

Award-Winning Authors and Illustrators at Lafayette Library Oct. 24

Submitted by Fran Miller



Image Michael Slack

Five well-known, award-winning authors and illustrators – Jennifer Choldenko, Thacher Hurd, Jordan Jacobs, Elisa Kleven and Michael Slack – will sign books and demonstrate illustration techniques from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24 as part of the Children's Book Festival at the Lafayette Library Community Hall. Performers from Town Hall Theatre's "Seussical the Musical" will kick off the free festivities with a musical performance at 11 a.m.

Gennifer Choldenko is best known for her Newbery award-winning "Al Capone Does my Shirts."

With more than 2 million books in print, School Library Journal says Choldenko is "unsurpassed at interweaving plot with historical detail." Her Tales of Alcatraz trilogy is considered by Kirkus to be "a cornerstone series in contemporary children's literature." Choldenko will read from her latest novel, "Chasing Secrets."

Thacher Hurd graduated from the California College of Arts and Crafts with a degree in painting. He has written and illustrated more than 25 books for children, among them "Mystery on the Docks," "Mama Don't Allow," "Art Dog," "Moo Cow Kaboom,"

"Sleepy Cadillac," and most recently "Bad Frogs." He has also written and illustrated two board books, one of which, "Zoom City," was a New York Times Best Illustrated Book of the Year.

Elisa Kleven grew up in Los Angeles, and wished that the huge city could be more like the places in the books she loved – places where forests grew and seasons changed, where animals talked, people could fly, and anything was possible. As a writer and illustrator of children's picture books such as "The Lion and the Little Red Bird," "The Puddle Pail," and "Hooray, a Pinata," Kleven now creates the magical worlds she imagined as a young girl.

Jordan Jacobs is the award-winning author of the Samantha Sutton series of archaeological mysteries for tweens. His childhood passion for mummies, castles and Indiana Jones led to his participation in his first excavation at age 13. After completing a high school archaeology program, he followed his passion to Stanford, Oxford, and Cambridge. Jacobs' work for the Smithsonian, the American Museum of Natural History and UNESCO Headquarters in Paris has focused on policy and the protection of archaeological sites in the developing world.

Michael Slack is an artist, illustrator, and character designer. His character driven humorous art has been recognized by Society of Illustrators Los Angeles, Applied Arts, Pictoplasma, Computer Arts, and SBS Digital Design. Slack's illustrations have appeared in books, magazines, and on TV. His paintings and drawings have been exhibited in the U.S. and Europe.

For more information, visit llcf.org.

Family Focus

Handling Our Anger in Increasingly Stressful Times

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

We are all aware of the increase in incidents of excessively angry behavior in recent years. Road rage (a term that didn't exist 30 years ago); nasty interpersonal disputes; adult temper tantrums in public; increased rudeness and impatience toward service people; and many more instances of bullying behavior, including online bullying, have all led to a sense that civility in our society is breaking down.

A 2013 study reported in USA Today found that 60 percent of Americans reported feeling angry or irritable. That is up from 50 percent when a similar poll was taken in 2011. The percentage for 2015 may well be even higher.

As we know, our behavior and attitudes have a profound effect on our children. If we want to help them learn to control their anger we need to be models of self-restraint.

Some factors that may contribute to our increased anger and frustration are high expectations for ourselves, our children, and others; comparisons with others we see as more successful and privileged (exacerbated by social media and increased celebrity worship); uncertainty about the economy and our financial present and future; worries about happiness and success for our children; and upsetting events in the world.

On top of all this, we now have "social media rage." One study on Internet social media sites points to the contagious nature of strong emotions, and identifies anger as the most influential emotion in online interactions. Is it any wonder that we are more prone than ever to anger and irritability?

When we have underlying unresolved issues and then become overloaded by stressors, it may not take much to cause loss of control. A former client, a successful businessman, came to see me because he was becoming increasingly irritable at home and at work. In addition, he had a high degree of road rage and was driving erratically at times.

"Tony" already carried around hurt and anger from growing up with critical parents who only seemed to care about his achievements. He did not feel that his parents tried to get to know him, and did not feel accepted and loved for who he was – only for how he could make his parents proud so they could impress others.

Although Tony was highly accomplished in his career, he felt pressure to keep up a certain level of performance and to maintain his family's lifestyle. Lately, Tony's relationship with his wife and sons was deteriorating, and he was drinking a bottle of wine or more each night. Tony had many friends, but no one who knew him on a deep level. In therapy Tony realized that he had been keeping everyone in his life at an emotional distance. Undereath his facade of success was a person who didn't feel good enough. He feared that if others got too close they would realize he was flawed.

Tony's unhappiness and dissatisfaction with himself made him more vulnerable and reactive to upsetting events. On the road he personalized perceived slights by other drivers and tried to take control in ways that were highly risky. When his wife and sons expressed even a mild complaint or criticism, he quickly and unconsciously reverted back to his childhood when he endured so much negativity from his parents, and he became enraged.

We need to make sure that we are emotionally healthy and well-balanced in order to cope with the many potential stressors in our lives. Understanding ourselves and being aware of our feelings help us maintain self-control and rationality. Additionally, we can try hard to avoid speaking or acting on impulse when we are highly upset. Taking time to think things through before deciding how or if to react can significantly reduce conflict.

If we do need to express irritation or anger, because it is not healthy to bottle up our emotions, we can do so

assertively, not aggressively. Talking about how a situation affects us and using an "I-message," without blaming or making others wrong, can help ease communication. Starting messages with "I" and how you feel, and avoiding the word "you," allows the recipient to better hear what you have to say. For example, if you are upset because your spouse frequently interrupts, you could say "I get frustrated when I'm interrupted in the middle of a sentence." Then follow up with a request, "Can we agree that I will have time to finish my thought?" And finally, be sure to establish an agreement in order to complete the transaction.

Of course, it helps to take good care of ourselves physically with adequate sleep, exercise, healthy eating, and moderate screen time. Spending time in nature, taking time off from work and responsibilities, maintaining positive connections with family and friends, feeling a sense of purpose and value, and helping others, all contribute to our well-being. And finding ways to turn off our thoughts and give ourselves mental breaks – through meditation, prayer, music, and other soothing activities – can help us feel stronger and calmer.

By making an effort to control our own anger and irritability, we help our children learn to control theirs as well. After all, we don't want to be in the position of telling our children to "do as I say, not as I do."



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