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SUPPORT GROUP

For Mothers Who Started Off Older, a Circle of Peers

By [MARCELLE S. FISCHLER](#)

Mill Neck

WHEN Daryl Katz, 38, had a son, Grant, eight months ago, her friends were at a different stage of their lives, she said. Busy with older children, they weren't interested in chatting about midnight feedings or how to soothe a croupy baby at 3 a.m.

Ms. Katz, who manages her husband's cosmetic surgery practice in Syosset, found camaraderie with "Motherhood Later...Than Sooner," a friendship and support group for those 35 and older and their young children.

The group holds gatherings at homes, parks and venues like the Long Island Children's Museum, meets in restaurants for monthly moms' nights out and encourages members to plan their own events.

Last month, more than a dozen mothers, little ones in tow, shared lunch and playtime at Ms. Katz's home on Beaver Lake here.

"We can commiserate on the different advantages and challenges that we face as older moms," Ms. Katz said. "We are able to allay each other's fears and calm each other's nerves and comfort and support each other."

Michelle Arnold, 41, a property manager from Port Washington, left her 4-month-old son, Chase, at home with his nanny because he was teething and had a fever. But at the party she said that supervising 122 employees was a cinch compared with caring for an infant. "Even though you run a business and you are successful," she said, motherhood is "totally new territory."

"You have so many questions that you don't have answers to," Ms. Arnold said. "At this point in your age and your life, it does bring out a lot of your insecurities."

Among the favorite topics for discussion are family planning concerns and fertility issues; Ms. Katz underwent in vitro fertilization and Ms. Arnold used a surrogate. "We can't wait several years" to have another child, Ms. Katz said. "Our parents and in-laws are older and less apt to be able to help us and be supportive and be involved."

On the plus side, Ms. Katz said, the moms have "more financial security, more maturity and more life experience."

The group was founded four years ago by Robin Gorman Newman, the author of two books for singles and a

“dating coach,” as a social support circle, based in Great Neck, that met every other week for a discussion led by a social worker. Ms. Newman, then 42, had just adopted a son, Seth, and “yearned to meet mom peers.”

A year ago, Ms. Newman started a Web site, motherhoodlater.com, with Aliza Sherman Risdahl, 43, an Internet consultant and founder of Webgrrls International, an organization of women in new media. Now there are more than 200 members in the New York area, and chapters in Anchorage, where Ms. Sherman Risdahl lives, as well as in Fairfield County, Conn.; Los Angeles and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Ms. Newman, who said she “often felt like one of the oldest moms at mommy and me classes,” is planning a family outing, including children 10 and under, to Orly’s Treehouse, an indoor play center in Westbury, on Jan. 27.

“Having age in common isn’t enough to cement a friendship, but it was a place to start,” Ms. Newman said. Membership is free, though Ms. Newman hopes to spin the demographically defined group into a business venture. The Web site includes a blog. Members share information about baby-sitting services and other concerns on a message board on meetup.com.

When Meg Tippy, 37, a psychologist from East Norwich, signed up her daughter, Sarah, 8 ½ months, for music sessions and a parent and baby class, her first concern was the age of the other children, she said. But she noticed a gap between younger and older mothers even at a stroller exercise program. “Those of us who are older when we had our first kids find each other at whatever activities we are at,” Dr. Tippy said; she recognized several mothers she knew at Ms. Katz’s get-together.

Suzanne Brook, 47, swapped stories with other mothers while her husband, Eric, 41, watched their twin 9-month-olds, Jackson and Grace, at the gathering. (He was one of two men attending; Ms. Katz’s husband, Roger, was the other.)

“I am thrilled to be where I am at this point in my life,” said Ms. Brook, a physician’s assistant from Old Brookville. Still, she felt “a little out of place at times” in some settings.

“I am waiting for someone to ask me if I am the grandmother,” Ms. Brook said. “Hopefully I will have enough sense of humor to laugh it off.”

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