

Up and Away

MOTHER'S CAR SEAT CARRIER KEEPS BABIES SAFELY IN SHOPPING CART, AND OUT OF THE WAY **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

WHEN I WAS a young mom with small children, there was always a need to take them grocery shopping.

Shopping carts are often messy, with the seat portions often germey and the so-called “safety” belt missing. Imagine testing your reflexes to catch your kiddie climbing out of the cart while juggling a bottle of O.J. about to shatter on the market floor.

So, what if the little one cannot sit by himself or herself but you still need to shop? With Totes Babies Car Seat Carrier—an idea that originated with Lindsey Valiulis Fleischhauer of Naperville, Illinois—he or she stays in the car seat and safely sits *over* the shopping cart without compromising on valuable shopping cart real estate.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How does the Totes Babies Car Seat Carrier work, and how did it come about?

Lindsey Valiulis Fleischhauer (LVS): The Totes Babies Car Seat Carrier is “Shopping with Babies, Made Simple!” You just unroll the Totes Babies and lay it onto the shopping cart.

There are adjustable arm grips that work with most carts. Adjust the grips to

the cart, place the car seat into the Totes Babies carrier, adjust with the safety straps and shop away! The Totes Babies holds over 75 pounds and works with newborns, up to—usually—1-year-olds, or when they convert to the convertible car seat.

This product allows full cart access for parents when shopping. The idea came about when I was shopping with my newborn and it was a disaster trying to get everything I needed, as the car seat takes up the entire shopping cart area.

One day while I was shopping, a light bulb went off and I had the idea. I went straight to my dad, Stan Valiulis, who holds over 40 patents from his retail store fixture background, and together we got to work on the idea!

I’m not only the cofounder with my dad, I used the product with both of my sons and it was a total lifesaver. Parents can also have their toddlers in the front of the basket and the Totes Babies behind them, which helps parents out with multiple little ones.

EGT: Have you invented anything before?

LVS: I helped with some projects back when I was working in sales, yet this was my first actual invention. We have a few other inventions in the works, and I can’t wait to keep the ideas flowing.



“I was shopping with my newborn and it was a disaster trying to get everything I needed, as the car seat takes up the entire shopping cart area.”

— LINDSEY VALIULIS FLEISCHHAUER

EGT: Is the product patented?

LVS: Yes, we have three patents: two utility patents and a design patent. We have two more patents pending for the Totes Babies and additional products to come.

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

LVS: My dad made our first prototype with adjustable curtain rods, a drop cloth and staples, and from that we worked with a friend who is an engineer.

We had quite a few samples that we worked on before it was perfect. We wanted to make sure it was exactly how we wanted it to be.

We also knew upfront that we wanted it to be simple, safe, super sturdy and easy to roll up to have in a diaper bag or purse. The Totes Babies also comes with a carrying bag. I would always keep mine in the back seat of my car.

EGT: Where are you manufacturing?

LVS: We are manufacturing in China.

EGT: Have you had any obstacles in developing this product?

LVS: With any new business there are, most definitely, obstacles and it is important to be able to learn from mistakes and grow from them. COVID-19 brought our sales down a bit, yet we are fortunate that sales did continue and that our product helps babies and parents while shopping. To be able to see our happy customers sending us pictures shopping with their sweet babies is truly one of my favorite parts of this business.



EGT: Because this is a product for babies, are you safety-testing with a third-party lab for Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act certification?

LVS: Yes, we definitely had safety testing done multiple times that meets the CPSIA certification.

EGT: I understand you were on "Shark Tank."

LVS: "Shark Tank" was an incredible experience and a dream come true for us as entrepreneurs. To be able to pitch our business on national television on a show we have watched for years will be something we will never forget. It was totally out of our comfort zone, yet it was so beneficial for our business.

All the Sharks were amazing, and we took all their advice and ran with it. We did a deal on the show with Lori Greiner. She is great! (*Editor's note:* In the episode, which aired in March 2021, Greiner agreed to give \$100,000 in exchange for a 25 percent stake in the company.)

The Totes Baby Car Seat Carrier includes adjustable arm grips that work with most carts, as well as safety straps.

INVENTOR SPOTLIGHT



EGT: Where are you selling the Totes Babies Car Seat Carrier?

LVS: We are selling on our website; Amazon; buybuy Baby; Bed Bath & Beyond; and Walmart.com.

The mother and inventor has a co-founder—her father, Stan Valiulis.

EGT: Do you have any advice for our readers who might be interested in developing a new product for babies?

LVS: Simply go for it! You should certainly do your research ahead of time as far as patents, safety testing, manufacturing, and so many other things that are required to develop a new product.

Do know that it takes time to get a product going and learn from any mistakes that may happen along the way. If it were easy, everybody would be doing it—so work hard and never stop dreaming up new ideas. 🍌

Details: totesbabies.com

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include "Fanny on Fire" (fannyonfire.com) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



2 Critical Steps to getting your NEW PRODUCT "out there"

1 GET IT MADE

Contact Edie Tolchin – "The Sourcing Lady" (SM) for sourcing, China manufacturing, product safety issues, packaging assistance, quality control, production testing, final shipment inspections, freight arrangements, import services and delivery to your door!

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2 GET A WEBSITE!

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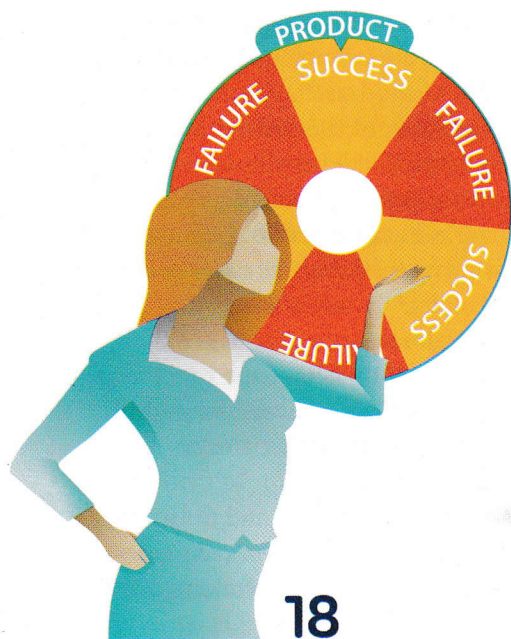
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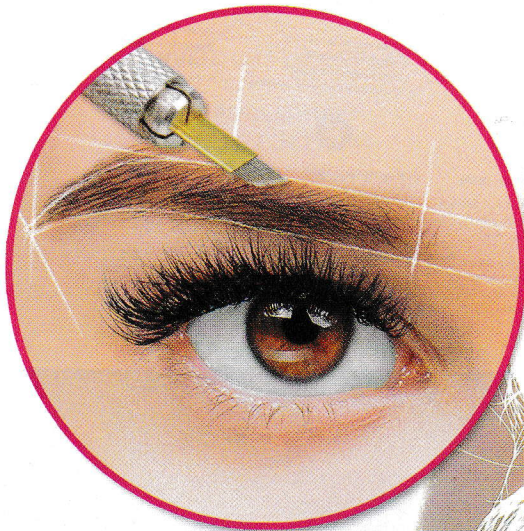


Inventors

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