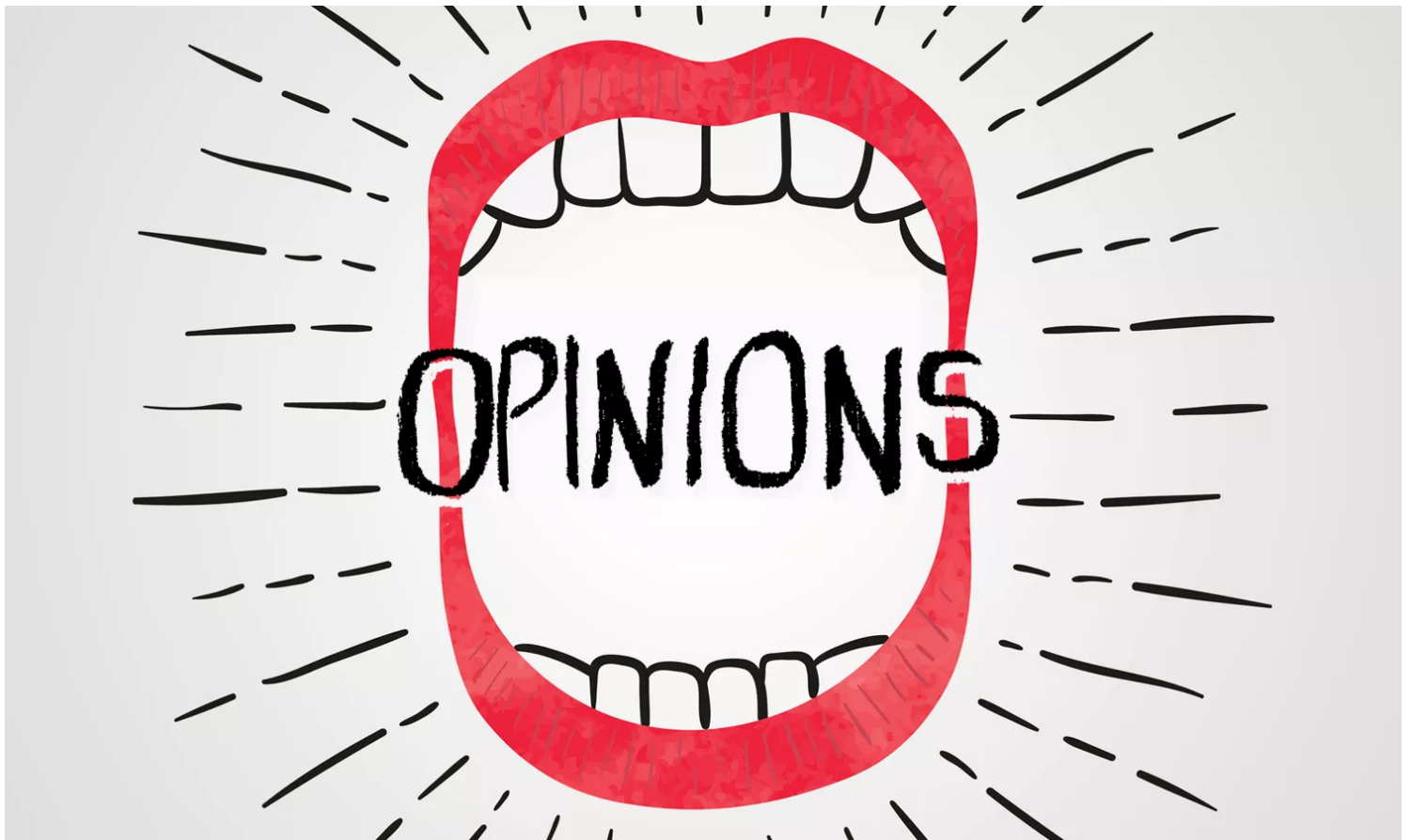


DIGITAL LIFE PARENTS AS PEOPLE

Your Friendly Neighborhood Online Parenting Forum

BY
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In addition to wasting a bunch of precious time, online parenting forums have also paved the way for moms and dads to overtly or inadvertently foist their opinions about child-rearing, politics, and lifestyle choice on other parents.

Does this scenario sound familiar?

BOB: So, what are we going to do about the monkey bars at the playground, everybody?

JANE: What's the problem with the monkey bars?

SUE: Well, five kids broke their arms on them in three weeks – including my kids, Velvet and Jagger.

JANE: That's too bad, but studies have proven that playgrounds today are actually "too safe" and it's detrimental to the children's development. You're obviously a bunch of helicopter parents.

BOB: Well, I think it's detrimental to have a broken arm.

SUE: FYI, the preferred term is no longer "monkey bars." It's "parallel equipment." While we're on the topic of safety, I'd also like to start talking about the pool, so we can fix any lingering issues by the summer.

JANE: What's wrong with the pool?

BOB: Well, there is garbage everywhere, and non-organic snacks, and some people allow their children to throw balls in the air, all of which is inherently dangerous.

XYRTHIS: I am a free-range parent and I ENCOURAGE my children to throw balls in the air, even near the pool. In fact, I think the fences from around the pool should be removed. I have created a separate group called Locals Against Fences if you want to join. But yes, we do need organic snacks PRONTO.

DAVE: I can tell from her comment that Xyrthis has not lived in this town for 75 generations like MY family AND is a ridiculous liberal who most likely moved here from Brooklyn four months ago. But I agree, we should do away with the fences, because I consider myself a libertarian and a rabble-rouser. P.S. I am running for mayor of this town based on the fact that I have lived here for 68 years. I hope you'll vote for me! You may say I have no political experience, but I say I am the SOUL of this very town.

JOE: Well, the food at the pool is provided by Pizza Haven, and Sam, who has run Pizza Haven for 45 years, says that he has tried, in fact, to sell organic fruit at the pool before, but the kids just buy candy and pizza. The organic apples ended up being used as balls and thrown in the air by the children. Also, I, too, am running for mayor of this town even though I am only 22 years old, because having worked as a lifeguard and snack supervisor at the pool since I was 16, I know the inner workings of this town better than anyone.

ANNE: No fences around the pool? Are you insane!? Have you forgotten about this town's deer problem? The deer will eat the trees, bushes, grass, organic and non-organic snacks. They will drown in the pool and spread Lyme disease, and then Bill, who works at the pool, will have to clean dead deer corpses out of it. Also, I really don't think pools should be used by children at all. Get a grip, you scumbags!

JANE: Anne, there is no need to use divisive language. Also, clearly you do not understand the important role that deer have played in this town, not to mention in classic literature AND the pagan tradition. I suggest you educate yourself before calling others names.

JOHN: I think you should all stuff your organic snacks in a plastic bag.

XYRTHIS: I can't believe you brought plastic bags into this discussion. That lawsuit was dismissed, you know, and the plastic bag ban remains in effect.

PAUL: The plastic bag ban overturn is totally unconstitutional. The judge who allowed the dismissal of the suit only did so because of Law 30.5.67 in our town's Code of Conduct, which you can easily find on page 5,437 in the copy at the local library. The document is there in full for anyone to read at any time! It should be noted, however, that our current Mayor and Trustees have tried to limit the people's access to this document by highly unethical means – such as limiting library hours to only 10 hours a day. Also, the entire political body of the town is NOT operating with full transparency. The minutes from the last town meeting were posted on the town website, however, the last 30 seconds of the meeting were “accidentally” cut off. Don't you think we, the taxpayers, have a right to know exactly what happened in those 30 seconds?!

BOB: Paul, are you a lawyer? Because I think I want to sue the pool.

PAUL: No, I'm not a lawyer, just a concerned citizen.

BOB: That's great, Paul. By the way, I have a free television to give away if anyone wants it. Also, does anyone know a good handyman?

LESLIE: I can't believe you just assumed there are no good handywomen in this town. And please educate yourself on how to use the “search” function in this group and “turn on notifications.”

SARA: Hi, everyone. I'm new in town and wanted to ask about the fire alarm. It seems kind of loud, doesn't it?

DAVE: I can't BELIEVE you asked about the fire alarm. If you don't like it, you should move. The fire alarm SAVES LIVES. You must be against the saving of lives, and you clearly haven't volunteered with the fire department like I have.

SARA: I just noted it was loud!

BOB: I've just about had it with the liberals in this group, and this town. I'm going to be flying a flag with a swastika on it at the next farmer's market. But let me educate all of you before you complain about the swastika – that symbol doesn't mean what you think it means.

DAVE: Wow, you guys are really a bunch of privileged whiners. By the way, someone just sped through the stop sign at the corner of Main and Elm. I took a photo of his license plate – here it is. See you all in the spot where the monkey bars used to be!



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Janine Annett lives in a house full of piles of books, with her husband, son, dog, and very old cat. Her writing has appeared in the New York Times, McSweeney’s Internet Tendency, the Establishment, and other places.



