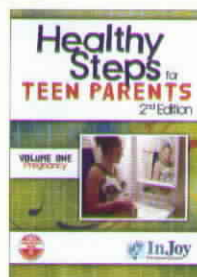


commentary, *Lost Adventures of Childhood* explores the consequences of children's lives becoming increasingly structured over the past 30 years—with statistics indicating that contemporary kids now spend most of their time indoors, as planned activities trump imaginative play. Fearful moms and dads are not only keeping an ever-closer eye on their offspring—even tracking them via GPS—but are also more likely to enroll them in extracurricular academics or organized competitive sports, in hopes of providing them with advantages down the line. Interviews with parents and kids spotlight the adults' fears and ambitions as well as the stresses faced by overlooked children. Meanwhile, psychologists and teachers note that unsupervised play facilitates the development of mental skills necessary for effective functioning (one goes so far as to say the world's economic future is in peril if children do not learn interpersonal and problem-solving skills that would be acquired naturally through playtime). In a particularly interesting sequence, the film looks at recent scientific studies linking play to brain development, including a project in Great Britain in which children—left alone with a variety of materials and toys—quickly developed social skills that translated to improved learning behaviors in the classroom. Despite occasional melodramatic statements, this thought-provoking documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

A Mother's Courage: Talking Back to Autism ★★★

(2010) 103 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Iceland's Fridrik Thor Fridriksson, known for lyrical feature films such as *Children of Nature*, takes a surprising turn with this documentary about autism, which focuses on 10-year-old Keli and his mother, Margret, who describes her son as severely autistic and nonverbal (Kate Winslet narrates Margret's words in English). Fridriksson films Keli at school and at home, but concentrates mostly on Margret as she travels abroad to learn more about her son's condition—which is four times more prevalent in boys than girls—with the hope that other parents can learn from her experience. Margret meets with researchers, advocates, and affected families throughout the U.S. and the U.K. including the Meulemans, who have three sons with the disorder; activist Portia Iverson of Cure Autism Now; Nobel Prize winner Dr. Vernon L. Smith, who has Asperger syndrome; and Dr. Temple Grandin, whose life with autism inspired an Emmy-winning HBO biopic. Margret learns about the characteristics of the autistic brain, the differences between verbal and visual thinkers (many autistic individuals have acute visual-spatial capabilities), and treatments such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and Rapid Prompt-



Healthy Steps for Teen Parents, 2nd Edition: Vol. 1, Pregnancy ★★★1/2

(2010) 30 min. DVD: \$69.95; public libraries; \$199.95; high schools, colleges & universities. InJoy. PPR. Closed captioned.

Pregnancy, the first volume in the updated award-winning *Healthy Steps for Teen Parents* series covers topics ranging from the importance of prenatal care to what kinds of physical and emotional changes mothers-to-be can expect. Hosted by a young woman with firsthand knowledge, the realistic but upbeat and engaging program is chockfull of practical information and solid advice on a wide range of subjects, such as staying physically fit, following a nutritious diet, and coping with changes in mood—all presented from and for a teen perspective. The program profiles six women in their third trimester—ranging in age from 16 to 20 and representing a variety of ethnicities and socioeconomic situations—whose comments and observations will resonate with the intended audience. Doctor visits and body transformations are demystified, ways to keep the growing baby protected are thoroughly explained, and even strategies for staying in school and getting support are presented (and while some of the girls shown do have supportive partners, the topic of abusive relationships is covered as well). Employing easy-to-understand but never condescending language, the main focus here is on ensuring a healthy pregnancy. The other titles in the series are *Volume 2: Labor and Birth* and *Volume 3: Postpartum*. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (E. Gieschen)

ing Method (RPM), which can minimize symptoms. Margret spends most of her time in Texas, where Keli tries RPM, which yields promising results. DVD extras include an autism reference guide. Hopeful and informative, *A Mother's Courage* is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

My Toxic Baby ★★★

(2009) 46 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

Filmmaker and new mother Min Sook Lee finds carcinogens and neurotoxins in nearly everything that touches her young daughter's life—from bath soap to baby bottles—in this documentary that examines the options for raising a "green" baby. Lee looks at traditional/natural childrearing practices—such as breastfeeding, preparing fresh meals for children, and holding "chicken pox parties" in which youngsters are purposely exposed to the disease in order to avoid vaccination and develop immune resistance—contrasting these methods with other approaches that might be more commonly accepted but also less safe. Lee notes that some food dyes have been linked to hyperactivity in children and to cancer, discovers that baby formula manufactured in the U.S. has been found to contain traces of toxic melamine, and points out that organic food can be prohibitively expensive. She also devotes considerable time to "elimination communication" (or "EC," carrying an infant to the toilet rather than using diapers)—interviewing a small group of parents who use EC and describe how it works. When an expert visits Lee's home to test the environment for lead, he finds unsafe levels in toys and bedding, in the bathtub, and in the paint on the kitchen cupboards. Despite occasional injections of wry humor, the film comes to a downbeat

conclusion: with both manufacturers and the government allowing even small amounts of dangerous substances in products intended for children, who can be trusted? Recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

The Line ★★★

(2010) 24 min. DVD: \$34.95; public libraries; \$95; high schools; \$195; colleges & universities. Media Education Foundation. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-932869-42-5.

Filmmaker Nancy Schwartzman narrates this intensely personal documentary about her experience with sexual assault, exploring the political, legal, and cultural questions that emerge in the aftermath—including the fine line between consent and coercion. Intended as a focus for discussion, *The Line* describes Schwartzman's suburban upbringing, risky college behavior (casual sex, drugs, an affair with a professor), and move to Jerusalem, where a date with a co-worker ends with an act she didn't agree to, although she did say yes to having sex. After returning to the U.S., Schwartzman consults with attorneys including Brett Sokolow—who specializes in campus security and safety issues—about filing charges. Sokolow cautions her that if drinking and flirting preceded the attack, it would be difficult to convince a jury that rape took place. Schwartzman also speaks with educators, lawmakers, fraternity guys, and prostitutes (who talk about establishing clear guidelines before encounters), before eventually deciding to return to Israel to confront her attacker. Surprisingly, he agrees to meet with her, and Schwartzman secretly films their exchange but obscures his face in