



Stuff We Love

Calming the Crazy in your life one post at a time.

2010

Busy doesn't begin to describe our lives today.

School, work, baseball, ballet, dinner, clean, repeat. The daily cycle can easily become less about living and more about surviving. **In a word, it's crazy.** We here at **Calm the Crazy** can't promise we'll eliminate this frenetic pattern or make your life suddenly simple 'for only \$19.99!' But what we can promise is that, with products like our **Kikou** and by finding and sharing services and products that save you a little time, or a little money, or a little sanity, we're constantly striving to make a few moments in your day a little calmer. And, we hope, that when all those little moments are added together at the end of the day, the week, or the month, you feel we've helped **Calm the Crazy** in your life.

In that spirit, we present a collection of the **Stuff We Loved in 2010**—products, services, or just great ideas that make a moment or two a day a little easier. **Because life with kids shouldn't just be survived, it should be lived. One moment at a time.**

DISCLOSURE: We received no compensation or gifts in exchange for posting about any of the items in Stuff We Love. The only benefit we've ever received for sharing the following is the simple pleasure of turning people on to great products and services that we've enjoyed.



Services We Love



Paperback Swap: If you have a pile of books from years past, swap them for new reads at the Paperback Swap. Simply list 10 books you're willing to swap with other members and you're off and running. There are no hidden fees or costs—all you pay is the cost to ship your books out if/when someone requests them. Fresh books to your door in exchange for a little decluttering—now that helps calm the crazy. www.paperbackswap.com



Macaroni Kid: Keeping the kiddos entertained, especially in the summer, can be a challenge. That's why we love Macaroni Kid—it's an e-newsletter/website that keeps you updated on events and activities for kids happening in your area. <http://national.macaronikid.com>



Swap-a-DVD: Gonna stick a spork in your eye if you have to watch "Elmo in Grouchland" one more time? List it on swapadvd.com, mail it to another member when requested, then choose from over 150,000 available movies to have mailed to you. No member fees. Just pay the cost of mailing. www.swapadvd.com



Woot: Woot is an online store that focuses on selling cool stuff cheap. The catch? They sell only one product per day, ranging from a \$1,000 TV to a \$10 hairdryer. Day to day, you never know what they'll be offering. Check it out for a few days and you'll be hooked. They also have sites just for kids stuff and wine—everyone wins! www.woot.com, www.wine.woot.com, www.kids.woot.com



Zenni Optical: The third time our eldest daughter bent our glasses while playfully pulling them off our face, we knew we needed to find some cheap, attractive, and functional glasses. Enter www.zennioptical.com. For \$15-50 you get great, stylish glasses shipped right to your door—they even do prescription sunglasses! We've ordered several pair and have always been pleased. Order multiples of the same pair and you'll be ready with a backup when the next wrestling match breaks out!



Bookseer: Loved that book you just finished? Well, at www.bookseer.com you can use that book to get recommendations for other books you'll love! Now if only they'd help you find time to read!



Dinner Tonight by myrecipe

MyRecipes.com 'Dinner Tonight': Tired of thinking about what to make for dinner? Have great recipes delivered to your inbox! Sign up for the MyRecipes.com 'Dinner Tonight' e-newsletter. They also have ones on Summer Grilling and Desserts! Now if only they'd cook them for you....
<http://www.myrecipes.com/newsletter/>



opal
never
shouts

Opal Never Shouts: Looking for ways to spruce up your living room or need a new color palette to add style to your boudoir? Check out Opal Never Shouts—an online interior design team who gives you a customized design plan for a whole lot less than standard design firms. Just answer some questions and send in some photos and you get a design consult to suit your needs (and your budget). You can also just peruse their site for ideas, too! <https://www.opalnevershouts.com/Design-Services/>



FillerItem: We are all about shopping online. Sure, there is something about going to the snow-covered mall, seeing Santa, and hearing 'Feliz Navidad' at the Brookstone store. But, for us, nothing tops sitting under a blanket with a cup of hot cocoa and buying all our gifts from Amazon. And any experienced Amazon user has to use www.filleritem.com to find those small priced items to qualify your order for free shipping.



UncommonGoods: If you're looking for a gift for that hard to shop for loved one, check out www.uncommongoods.com. Unique, fun gifts for men, women, and kids (we absolutely love the 'construction plate and utensils'!) We can almost guarantee you'll find something for anyone on your list!



Zwaggle: It seems that after every birthday, gift-giving holiday, or visit from the grandparents, the kiddos have a pile of new toys and you're left with a pile of suddenly 'old' toys that need a home. Try www.zwaggle.com. When you donate any gently used children's items (not just toys!) you receive Zoints that you can redeem for toys and gear for your family. Best of all, you can even donate your zoints to charity so they can get what they need!!



Products We Love



'Paper' Plates and 'Plastic' Cups: Summertime cook-outs with family, friends, white paper plates and red Solo cups—what could be better. How about dishwasher-safe, virtually unbreakable 'paper' plates and 'plastic' cups made to look like the originals. <http://bit.ly/hTLgKI>



Old Musicals: We love family movie night, but we've blown through Pixar, are over Princesses of all kinds, and can't handle any more singing toasters. Solution: Singin' in the Rain—it had us all entertained. Give it a try and check out other old musicals for more fun, parent-friendly options.



"No Mess" Cooking Utensils: File this under things we wish we'd thought of—a set of cooking spoons that hang inside the pot. The four spoons have silicon handles that stay cool to the touch and a 'bent handle' design for hanging on the edge of the pot. As far as inventions go it's not exactly the airplane, but it's simple, it works, and it helps make cooking dinner just a little less crazy. <http://bit.ly/a2ZHJk> (And yes it's a link to QVC! We're not afraid to do the Q every now and then – don't judge us!)



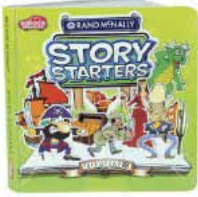
Lunchskins Sandwich/Snack Bags: Reusable, dishwasher-safe, and fashionable sandwich/snack bags. Save money and the environment. What's not to love? <http://www.lunchskins.com>



Dollar Tree Bubbles: Random? Yes! But seriously, they truly are the best...and three bottles for only \$1! You can't beat that. Plus, they're scented—mildly disturbing, but awesome!



Rocket Pop Molds: Those summer 1,000 degree days, mean two things—sprinklers and popsicles. And making our own popsicles has never been easier than with these: <http://amzn.to/dsPUk7>. They are easy to make, easy to serve one at a time, and even the handle has a small lip to catch some of the drips! And, perhaps most importantly, they're shaped like rockets. I think we can all agree that any flavor 'sicle tastes better when it's shaped like a rocket!



Boredom Breakers: A 12-hour car-ride with 2 toddlers and dog will test your sanity. Even with the modern blessing that is the portable DVD player, it can be difficult to fill the hours. Enter the Rand McNally Boredom Breakers, <http://amzn.to/cZp1QR>. There's karaoke, story starters (our kids' favorite), and finding games. The kids love them and we get a break from talking animals. Win/win.



Dipe-n-Go: Thankfully we're out of the diaper-changing stage, but when we were knee-deep in it, we wish we had a Dipe-n-Go. We've never felt more disheveled and slovenly as when we had to change diapers on the go in the back of our van. With the Dipe-n-Go, it's almost like we planned to change our kid in the grocery store parking lot! <http://www.dipe-n-go.com>



SpinArt App: We're always looking for those 5-minute distractions for the kids. Just enough to get us through the check-out line at the grocery store or those last few minutes, that feel like hours, before the mac n' cheese arrives. For those times, we love the SpinArt iPhone/iPod app. It lets the kids 'get messy' without the mess and lets us breathe for a few precious moments.

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/spinart/id289983752?mt=8>



Magnificent Baby: Anyway who has to undress, change, and redress a squirming baby at 2:30 in the morning has come to loath snapping onesies. Enter Magnificent Baby's magnetic closure system. Easy on, easy off—now that's calming the crazy.

<http://www.magnificentbaby.com/>



tknits: Every winter we pull the hats, coats, scarves, and gloves out of the attic only to find that virtually nothing from last year fits our weeds, er kids. In our search for new cold-weather gear, we came across www.tknits.com. They are great, customized hats that the kids can help design! Fun, fashionable, and functional—check 'em out!



DiaperBuds: When our kids were in diapers, it was inevitable that once a month we'd be caught out and about with an empty diaper bag and a full diaper. At those moments, it would have been great to have a few DiaperBuds in our purse. The 'buds' are full-sized diapers that have been individually vacuum-packed down to pocket size. And they were invented by three amazing working moms! <http://www.diaperbuds.com/>



Expandable Cooling Rack: The holidays mean entertaining family and friends, which of course means mass quantities of baking and cooking. These expandable cooling racks are a simple, problem-solving product that makes that process easier. 14" x 14" when stored, the rack expands to 14" x 35" when in use. The only downside is that when all that food cools enough to eat, the rack won't be the only thing expanding this holiday season. <http://bit.ly/fxoccm>



Cooking Guide Apron: Make cooking dinner a little easier with this ingenious cooking guide apron. Measuring conversions, cooking times, and freezing instructions are all printed upside-down on the bottom of the apron, so all you need do is lift it up and easily check out how many tablespoons are in 1/4 cup or how long to defrost the bird. If only it told us the secret to cooking a perfect turkey. <http://www.delight.com/Handy-Cooking-Guide-Apron>



WrapIt App: On the scale of worst minor inconveniences, cutting too little wrapping paper to wrap a present has to be near the top. It doesn't ruin our day or anything, but, boy, is it annoying. Avoid cutting a new sheet or trying to tape a little piece over the open space with the WrapItApp. Simply enter a gift box's measurements (or use the app's handy measurement tool) to find out how much paper and ribbon you'll really need. <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/wrapitapp/id339749544?mt=8>



People We Love



Live. Write. Repeat.

Live. Write. Repeat. Our friend Jen Kuhel has started writing again and we are all the better for it. She's honest and hysterical and she reminds us that it's not us that are crazy, it's our lives. (Ok, and us a little). We particularly love this post, but they're all fantastic. <http://bit.ly/a8eyPg>



Pomplamoose Music: For music that makes us & our kids smile, we turn to Pomplamoose—simple melodies, distinct instruments, and they have great videos too! <http://bit.ly/3gmTLo>



Caring Cubs: Founded in Cleveland, OH, Caring Cubs is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping teach young children the importance of giving back through volunteering, education, and fun. Look for an organization in your area. If there is one, join it, if there's not, start it! <http://www.caringcubs.org/>



Ready, Prep, Go: This isn't just another recipe site or a place to find quick & easy meals. It will teach you how to make a béchamel and hopefully get you past short-order cooking for your kids. And while we're not here to dispense parenting advice, we did think this "three bites" approach to help get picky eaters to try anything from fava beans to Kaddo Borani without tears and tantrums was interesting. <http://readyprepgo.com/tastes-change>



Food Revolution: Between work and school and playdates and soccer practices, our modern lives are filled to the brim with crazy. Our favorite way to slow down, be with our kids, and keep life moving is to cook together as a family. As part of his Food Revolution, Jamie Oliver has offered up some delicious, simple recipes to make together. So check it out and spend some quality time bonding over a pot of classic spaghetti (loaded with veg!). <http://bit.ly/aJRtxt>



Fun We Love



Make Your Own Crayons: Got a shoebox full of broken, chipped, and cracked crayons of every size and color? Turn that pile of bits into new crayons perfect for little hands by melting them down! (Don't worry it's actually pretty easy <http://bit.ly/cMhLaw>) You can group like colors together or mix them all up to make rainbow crayons. Your kids will be amazed to see new crayons come out of the oven and you'll love getting rid of that mess of a shoebox!



Why Having A Toddler is Like Being at a Frat Party:

Hard to argue with this, but we always viewed our house with 2 little girls as more of a sorority party. Girls laughing at things that aren't that funny, crying at things that aren't that sad, fighting over things that aren't that important, and ending up on the couch together as best friends. <http://bit.ly/bkkQO9>



10 Tips for Becoming a Happier Parent: So, parenting is hard. At times, really hard. While incredibly rewarding, it can also be emotionally draining. So how best to refill that 'happy' tank when it gets low? There's no magic formula, but we thought these 10 tips offered some great starting points. In essence, it seems to us, it's all just variations on not forgetting about yourself. And it's not enough to just sneak away for 10 minutes to take a relaxing shower. You need to always remember that person you were before kids. And make sure that person gets out to play every once in a while. <http://bit.ly/be8OWR>



Zoo/Aquarium Reciprocity: We like to take quick overnight trips to nearby cities, and when we do we love that because we are a member of our local zoo we then get free or discounted admission to other zoos. Check out this link for participating zoos (and aquariums): <http://www.aza.org/reciprocity/> I mean, really, is there anything better than free monkeys?!!



Paper Cocktail Covers: Not all of the crazy in our life is caused by the big things. Sometimes the littlest thing can turn our sweet mood to sour. Say, a mosquito in our mojito. So here's a simple, stylish solution to a small, but annoying problem. <http://www.marthastewart.com/goodthings/paper-cocktail-covers>



Healthy Snacks: With our oldest in Kindergarten we're officially in 'afterschool snack' mode. Here are some new ideas for healthy snacks! <http://www.parents.com/recipes/nutrition/kids/10-new-healthy-snacks-for-kids/>



Anti-Princess Reading List: We've got two little girls, so we're all about princesses, fairies, and tutus in our house. But every now and then we want to read a book that isn't pink and frilly. Fortunately, over at mommytracked.com we found a huge list of books that feature strong, smart, spunky girl protagonists—Great books that your kids, and you, will love!
<http://www.mommytracked.com/bookshelf/amazon>



New Year's Eve Fun With Kids: Our five-year-old is very excited about New Year's Eve this year and while we're still deciding whether she can stay up until midnight, we definitely want to have some NYE fun. Searching around, we found this list of fun and easy games and activities to make the night special and memorable for all of us.
<http://hiphiphoorayblog.com/2010/12/happy-new-year/>

Don't forget to follow us on

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You Tube
Broadcast Yourself™

for our latest links to tips, products, and people that help calm the crazy in your day. We also post coupon codes and specials to make calming the crazy a little less costly.

And check out our fun little YouTube video called [Spit-Up is Not an Accessory.](#)

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