

HEALTHY
BODY+
HAPPY LIFE

Your Essential Guide to Mind/Body Bliss **P.71**

EBONY

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for
Every
Age**

**SINGLE,
SAVED
AND
HAVING
SEX**

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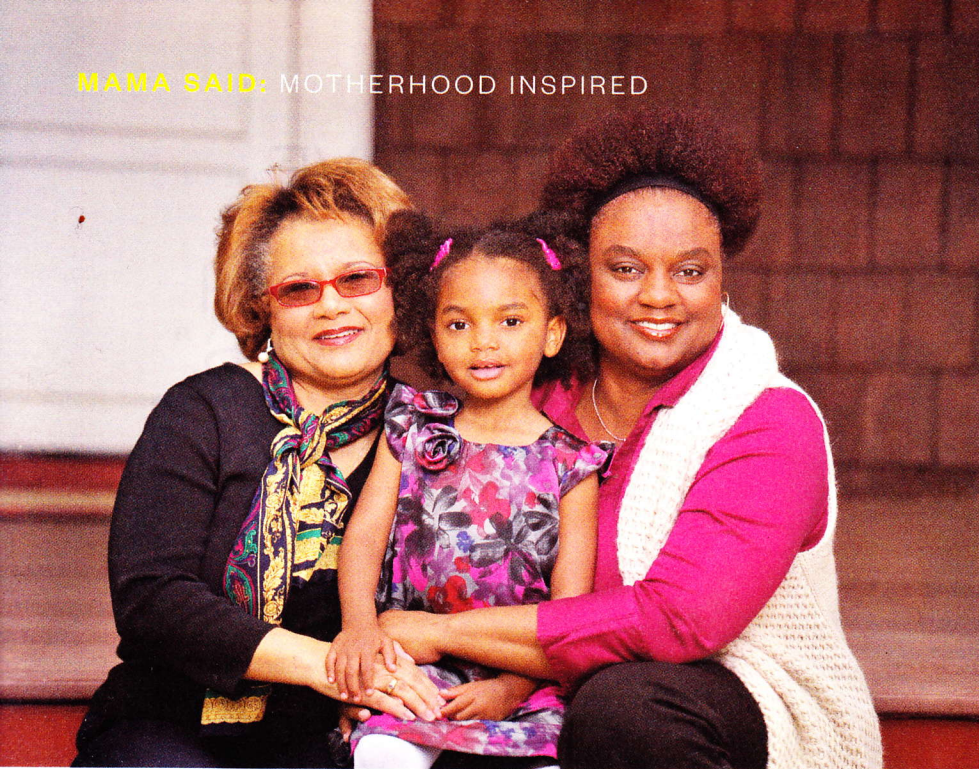
Motherhood, Healthy Living and
the *One* Thing She Can't Give Up

EBONY SPECIAL REPORT

MAMA SAID: MOTHERHOOD INSPIRED

Whether she's raising a brood of five on her own, parenting from a war zone, earning her diploma and homeschooling or caring for little ones with special needs, no one's more resilient, resourceful or radiant than an African-American mom. In their own words, seven extraordinary women share their passion for parenting.

INTERVIEWS BY CLAIRE McINTOSH WITH ROD MCCOLLUM



The Gay Mom
**“SHE
 CALLS US
 BOTH
 ‘MOM.’”**

Renee Perrier, 42 | social worker/
 child protective services supervisor
 Washington, D.C | CHILD: Amaris, 3
 Photograph by MARVIN JOSEPH

BEGAN A RELATIONSHIP with my partner, Karen [pictured above left], six years ago, and it was a gift that she also wanted a family. That desire eventually led us to a fertility clinic, an anonymous donor and my becoming inseminated. My first Mother’s Day was so special. It was great to receive congratulations and cards because my dream of motherhood had finally come true. I love children and the gift that they bring to the world.

Amaris makes me smile every day. She’s such an incredible child. She grabs my face and says, ‘I love you hard!’ What amazes me the most about our relationship is the overwhelming love. I see her walking around, and I just adore her. My happiest moments as a parent over the

last year have been watching Amaris grow.

She calls us both “Mom.” That was a decision that Karen and I made during pregnancy.

The biggest misconception about gays or lesbians raising children is that we are somehow different. Karen and I go to work, come home and pay our mortgage, like any other couple. I just choose to spend my life with a woman. What are people afraid of? If you walk past us, you wouldn’t be afraid.

Children have endless energy. My toughest parenting moments are usually when I’m tired. Karen is my anchor. When I’m exhausted, she will say, “Take a time out. I got this.” I appreciate that. Karen and I both work in children’s social services. We balance work and family by juggling tasks. We have a routine and always communicate if we can’t stick to it.

What keeps me up at night? I work in child protective services, and what I see every day—the horror, the abuse—sometimes makes me worry about Amaris. But when I watch my baby—her language and confidence, her diverse friends—then I feel that I’ve succeeded so far as a parent.

If we need help or support, we reach to our “village”—Amaris’ godmother or godfather or a neighborhood friend. Neighbors usually help with information, such as which schools are better. They also offer moral support. I told one neighbor that Karen and I are to be married on June 16. There were so many well wishes from all the neighbors. It was overwhelming!

“No song or poem will bear my mother’s name.”



The Mom of Special-Needs Children

“I want my boys to have the same opportunities as everyone else’s children.”

Shae Freeman, 29 | full-time student | Tempe, Ariz.
 CHILDREN: DeVion, 11; Donovan, 7; and David-Anthony, 4

I WAS A YOUNG MOTHER—pregnant at 17—but I took care of my health and had phenomenal prenatal care. My oldest son’s rare medical condition isn’t due to anything I did or didn’t do. He has a chromosomal defect. My middle son showed signs of autism early on but was not diagnosed until after he started kindergarten. My youngest child is perfectly healthy, and I didn’t do anything different with my last pregnancy.

Once I learned that something was wrong with my first pregnancy, I got busy finding out what my baby was facing. He would end up being diagnosed only after years of my fighting to have him seen by the best doctors, doing research, joining support groups and educating myself on what he would need to survive. My firstborn arrived a month after I turned 18, and by the time I was 19, I had earned others’ respect as an advocate [mom who was] educated about my child’s condition.

DeVion has Klippel Trenaunay syndrome, a rare disorder affecting the lymphatic and vascular systems, which causes soft tissue and muscle overgrowth, internal organ overgrowth, bone overgrowth or undergrowth, bleeding disorder