

Building Mom Connections: Guest Post by Amy Suardi

MARCH 18, 2013 by [KELLE](#)

We're enjoying some family in from out of town right now but happy to share the blog today with my friend [Amy Suardi](#) of [Frugal Mama](#). I met [Amy](#) through an e-mail loop of bloggers, started reading her blog and was instantly inspired by the way she genuinely presented ways for living more frugally. On her blog, [Frugal Mama](#), Amy seamlessly weaves together the experiences we share in raising our families with tips for living more simply and purposefully—easy adaptations we all can make and ideas that go beyond “cutting coupons.”

Today, [Amy](#) shares ways to connect with other moms and ideas for building a supportive community—a necessity when we're in the trenches of this complexly challenging yet ever so rewarding job of raising our families.



(photo credit: TLC/Discovery)

Banish Mom Isolation and Find the Warmth and Connection You Need

by Amy Suardi

Raising young children can get a little lonely sometimes. Just getting out of the house can feel like an acrobatic feat. And with all of the naps, feedings, diaper changes, and gear, it's enough to make anyone just surrender and just stay home.

Yet mothers are very much in need of communing with others. I find nurturing children extremely yummy and satisfying, but there is also a yucky side. Cleaning up messes, trying to reason with obstinate toddlers, and spending a little too much time alone at the playground can make the days long and the weeks draggy. And if we're not getting enough sleep (who is?) or struggling with parenting issues (who isn't?), then our need for a long chat and a good laugh becomes even more urgent.

Neither my husband nor I live in our home town with family and long-time friends. And since we have moved so much as we were raising our kids (five times in the past ten years), I have to be very proactive about finding friends and creating community. I learned that it's just as important for me to form relationships as it is to get my kids out and about. Because let's face it: if mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.



Here are my favorite ways to jumpstart the process of finding kindred spirits and fellow mamas, and start feeling good.

Don't Be Shy — Sign Up

Over the years, I've realized that it's not necessary to find a best friend or someone whose

interests reflect mine. It's just as important — and easier — to find someone who is in the **same situation.**

Because even if we have plenty of friends, our friends are not always in the same life stage as us. Maybe they've gone back to work, maybe their kids are older and busy with lots of activities, maybe they have moved across town.

And really, who else is more willing to listen to dramas about how your baby is waking up every hour or how your toddler pulls everything off the grocery store shelves than someone in the same canoe?

The best way to find people like you is to join groups that focus on your stage of mothering and that will give you a reason to get out of the house on a regular basis. Here are the kinds of groups where I have met people and gotten out of my little micro-world:

- * Child birthing classes
- * Prenatal or family yoga classes
- * Informal playgroups that emerge from these groups (where moms take turns hosting)
- * Mother's groups (national organizations have thousands of small group chapters where you live, such as the MOM's Club, Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), Holistic Moms, and Parents of Multiples)
- * Church- or temple-based parent groups
- * Babysitting co-ops
- * Parent-teacher associations
- * Co-operative preschools or playgroups

The groups I have joined over the years have been like a lifeboat to me. It's not always easy for me to jump in. But once I get over my shyness and my silly embarrassment, I feel so grateful. Besides having met some of the most warm and interesting women, being part of a community is just good for the soul.

I think it helps to remember too that these friends didn't have to be my buddies for life.

They may just be my friend in this or that intense period, and that's OK too.

Give and Ye Shall Receive Whether you're joining a group or hanging out at the baby pool, sometimes it can be hard to get beyond the small talk. But I have found that when I offer to help organize a book sale or a spring party, I interact with people in a deeper way. Working together on something gives me a shared sense of purpose, and the bonds that are formed as a result are stronger.

I know what you're thinking, because I've thought the same thing myself: "How can I help someone else when I'm barely keeping up with my own house and life and kids?" An amazing paradox that I have discovered to be true, time and time again, is that: when I give my love and energy, I always get more back.

So when I'm feeling overwhelmed and a little down, sometimes the solution is reaching and getting involved. Besides getting to know people, having a project to work on (beyond the relentlessness of cleaning house) really gives me an emotional boost. And the great thing about volunteering for family-centered organizations is that you can always fit it into your life as a mom.

Volunteering has also been a great way to develop my professional skills while staying home with my kids. Before having children I had flitted from job to job, unsure of myself and my strengths. But when my children inspired me to offer to run a cooperative preschool and rally support for our struggling elementary school, I gained confidence and ideas about what I could do later in life.

Feed Yourself by Feeding Others

Perhaps the surest way to deepen relationships is to invite someone over. I find that a relationship always shifts into a more solid place when I invite someone to come in for a snack, a coffee, or a simple dinner. Is it the vulnerability inherent in this act that makes the

relationship more real, more serious? I say vulnerable because no one (that I know anyway) has a show house or is a gourmet cook. So bringing someone into your personal space requires a certain courage. It means showing who you really are, with all your imperfections and quirks.

When I was a young mother, I would invite moms and kids over for playdates, and they would invite us over. Sometimes I would invite them to stay for a basic lunch — grilled cheese sandwiches or pasta with tomato sauce. Since I much preferred to eat in company, the little bit of extra work involved in prep and clean-up was way worth it for me.



Over the years, my husband Enrico and I have grown to really love having other families over for dinner. Going out to restaurants is expensive and, with young kids, it's the opposite

of relaxing. However, inviting people over for a meal can often mean a luxurious amount of talking and laughing while the kids are playing or watching a movie.

I started inviting people over when I had very little experience in the kitchen, and I had my share of ‘oops’ moments. Like the times when I served raw meat, wincingly salty eggplant parmesan, cold casserole, or gloppy quiche. But hey, we learn from living life and making mistakes, and the more I cook for others, the more I get comfortable and better at it.

But wait: you don’t have to like cooking. As a guest, I can say that it doesn’t matter what people serve me. I am just touched by the kindness of the invitation, and whether it’s store-bought, homemade, or heated up, food prepared by someone else just tastes better. If you’re feeling insecure, I say it’s always safe to make a family favorite. Even though it may not seem exciting to you, it’s still new to your guests, and making something familiar allows you to enjoy your friends, instead of stressing over the food.



And don't wait until your house is fixed up, organized, or squeaky clean. Inviting someone over is about being friendly, not perfect, and people will love you for it. By welcoming someone into your personal space, you are committing one of the greatest acts of generosity.

Whether we are raising newborns or ninth-graders, getting beyond the demands of our daily lives to connect with others can require a little effort. But it's about taking care of ourselves, really. Just as I am always thankful and even euphoric after making myself get some exercise, I have found that the effort in reaching out to other people always, always pays off.

Amy Suardi is a writer, community-builder, and mother of four. At her blog [Frugal Mama](#), she shares about her journey in finding the fun in saving money while keeping life simple so she has time for what matters.



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LEAH says:

March 18, 2013 at 2:44 pm

Love this post. We all need to find our “people.”

[Reply](#)



PATTI *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 3:23 pm

Looking forward to reading more on her blog !

[Reply](#)



MELANEE *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 3:27 pm

Great advice to moms who nurture their children and family daily. We have to remember to nurture ourselves, as well.

[Reply](#)



IRELASSRED *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 5:25 pm

I really enjoyed your guest post! Sometimes I feel like hospitality is a dying art so I am always happy to see it being promoted!

I love to have people into my home & agree that it is always worth the hassle. And being invited to someone else's home is always a thrill.

I'm planning to go check out your blog right now....

[Reply](#)



YEAMIEWAFFLES *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 5:50 pm

Wonderful guest post, thanks so much for dropping by to write for us.

[Reply](#)



ELLIE *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 6:56 pm

Wonderful!

[Reply](#)

LEX WISNIEWSKI *says:*



March 18, 2013 at 7:29 pm

Thanks for this.

We're in the same town we've been in since we were married, and our families are nearby, but it took a while for our first little baby to show up, so we're in a weird season of rearranging social circles. We love our friends, but you're so right about finding people in the same stage of life.

This may also have been the last straw on inviting people over. My house has always been neat and clean, and now with a new baby it's anything but. We love having friends over, but haven't for the past three months. Maybe it's time to let go and let people come over even though the laundry isn't put away and the floor is unwashed ...

Reply



LINDSAY *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 7:48 pm

Kelle

When I saw this, I was reminded about your IG post about Nella and the puzzle pieces. I hope she continues to show you just how amazing she can be!

http://bites.today.com/_news/2013/03/18/17213204-restaurateur-with-down-

[syndrome-serves-up-tasty-grub-and-hugs?lite](#)

[Reply](#)



ANNIE *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 8:01 pm

So true! We just invited a family over this past weekend – I was impressed with myself (and so was my husband) with letting things go (read: had not cleaned the house end to end). And it worked out great!

[Reply](#)



ADE *says:*

March 18, 2013 at 10:56 pm

Love Amy...knew her in high school and was pleasantly surprised to stumble upon her blog a few years ago. I need to open up my home more...I'm in the stage of parenting where we are rarely home and our shabby nest is a testament to parenting by carpool these days. I vow to try to get over my shame at not having the "nice house"...

[Reply](#)



KIMMY says:

March 19, 2013 at 12:10 am

Great ideas. Even just going to a movie with a friend or book club for two hours really helps recharge my batteries. Even when I am tired I am always glad I spent time with friends it is similar to how I feel after exercise, I am always glad I did it. You are right - when Mommy is happy and relaxed everyone is happier. Great post. I like what you said about not having to have the perfect house or gourmet meal. Everyone appreciates being invited over to someone's home, I know I always do. I look forward to checking out your blog.

[Reply](#)



KIMMY says:

March 19, 2013 at 12:11 am

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[Reply](#)



JEN DAWSON *says:*

March 19, 2013 at 1:55 am

This was lovely to read. You're so right, building relationships is what has gotten me through some of the toughest parts of parenting. Looking forward to reading your blog further!

Erica

<http://www.beautifullifemadeeasy.blogspot.ca>

Reply



JENNY *says:*

March 19, 2013 at 2:57 am

Such a great post and a good reminder to make an effort to reach out. I fully agree with the part about getting more energy when you give back. I am typically so tired at night, but last night I made a "get well" basket for an old neighbor, stayed up late doing it and was really happy driving it over to her house. Feeling connected is a great thing. Thanks for sharing.

Reply

MADDYDOG *says:*



March 19, 2013 at 3:51 am

So excited you shared this blog with us! Thank you, Kelle!!

[Reply](#)



KODI says:

March 19, 2013 at 4:25 am

I loved this. I'm moving next week and I'm determined that I will not do this motherhood thing alone any longer. I will put myself out there. I will host instead of hoping to be included. After three lonely years, I'm excited for the possibilities.

[Reply](#)



RACHEL says:

March 19, 2013 at 9:59 am

Simply Perfect!!! Loved it!!

[Reply](#)



KMRP says:

March 19, 2013 at 12:48 pm

I love the “you don’t have to like cooking” part. I was hospitality- phobic because I hated to cook. I have friends who are amazing cooks and take time and care with every meal. I prefer cleaning house. Yes, I am weird like that. I discovered crockpot meals and caseroles made with shelf ready items. When we started having people over more they loved my lazy cook meals. It’s so true- the company makes all the difference.

[Reply](#)



MORGEN says:

March 19, 2013 at 1:17 pm

This was so perfect for me! I’m 7 mo pregnant and really craving community right now. Great post!

[Reply](#)



STEPHANIE PRECOURT says:

March 19, 2013 at 2:04 pm

Thank you for sharing this and Amy- perfect timing as today I am going on my first

park playdate with Ivy since moving here and it might rain and now I've decided that no matter what I'll invite the other mom over here, unpacked boxes and all. 😊

Steph

Reply



UNKNOWN says:

March 19, 2013 at 8:16 pm

People haven't received their signed book plate from the hardcover yet but your pushing them for the paperback?!?!

Reply



MISSOULAGRACE.COM says:

March 20, 2013 at 5:04 am

These are good suggestions! I especially appreciate the “don't wait til your house is pinterest perfect” before having people over. 😊 People who care more about what my house looks like than the warmth it contains? I don't want to KNOW them— Much less BE them. 😊

Reply



KELLY SHEEHY *says:*

March 20, 2013 at 3:54 pm

This is a wonderful post, filled with super-great ideas, and has come in a very timely fashion as I am adjusting to life in our new town! Thank you so much for sharing!

[Reply](#)



PETTITT FAMILY *says:*

March 20, 2013 at 8:32 pm

This is such a great reminder! We moved to another state over two years ago and making new friends was painful!

[Reply](#)



LITTLE RED MOTHERHOOD *says:*

March 20, 2013 at 9:02 pm

I love this. I was thinking of starting a weekly play date this summer. This was just the push I needed. Mom communities provide so much support. Thank you for the inspiration!

[Reply](#)



PAULIEANNA *says:*

March 21, 2013 at 4:07 pm

Thanks so much for this! I make it a point to invite friends /mom friends over for play dates often, but I often stress out extremely before they come to my less thn perfect home. I worry since I rent and hey all own amazing homes that are always meticulous that I just don't meet up, but I try to remind myself that they love me/my kids...not my house or my cooking!

[Reply](#)



ARTIFICE *says:*

March 21, 2013 at 5:00 pm

Thank you so much for sharing this article and your insight! I am 58 and all of your suggestions still pertain to me. At any age we can get isolated for many different reasons. Mine being laid off from my job, moving to a new city, and being married to a spouse who has daily chronic back pain. I am out of the house working again yet I need to take that next step and invite people into my home to commune.

Linda

[Reply](#)



JENNIFER GAFFORD *says:*

March 22, 2013 at 8:34 pm

We have the same black & white plates! Love cooking with kids, it is such a great time to bond. One of our favorite ways to spend a play date too!

– Jennifer

gps-gracepowerstrength.blogspot.com

[Reply](#)



KARREN *says:*

March 24, 2013 at 9:10 pm

Love this post! I moved away from my hometown three years ago for my husband's career with the military.. The first year was the hardest for me because I was pregnant and didn't know anyone. I eventually found a book club and a playgroup for my son, and it helped so much. We are moving in a couple weeks to a new state and I'm starting to feel nervous about meeting new friends again—I needed this reminder to put myself out there! Thanks for sharing!

[Reply](#)

AMY SUARDI *says:*



March 24, 2013 at 9:39 pm

Hello wonderful ETST and Kelle Hampton community,

I loved reading every one of your comments. It made my week. It was heartening to hear that so many of you know where I am coming from; and that this message came at a timely moment for others.

It is my wish that no one should be alone and overwhelmed, that we mothers can unite and nurture each other as we build community and raise our children together.

If anyone stopped by my site, I must apologize for the “under construction” state; it’s going through a messy redesign. But thank you for coming by, and for sharing your thoughts about friendship with me here at Kelle’s blog.

Sincerely,

Amy

[Reply](#)



FEISTYREDHAIR *says:*

March 26, 2013 at 12:40 pm

I really enjoyed this post. Amy seems to have a wonderful grasp of how to make mothering as meaningful as possible. Thanks for these great tips.

[Reply](#)