

Safe at Homes

JOURNAL/PLANNER OFFERS COMFORT FOR KIDS AND PARENTS IN CO-PARENTING SITUATIONS BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

HERE'S A FUN, hands-on product that benefits young children and parents who have suffered the challenges and pain of separation and divorce.

According to the inventor, Fiona Kong of Los Angeles: "My mission through 'Home Sweet Homes' (journal and planner) is to help co-parents and their child stay connected while bringing a child comfort and joy across their two homes."

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did this invention come about?

Fiona Kong (FK): The Home Sweet Homes journal and planner is a tool I created to help co-parented children heal from trauma caused by parental divorce or separation. It takes a unique, loving and compassionate approach to help families stay connected and communicate, all the while supporting a child's mental health during a confusing and often difficult time.

It combines features of a journal and yearly planner to function as a shared family diary. The child keeps it with them from home to home and is a vehicle where both parents and child participate in and can share milestones, memories, as well as essential scheduling and calendar information. It includes empowering affirmations, activities and more, which ultimately will become a treasured keepsake.

The idea for this began in June 2020. I'd been co-parenting for about a year. When my son was at his father's home, I'd feel disconnected from him, wondering what he was doing, eating, and how he was feeling and coping emotionally.

I really wanted a way to make sure my son always felt supported and loved despite our separation. It was a purchase of a \$2 dollar store planner that led me to create my Home Sweet Homes co-parenting journal business.

EGT: Tell us a bit about yourself, your family, education, and background. Has it helped in creating your business?

FK: I am a first-generation American, born and raised in Maryland. I am of Chinese descent, a middle child of three.

My parents moved to the States in 1980 to pursue the American dream of a better life. They held blue-collar jobs. As a child, I remember them working a lot to provide for us.

My childhood was really tough. My very first memory as a child was a traumatic one, followed by two decades witnessing or experiencing physical and emotional abuse. It took me a long time to realize how toxic an environment it was to grow up in and the huge impact it had on my life, relationships, personality, and my sense of self-worth.

My background has taught me such important life lessons personally and for my business, the power of connection, love, and the need to address and heal generational trauma.

EGT: How many tries did it take before you had the perfect working prototype?

FK: Creating a book is different from creating a product prototype, so I wouldn't say it took a certain number of tries. I began in August 2020, where I'd go to the local bookstore and leaf through all the journals, making note of the elements I liked. I then used Canva to create a mock version.

I hired a designer in September and the final book was completed in early January 2021, with the whole design process taking roughly 4 months.

EGT: Have you ever applied to "Shark Tank" or done any other type of crowdfunding?

FK: I ran a crowdfunding campaign via Indiegogo in May 2021. Being a one-woman show, I was

happy to just get the campaign together and told myself I'd be satisfied with whatever the outcome. I didn't run any advertising or do much marketing besides using my personal network.

I raised nearly \$4K, which paid for the majority of my first bulk order. I haven't applied to "Shark Tank," but I'd absolutely go for it—even though it'd be terrifying!

EGT: Where are the journals manufactured? If overseas, have you had any logistics problems due to the pandemic?

FK: I first looked into domestic manufacturers, including print on demand. However, due to my journal being nearly 300 pages in full color,

it was most economical to work with a Chinese manufacturer.

I ordered samples from two factories, although ideally I would have wanted to get 3-4 samples before making a decision. I placed my bulk order in May 2021; the shipping time and cost was very much affected by the pandemic. The ports were very backed up, so the time to clear Customs took an extra few weeks once it arrived.

EGT: Where are you selling?

FK: The Home Sweet Homes co-parenting journal is available on my website (home-sweethomesjournal.com) and on Amazon. I

A "really tough" childhood eventually taught Fiona Kong "the power of connection, love, and the need to address and heal generational trauma."

"When my son was at his father's home, I'd feel disconnected from him, wondering what he was doing, eating, and how he was feeling and coping emotionally." —FIONA KONG



haven't begun approaching retail outlets yet but plan on looking into wholesale opportunities.

EGT: What product development obstacles or difficulties have you had?

FK: The biggest obstacle was communicating with the manufacturer in China.

There were things I didn't know to ask, and miscommunication and misunderstandings occurred. I'd suggest finding an agent or vendor you feel completely comfortable with, ask lots of questions, and confirm things multiple times.

EGT: What advice do you have for anyone interested in developing an invention?

FK: I'd say validating your idea and getting feedback is really important. I don't think most people spend enough time on this step, because they want to jump ahead to the "fun" part and get their invention made and ready to market.

Surround yourself with like-minded people and find other entrepreneurs you can share and exchange information with. Being an entrepreneur

is incredibly grueling and lonely. Your friends and family who haven't done this can't really relate or offer you the advice or support you need.

Last of all, believe in yourself—because you ultimately are and will always be your biggest and loudest cheerleader.

EGT: Any words of wisdom concerning co-parenting?

FK: I'd say take time to heal your past wounds. For the longest time, I couldn't see the connection between my childhood trauma and how it's shaped me. It's this acute awareness that I believe makes me a better person, parent and co-parent.

And finally, be the parent you wish you had. There are no second chances. Children need and are deserving of genuine connection and love to become their best selves. ♡

Edith G Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is an editor (opinionatededitor.com/testimonials), writer (edietolchin.com), and has specialized in China manufacturing since 1990 (egtglobaltrading.com).



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Sarah Figueroa, co-founder and CEO of Geojam; photo by Cambron Lyles



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