules are so infrequently 'gym friendly'. I recently started going jogging with my 10- and 11-year-old charges. They love getting geared up with reflective arm bands and we all get a nice boost of endorphins.

*Let Go when You Leave*

I love my charges to bits. They are fascinating and

funny little humans. But it's important to remember that their parents are with them when you're not, so it's not your job to worry how they do at the swim meet or the tri-state math contest whilst you aren't wearing your nanny hat. Likewise, it is not your job to worry that they didn't finish all their homework on Friday. If you're wise you'll have mentioned all the relevant things as you handed over the reigns at the end of your day or week. Learn to leave your worry at the door so you can enjoy your time off the clock, and trust yourself and your employers enough to leave it up to the parents.

*Communication Is Key*

The only times I've had problems with an employer is when communication broke down. If there isn't time for frequent casual check ins you may feel nervous about asking to have a meeting about the kids but parents will appreciate how seriously you take their development. It's often in those spaces designed to focus on each child's individual development that small grievances can be raised organically from



both sides and a compromise reached.

We all know that if stress or tension is hanging around the household, chaos can ensue. While tact can be tricky to find in housekeeping issues a nonaccusatory tone is key. Work out before the meeting which concrete issues are bothering you and then leave your emotion aside to discuss them. Parents can be scared of confrontation and may be worried they'll lose you, but talking about these issues can give MomBoss the confidence to tell you how she really wants the sheets folded, even if it happens to be several months after you started your job.

All those olive branches become a sturdy frame for your relationship. Very few problems can't be ironed out by communication. Open the lines before the problems arise and you'll be golden. If you feel like you're in a difficult spot as you're reading this, why not request a one-on-one meeting with your employer to discuss whatever is bothering you?

### *Days off Are Sacred*

Yes, we nannies have some cracking anecdotes to share, and my friends and family have all enjoyed hearing them, but if we aren't careful we can find that it's all we've talked about all weekend! You may want to share the eccentricities and frustrations of your NannyFamily with someone close to you, but be careful not to repeatedly rehash events of the week that made you upset. Firstly, it's important to realize that your loved ones care about you and will hate to see you upset, so it is understandable that they many form negative opinions about your MomBoss and DadBoss, which you may regret down the line. When we present a problem or upsetting situation, it is natural for others to respond with advice; if we then don't take that advice it



can make people frustrated to hear similar problems arise in the future. Most importantly, if you spend the weekend dwelling on your MomBoss's passive aggressive email, you will dread going back. It's a recipe for resentment. Make a note to reopen the lines of honest communication with MomBoss on Monday to clear the air and leave your work at work.

Other than driving your partner up the wall and your friends crazy it also stops you getting the refresher you need to return on Monday excited to see your charges.

### *Money Talks*

Annual reviews are standard in most work settings; our line of employment is, in many ways, unconventional, so we must be our own managers. We often go above and beyond and you'll know whether you feel you deserve a raise or not. If you do schedule an annual review. Prepare, make notes, and practice in the mirror if necessary, then go put your grown-up pants on and ask for a face-to-face meeting to discuss your performance. When you meet, plan to talk about how far the kids have come, remind the parents of all the great work you've done or extra duties you've taken on, (maybe there's a new baby or pet in the house), then ask for a raise and let them think about it. If they don't respond positively, ask for feedback on

what you could improve upon or professional development they might want you to do. In some cases they may even offer to finance a course in lieu of a raise. In my experience, families that want to keep you will be happy to give your wages a bump up.

### *Aspirations and Side Hustle*

Nannying is a career, yes, but it is often not a lifelong one. You may adore children but many nannies have a second career in mind for down the line. Often, nannies work as childcare professionals for a short time, such as while enrolled at a university, while others spend many years in the field before moving on to something else. Whether you want to open your own nursery, pursue a career in psychology, or pen the next great American novel you can start preparing yourself now. If you love your job then this helps you to feel even more well rounded and give your nanny identity a much-needed rest. Meeting new people who share similar goals while acquiring a new skill in a class or workshop can be invigorating; this can add depth to your life. If you're having a tough week at work, as we all do from time to time, knowing that your value is not defined solely by your work with children will be welcome oxygen.

If all else fails, remember this: at least you're not stuck behind a desk and your day contains more hugs than most people get all week.



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# The Interview Questions You Have to Ask!

by Kerrie Bascomb

find out why! Within this answer you will find out a little more about your potential NannyFamily. Perhaps their last nanny had a lot of trouble showing up on time or perhaps this family just had some wild expectations that were not met. Whatever the reason may be, it will give you valuable feedback into what you are about to get yourself into and what this family is really looking for.

Don't ever go into an interview for a nanny job thinking that it is a one-sided interview! This is their interview as much as your interview, so get comfortable and get ready to ask them some questions too!

## 1. Can you describe your parenting style?

This might be the most important question you can ask a potential NannyFamily! This question will help you get a better understanding of whether or not you and this family will be a good match. There is so much that can go into an answer for this question, so make sure your ears are open.

## 2. Do you plan on adding any other responsibilities besides care for the children?

Some people just assume that a nanny is a jack of all trades. You do not want to start your first day of work only to be surprised that you will also be responsible for the family dog, wiping down the toilets, doing the grocery shopping, and mowing the lawn all while taking care of your charge. Some families just don't understand what a nanny is really responsible for and assume that because their friend's nanny will deep clean the house once a week that you should be responsible for those kinds of chores too. Do not fall for any comparisons about what the neighbor's nanny is or isn't willing to do. You have your own set of skills and standards and you are a professional.

## 3. What kind of relationship will we have?

Is this family looking for more of a professional relationship with set boundaries? Is this family looking at you as just the hired help? Do they want to see their nanny as a third parent on their team? Is this family the type of family that you'll be drinking cocktails with at 5 p.m. on a Wednesday? This question will set the stage for the kind of relationship you should expect from your NannyFamily.

## 4. Will we have a contract?

A contract is important because it will spell out all aspects of your job. Paid time off, responsibilities, severance pay, giving notice—these are all things you might feel uncomfortable discussing now, but you might wish you discussed beforehand when the time comes. Also important: make sure you have a say in this contract. This is your job agreement as well! Not comfortable with the way something is written? Speak now or forever hold your peace!

## 5. Will you pay me on the books?

You'll want to find out to this answer right away, and I will list the reasons why. Because you'll really see how serious this NannyFamily is and how well they have done their research on hiring a nanny. Because you'll want to make sure your butt is covered should this position come to a demise and you need to file for unemployment. Because it's the legal thing to do! You and your NannyFamily will have no worries when it comes to the IRS auditing or when tax season swings around. Come to this interview with some nanny tax research under your belt and help them understand why you need to be paid on the books.

## 6. How do you plan on paying me?

You might have it all set up in your mind that you'll be getting paid once a week, but surprise, it's two weeks in and when you ask when you will receive your first pay check, you come to find out that your new NannyFamily will be paying you the lump sum of your wages once a month! Find out during your interview and you will be able to budget your money accordingly. This is also a good question to lead into the question of pay.

## 7. Why did your last nanny leave?

You'll want to hear a straight answer for this one. Maybe the answer is that their old nanny was just not a good fit. Well,

## 8. Do you have backup care?

Families forget that their nanny may need time off whether it be for personal time or sick time. Bring this up now and it will get them thinking. Maybe they have a family member in the area, maybe they have a nanny agency they can sign up with, or maybe they will have to take turns taking time off from their own jobs to care for their children while you are out of office for a few days.

## 9. Are there any benefits or perks with this job?

Some families believe they are the benefit of the job! And maybe that is true, but hey, you are a great nanny and you are shopping around just as much as that NannyFamily is shopping around for a new nanny. But what will set this new NannyFamily apart? Think job benefits and perks! Some benefits and perks to think about are paid time off, contributions toward a health insurance plan, a phone plan, a gym membership, paid meals, childcare continuing education classes, nanny conventions, and more!

## 10. What is an average day like for your family?

The answer to this question will give you that glimpse that you need into your potential future. Will you be carting around your charge from activity to activity or will there be a lot of down time you will have to fill with activities that you will need to plan? Asking this question will also allow you to understand the pace in which your NannyFamily lives. Again, this is another great question that will allow you to assess whether or not you and this family are a match.

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