

The Childcare Question

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Every family seeking childcare has different needs and expectations—and rightfully so! To help families better understand their childcare options, we turned to three experts in the field to explain some of the great benefits of daycare, using a nanny, and using an au pair.

DAYCARE

Renee Bock: Educational Director, [Explore + Discover Early Learning Center](#)

Renee Bock, the educational director at [Explore + Discover](#), a daycare program in Kips Bay with a Reggio Emilia approach, offers up several key points that make daycare an appealing childcare option: Professional teachers, social interaction, curriculum, open-ended materials, and a parent-friendly community.

Professional teachers—with knowledge of child development, curriculum, classroom management, and team dynamics—are crucial to a positive care experience. Teachers should have a Master's in early childhood education, be certified to teach from birth to grade 2 in New York State, and understand how care is the curriculum for infants and toddlers. Diapering, feeding, sleeping, and exploring are all crucial to children's well-being and must be handled by knowledgeable, caring teachers.

[Come to the New York Baby Show, the largest family-friendly event for expectant and new parents in the country! It's coming up on May 16 and May 17 in NYC. **Click Here For Details And Tickets.**](#)

Social interaction is the single most attractive thing about group care because children get an early introduction to making friends, being part of a group, talking about feelings, caring for others, negotiation, and problem solving. Skills of relating to others form the basis of happiness and life success.

Curriculum is another positive facet of the structure of daycare. Teachers should have a solid understanding of what children can learn at different ages, and how to create inspiring learning experiences that respond to children's interests and needs. Children learn best when they are excited, and adults take their curiosity seriously. Even infants are creative, inquisitive beings and deserve to be challenged and validated as human beings.

Even before they have language children express themselves in all kinds of ways, so open-ended materials are wonderful for them. Great centers provide a wide variety of materials that invite exploration and self-expression, from musical instruments to clay, paint, books, water, and more.

Finally, good daycare centers are small towns within the city. They facilitate friendships between families and allow people to put down roots together. Parents should always be welcome to nurse, to play, to read to children, bake or sing. When grandparents are in town they should come visit. Daycare centers answer parent questions and give information about child development, parenting, and other important issues.

To learn more about Explore + Discover, visit explorediscover.net!

NANNY

Tammy Gold, Family Therapist, Parenting Coach, and author of *Secrets of the Nanny Whisperer: A Practical Guide for Finding and Achieving the Gold Standard of Childcare for Your Child*

In New York City, nannies have long been a preferred choice for parents with full-time jobs or a hectic lifestyle. Put simply, a nanny is someone who cares for a child or children in a home on a regular basis during the parents' absence. Unlike babysitters, nannies are usually responsible for everything to do with the care of the child, including feeding, bathing, sleep scheduling, laundry, and tidying up the child's room or play areas. A full-time nanny will typically work 40-60 hours per week, and part-time nanny may work anywhere from 15-35.

Like many other forms of childcare, nannies break down into two main camps: Live-in and live-out. A live-in nanny lives with the family in their home for some portion of the week while providing care for the children. A live-out nanny commutes to work each day and, after finishing her duties, returns to her own home each night.

The biggest advantage to having a nanny is that a child will be cared for by a single, attentive caregiver in the familiar surroundings of your home. Aside from having a family member to care for your child, a nanny most closely approximates a parent, and depending on your situation, she may do everything that a parent does—from helping with homework to settling sibling disputes—whether a parent is there or not. A nanny also gives parents maximum flexibility: They get to decide what hours and duties they need, and then hire someone who fits the bill. Many nannies will even work extra weekend hours so a couple can have a date night, or travel with the family on vacations if parents need back-up. The consistency and stability that a good nanny provides is ideal for young children, especially babies and toddlers, and in the best scenarios, the nanny becomes like a member of the family.

By far the greatest benefit of a nanny is that a child gets individual, one-on-one attention that is not possible from daycare centers. During the first three years of life, 90 percent of the human brain grows, and this growth is fostered when the child has an attentive caregiver responding to their needs both physically and emotionally. A good nanny can meet the needs of a child through each developmental stage, and truly foster their cognitive growth and emotional well-being.

To learn more about Tammy Gold, visit tammygold.com!

AU PAIR

Lynn Perkins: CEO and co-founder of [Urban Sitter](#)

For parents with older children or a looser day-to-day schedule, an au pair may be a good option for childcare. Typically young women between the ages of 18-25, an au pair can come from any country in the world. Moreover, au pairs are not only taking care of a family's children, but are also trying to experience American culture and education.

The relationship between an au pair and her employer is more symbiotic compared to the other forms of childcare. The employer can receive help from the live-in au pair approximately 40 hours per week for up to a year and a half, and the au pair can take the opportunity to improve her English, or enroll in some local educational courses at the collegiate level.

Some positive feedback that professionals like Perkins often hear from parents is that au pairs are extremely flexible. Parents with children in elementary schools love the concept of an au pair because an au pair can get the children up ready for school, and on the bus, and then the au pair can have a few hours to herself while the children are in school and then care for them in the afternoon and early evening. Finding a nanny or another caretaker that is as flexible can be a real challenge because very few individuals would be willing to take the time off during the day.

Furthermore, having live-in help is beneficial if there is a sudden change in the family's schedule. For example, if a child wakes up sick in the morning, there is automatically someone there to care for him. The structure of the hiring process for an au pair is also attractive to many families. Because au pairs only work for a particular family temporarily, a family can adjust to the type of help it may need. As children get older, they will obviously develop different needs. The process of selecting an au pair allows parents to pick different individuals based upon the type of care their children requires.

To learn more about Urban Sitter, visit urbansitter.com!

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