



WHAT YOUR NANNY WON'T TELL YOU

1. “Your kid loves me more than you.”

As the number of families in which both parents work has grown, so too has many Americans' dependence on nannies. From 2008 to 2013, caregiving job site Care.com says, the number of families looking for a nanny on its site grew an average of 85% annually. And not only do more families need caregivers, but the kids are spending a lot of time with them. Seven in 10 nannies work full time, according to the International Nanny Association, often spending 40 or more hours a week with a single family or even living with them (about one in 10 nannies lives with the family). Because nannies spend so much time with the children, some kids become more attached to this caretaker than to their own parents, says Chicago-area psychologist Elizabeth Lombardo. “I had a child ask to call me Mommy,” says former Atlanta nanny Sarena Brook Carter, 35, which, she adds, wasn't surprising: “The parents were never there, I got the kids up and put them to bed and went everywhere with them.” Furthermore, “kids might associate the nanny with positive time, because they have a lot of fun and good experiences with the nanny, playing and relaxing,” Lombardo says. Meanwhile, many parents are working full time and trying to juggle child-rearing and work, which can leave them “harried,” she says. Former nanny Pam Behan, who has cared for several prominent Hollywood families, says that a strong nanny-child bond can cause a lot of problems: “You want to love and nurture the child, but if you get too close, it causes friction [with the parents].”

2. “You're the worst part of my job.”

While screaming kids, dirty diapers and high-pitched whining are no walk in the park, “it's not the kids that nannies have trouble with; it's the parents,” says West Yarmouth, Mass.-based nanny Michelle LaRowe, the editor in chief of nanny resource site eNannySource.com. Parents are the worst part of the job, nannies say, for many reasons. They sometimes become jealous of the caretaker-child relationship and act out by yelling at the nanny, for instance. Or they develop typical terrible-boss behaviors: asking the nanny to do tasks he or she didn't sign on for, demanding lots of extra work hours, or just being downright unpleasant to work with. Behan says that she's had “plenty of tense moments” with parents. On one occasion, she didn't pick up broccoli at the grocery store (she doesn't think it was even on the grocery list) and the mother she was working for screamed, “I can't believe you forgot the f***ing broccoli,” bringing Behan to tears. “She was an intense person ... there were a lot of challenging moments.”

3. “I can't save your kid's life (or treat his injuries).”

If a child is injured — or worse, in a life-or-death situation — the child-care provider may or may not know what to do. Some 13% of nannies surveyed by INA admitted that they

aren't certified in CPR, and 20% reported that they don't have a first aid certification. And most survey respondents were associated with agencies or the INA, whose staffers tend to be among the best-paid and best-trained child-care workers, so in the wider nanny population, the untrained percentage may be much higher. What's more, fewer than one in 10 nannies has a certification for medication administration. LaRowe recommends nannies get CPR, first-aid, water-safety training (if they take the children swimming or work in a house with pool) and pass the INA's nanny credential exam. Most agencies won't work with a nanny who doesn't have pediatric CPR and first-aid certification, she adds. But lots of nannies don't work for agencies.

Even if a child-care provider doesn't have a ton of certifications, parents can easily find classes for him or her to take. LaRowe says that the Red Cross and the American Heart Association are good places to find CPR, first-aid and other safety-related courses, and that parents can find early childhood development courses at local colleges.

Furthermore, plenty of caretakers have saved lives — and some have even risked their own lives to do it. One case that made headlines was that of nanny Alyson Myatt. A few years back, she awoke in the wee hours of the morning to find the family's Shelbyville, Ky., home on fire. (The boy's father, a single parent, was out of town on business.) She ran through burning carpet barefoot to grab her charge, then-5-year-old Aden Hawes, and rescue him, suffering third degree burns on her feet and hands in the process, but saving the boy's life.

4. “My presence is a threat to your relationship.”

It's not just the rich and famous who engage in a little hanky-panky with the nanny, Lombardo says. While this behavior is rare — LaRowe points out that it's not more common in child-care than in any other industry — it does happen. Often, it's because they're convenient — the child-care provider is right in the home — and there can be a high level of emotional intimacy because you are jointly caring for the child, Lombardo says. “You see someone loving and caring for your child, and it can cause an attraction,” she says. (National nanny services often have policies prohibiting liaisons with clients.)

Some couples actively seek out caretakers that neither one will be attracted to, experts say. As southern-California resident and mom of six Denise Cortes, who blogs about her life for BabyCenter.com says of a nanny, “I'm looking for an old, crusty lady.” Of course, if a couple is really worried about a nanny hookup, there might be deeper issues going on, such as intimacy problems or a previous infidelity, says Lombardo.

5. “You're not paying me enough.”

While the median wage for a nanny is \$16 per hour, many make far less than that. Nearly one in four domestic workers — this includes nannies, as well as housecleaners and elder-care givers — are paid less than minimum wage, according to a survey by Domestic Workers United, a coalition that advocates for the rights of nannies, housekeepers and caregivers. And even those who do make minimum wage or more seldom get other financial benefits, like health care or a retirement plan. Among respondents to INA's survey, which was largely limited to agency or INA-affiliated nannies, only 38% of nannies got a raise in 2011, only about half got a year-end bonus, and roughly one in four didn't get compensated for travel expenses on the job. Plus, many nannies didn't get overtime (36% never get it, and 11% only sometimes get it), paid vacation (35.7% don't get it), paid holidays (34.4% don't get it) or paid sick days (about half don't get them).

But most nannies are paid under the table, says LaRowe. This can be problematic for people employing domestic workers because it's illegal in most cases: The law currently requires most employers to withhold and pay Social Security and Medicare taxes for

any worker who earns \$1,800 or more during 2013. If you get audited and haven't done this, you could face penalties. It's also an issue for nannies, says Deena B. Rosendahl, an attorney at Fort Lee, N.J.-based employment law firm Kaufman, Semeraro & Leibman, because they can't get unemployment when they're laid off if their wages haven't been on the books.

6. "I'll sue you."

Some child-care workers find that their working conditions are so awful, they're worth going to court over. While it's the celebrity cases that typically make the news — Sharon Stone and Alanis Morissette have been sued by their nannies — it's not just famous people that get taken to court by their household help. The biggest thing that nannies sue their employers for is wages, says Rosendahl. After that, the most common complaint is on-the-job injury, she says.

Such legal issues make it essential that you pay your caregivers at least minimum wage, and do it on the books so you have payment records, experts say. You should also purchase workers-compensation insurance, so that if your nanny is hurt on the job, you are covered, says Rosendahl.

7. "I'm smarter than you are."

Child-care providers nowadays are often better educated than in previous decades. Within the relatively elite circle of nannies surveyed by the INA, 85% have at least some college under their belt, 30% have a bachelor's degree, and 6% have a master's or Ph.D. Stephanie Breedlove, the vice president of caregiving advice site Care.com's HomePay, which provides household payroll, tax and compliance services, says she believes this is partly a function of the fact that there are now more families where both parents work, which means that the nanny is "like a third parent" rather than just part-time help to assist the family. This new role means that nannies need more skills than ever — think household manager, tutor, caregiver, and more — than before. "Wages increase as skills increase," she says — and when that happens, well-educated people who might have been teachers or counselors turn to nannying. "I've heard some nannies say they're 'moving to the private sector,'" she says. "So they used to be a teacher or counselor and now are a nanny."

8. "Your secret's not safe with me."

What happens in your home doesn't always stay in your home. Nannies talk to each other, friends and sometimes (ahem) the media about their bosses. Behan, for example, wrote a book — "Malibu Nanny" — about her experiences as a nanny for the Kardashian clan; former nanny Suzanne Hansen did the same, penning "You'll Never Nanny in This Town Again" (published in 2006) about her experiences working for a high-powered Hollywood agent among others. "If you think about anyone in their job, they talk to other people about it," says psychologist Lombardo. "It's no different with nannies." Carter says that nannies vent to one another about their jobs and employers, especially when they meet in the park or at Gymboree. The concern, of course, is that nannies have the ability to air some very personal details about the client's life, especially since they're so often live in the client's home.

9. "I know about that nanny cam."

More and more parents are using nanny cams to "secretly" spy on their nannies: Brickhouse Security, a leading national security and surveillance firm, says it has seen a spike in both sales and searches for nanny cams on its site. (Sales of hidden cameras have increased 47% in the past two years, and seem largely driven by the search for nanny cameras, the firm says; searches for that term doubled in the past 30 months, while regular camera searches increased just 20%.) But spies might not be all that sly after all. Tampa-based nanny Joshua Lapin-Bertone once worked for a woman who only wanted him to play with the kids in one room of the house and questioned him one

day when she found him in another room playing with the kids. While he never found the camera, he says he “highly suspected” that he was being taped, though, he adds, that it wasn’t surprising: “It didn’t really bother me ... I know that nanny cams are out there.”

10. “You’d better do a thorough background check on me.”

Unlike many other professions, like doctors and lawyers, there is no official license required to serve as a nanny. What’s more, only 6% of nannies have attended nanny training school, and nearly 16% of nannies have three or fewer years of experience. These facts make it especially important for parents to thoroughly check a child caretaker’s background. “A background check is an absolute necessity for hiring,” says Care.com HomePay’s Breedlove, though she warns that some background checks are better than others. If you hire through a reputable agency, that agency has probably done a background check for you. (Note that some states restrict employers from running a background or credit check on potential employees.)

But if you’re hiring a nanny on your own, consider using a professional [background-check service](#), like Intelius.com, NetDetective.com or USSearch.com. And be aware that even professional services have their drawbacks, says LaRowe, editor in chief of eNannySource.com. If the potential nanny lives in Massachusetts but committed a crime in Florida, for instance, the background check might not catch it. For extra peace of mind, parents can do a little more legwork, though it can be time-consuming. To be thorough, LaRowe says, parents should check references, verify employment history and credentials, and run a simple Web search.

[See also: 10 things your housekeeper won’t tell you](#)