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Melissa Benaroya (left) and Sarina Behar Natkin speak their truth

GROWTH SPURT

BY KATE CALAMUSA

When Sarina Behar Natkin gave birth to her eldest daughter eight years ago, she had everything going for her: a great support system, a loving husband and a wealth of family nearby. “And yet, it knocked me off my feet,” says the 40-year-old. “It was difficult, and I couldn’t help thinking, ‘How do people with limited resources do this?’” That thought planted the seed for **Grow Parenting** (growparenting.com), an education and coaching practice that helps guide parents through the challenges of raising children, aged newborn to adolescence (with a focus on age 2 and older), which she launched four years ago with Melissa Benaroya, 39. Through one-on-one coaching sessions (starting at \$125/hour) and group classes (ranging from \$20 to \$40 per session), Behar Natkin and Benaroya, both licensed clinical social workers, hope to normalize the idea of continuing parent education. “It’s funny, we won’t hesitate to go to a home improvement seminar,

but there seems to be an unjustified stigma about taking a parenting class,” Behar Natkin says. Capitol Hill–based Grow’s seasonally rotating parenting classes—which range from a seminar on “Bringing Home Baby” to the popular “Positive Discipline” series—are often grounded in scientific research, helping parents to understand the reasons behind certain behaviors—and to respond to them appropriately. Area businesses are also responding, often booking the duo for speaking engagements to their employees who are parents. Along with her dad, Howard Behar (who is a former president of Starbucks Coffee and a professional speaker), Behar Natkin will also appear in *ParentMap* magazine’s upcoming spring lecture series for teens and their parents. “At Grow, we want to create healthy families from the start,” says the mother of two. “Not necessarily perfect ones, but ones that are growing and learning together.”



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