

**ANDY +  
SONDRA**

**OH, HELLO.**



We are Andy and Sondra. Thank you for looking at our picture book.

We've been a couple for a long time - over half of our lives! - through many good times and some hard ones, too. We want to grow our family, and open adoption means more to us than just growing it by a child. We look forward to embracing a bigger family, which includes our child's birth family, accepting each person wherever they're at, and growing together.

Valentine's Day in 1998-ish



## Two kids, making a go of it...

(our relationship)

We met in 1997 (we were ~14 y.o.) and have been paired up ever since. We were two misfits who each liked the other's creativity, kindness and thoughtfulness.

We still have all the sweet letters we wrote to each other from then.

We moved in together after high school, got a few cats, and rode the bus to college. Eventually, we got married.

Work pushed us to California (~2009), and then to Washington where we live with our kitty named Moon (she's almost 20!) and beagle puppy named Sisu.

Hike with our pup, Sisu .....

Take long drives .....  
and get coffees en route  
..... (probably Starbucks)

Camp in the mountains,  
deserts, and beaches in our  
little camper trailer

Watch tv, movies .....  
... pressing pause to  
.....debate the finer points

Cook together.....  
.....Read out loud.....

## THE BASICS ABOUT US ... we like to...



These are pictures of Sisu, who joined our family in July 2021

## Some things we try to do regularly ...

*some traditions*

We both have chai tea lattes every morning --  
No *morning* coffee around here (afternoon coffee, yes pls).

Every Veterans Day we go on a long weekend trip. Some places we've gone: The Olympic peninsula. Banff (Canada). Bend (Eastern OR). The Grand Canyon. We'll often go on a snowy long weekend for Presidents' Day in Eastern WA.

We always watch the Charlie Brown specials during the holidays. We make dill bread on Thanksgiving and a dish on Christmas morning that we call "Andy Casserole" (eggs, hashbrowns, ham :) and drink mimosas. We like to open presents a few days before Christmas to make it last longer.

Sometimes we go to Minnesota and spend holidays with our families, but more often we are on our own. Since it's different every year, we don't have a lot of "must-dos." We aren't tied to anything looking a certain way, and are excited to create new traditions with our kiddo.



I'm Piko. I injured my toe playing today.



Christmas camping in Utah with Charlie Brown, Piko, our trailer, and our mini xmas tree.



ANDY ANDY ANDY

ANDY ANDY

ANDY ANDY

ANDY ANDY ANDY

ANDY ANDY ANDY

ANDY ANDY

ANDY ANDY ANDY ANDY



Um ... I am a mathematician (university professor). WAIT! keep reading!

I'm not one of these type A uptight math people. I see math as a creative outlet, and as a search for answers in a complicated world.

I'm wrong most of the time and comically bad with numbers. Still, I love working on hard problems and helping other people make order out of complicated ideas. I like learning and teaching.

I am listening to music all the time. I listen to all forms of electronic music, also hiphop and punk music mostly from the '90s.

Always scheming to get into the mountains to go climbing or skiing.

## SOME FACTS ABOUT ANDY ...

... not very good at taking photos, though I got lucky with this one

... pretty big sweet tooth ... esp. cakes ... want my kid to have fewer cavities than me

... wanted to be a dolphin when I grew up .... love my animal friends

later I wanted to be an artist. but settled on math. go figure ...

favorite kid book: The Snowy Day...

favorite family movie: The Princess Bride...

likes to cook. especially pizza.....

insists on riding his bike to work in the rain..  
and complaining about it.....

favorite tv character: Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) on *30 Rock*

really just wants to go be outside with the fam .....

I am terrible at spelling ....

How do you know a climber is in the room?



I enjoy alpine climbing. I volunteer with a local climbing club, leading rock and glacier climbs and all that. It's fun, but challenging.

Oh, they'll tell you ...



### What's important to me?

Education is really important to me. But broadly. I like to foster a love of learning in my own teaching, and for that people need to come to learning on their own terms. A huge part of learning is having a safe space to get things wrong and then have the support to get it right. I want to create that environment for my kid.



Channeling my strongest dad vibes, haha.



Having a fun time is also important to me (note the pink sunshirt and cool sunglasses, am I right?). Sondra would say my version of good time is questionable, since there is so much walking uphill in it. Education and learning for me involves lots of time to get away and play.



With my dad



With my mom



me, my lil sis + her kiddo in the rain

..... **ANDY'S FAMILY** .....

Andy has two sisters and a brother  
 Everyone lives far away: MN, NY, Australia

I grew up in Minneapolis, MN  
 where my mom, dad and 'lil sister still live

I was very much a city kid growing up, roaming the neighborhood with my sisters and other kids. My favorite activities were drawing and playing music. I have many great memories at summer camp. I was a bit rebellious ... got into bits and bops of trouble ....

My life changed when I met Sondra when I was 14. We fell in love and grew up together.

My greatest life lesson was that maybe I can do it, but only if I try ... I learned this when I was around 13...but I forget it all the time.



**~ WHAT I LOVE ABOUT ANDY, BY SONDRA ~**

Andy believes in me. He encourages me to dream big and to try hard and supports me no matter what. He lets me be my own weird self and doesn't care what other people think. He believes strongly in things and fights for what he thinks is right.

He is calm when the going gets tough. He is sensitive and not afraid to cry. He is creative, doesn't care about material things, and basically lives on peanut butter and jelly. He has cleaned the litter box (mostly) without complaint for our entire relationship. He loves nothing more than spending time together, even if it's just to clean the kitchen or do a crossword puzzle together before bed. He's also funny, but not "the funny one" between the two of us.



SONDRA!  
SONDRA!  
SONDRA!  
SONDRA!  
SONDRA!

Hi! I work in digital marketing and as a massage therapist. Pretty different, but they allow me to express different parts of myself. With marketing I get to be creative: taking photos, building websites, thinking about what people like. With massage, I get to hold space for people, to allow them to come as they are and just make them happy. They both allow me to keep learning and feel challenged in new and different ways.

Yoga is a big part of my life. I have been practicing for over 16 years now. I'm not that great at it, but that's not the point. It makes me feel good in my body and my mind, and has taught me a lot of life lessons.

Animals. I love them. Like, LOVE them, love them. In particular, my cats and dogs. I've had a lot of tough stuff happen over the years, but my animals have always been my rock.

..... **SOME FACTS ABOUT SONDRA** .....

Huge Prince fan

I hate emptying the dishwasher

Likes to watch animal videos online

I love chai tea lattes and don't care for coffee

Lover of (old) jazz music

Introduced Andy to techno

I prefer the ocean to the mountains

Favorite family movie: *Song of the Sea*

Favorite TV show: *Mad Men*

I love seeing plays

Favorite non-pizza food: breakfast burritos

Afraid of bees

Favorite kids book: *Cloudy With a Chance for Meatballs*

Would take a bath every day if I could

I respond to text messages right away

Make up a lot of (not very good) silly songs

I really like sunglasses

Always have fun-colored hair (usually purple though)

Didn't fly on an airplane until I was 18. Didn't see the ocean until I was 25. I've made up for both in the years since by visiting 5 continents and 5 of the oceans (so far!)



My parents - age 20



Me in high school with dad, sister and kitties =)



Me and my dad's parents (2019)



Me and my dad on a visit to WA, with our old beagle Piko



With my mom and sister (I'm the bigger kiddo)

I grew up in a suburb of St. Paul, MN. My parents both struggled with substance abuse and mental health issues, which made growing up sometimes bumpy. In spite of this, there was a lot of love in our house, too. My mom was a terrific cook, had a magic green thumb with plants, and had a soft spot for all animals (wonder where I got it from!). My dad loved science fiction, collecting watches, and was always there for a friend in need. My mom died very young at the age of 40 (when I was 18). I got another 20 years with my dad and we talked on the phone nearly every day. He died in an accident in 2020. I miss them both every day.

Growing up in a family with challenges like ours was hard, but it also taught me a lot of things. I learned compassion, patience, resilience, and the power of grief -- all qualities which have served me well as I have gotten older, and I know they will help me be a better parent.

## ..... SONDRA'S FAMILY .....



Today, my family looks like <<<< this! I have a younger sister, Alissa, and an awesome niece (Emma) and nephew (Nick). I also have grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins who we see when in Minnesota (we try and visit about twice a year). My "Aunt Sondra" time is always a highlight!





Two of Andy's current fave pics of Sondra

## ~ WHAT I LOVE ABOUT SONDRA, BY ANDY ~

She's funny. Not "the funny one," but pretty funny.

She's smart. Sondra is always reading. She's interested.

She's got an eye and ear for cool things. Sondra is creative.

Sondra has a tough exterior and soft tender inside.

Sondra loves animals.

She's always thinking ahead.

Sondra lets me be me.

She's good with little kids. She's gonna be a good mom.

Sondra likes happysad animal videos on the internet. I like that.

## More important Sondra things!

Art. Not so much making it (although that is fun, too), but having it in my life. Except for books and music, I wasn't exposed to much of it as a kid, but once I grew up I discovered film, theater, photography, paintings, sculpture, design, fashion, and more. It connects us all as humans, and helps me make sense of the crazy world around us.



## Some stuff I can't wait to do with a bébé:

**Story time.** Reading out loud together. I've never read any of the Harry Potter series, I've been saving it to read with my kid someday.

**Drawing and painting time.** Going to Children's Theater to see plays, (re)watching kids movies. Singing silly songs. Discovering museums together.

**Traveling.** It took me a long time to travel far from home. I want our kid to see the world from an early age.



Aunt time with Soren

**... This is our house on a sunny day ...**



It's just big enough for our small family + one. We live in a medium-sized city. There is a large park across the street from our house and an elementary school is a short walk from home.

Our city is full of places to adventure outside. There are tons of trails right here, beaches to explore, and bike paths to wander.

We like to take day trips to the Big City (Seattle or Vancouver) to do city stuff & see friends. We're lucky to have access to so many great options.

In our house we fix pizza once a week because it makes us smile. Most other nights we try to cook dinner. Other favorites are Mexican and Indian food. When it's raining or snowing or cold (aka most of the time) everyone likes to hang inside by the gas fireplace, especially Sondra and Sisu.



In the summer and fall we like to eat outside. Here with Andy's sis and fam



This is where a baby will throw food on the floor



Family snuggle time



We'll take trips and share new experiences. Grow together.

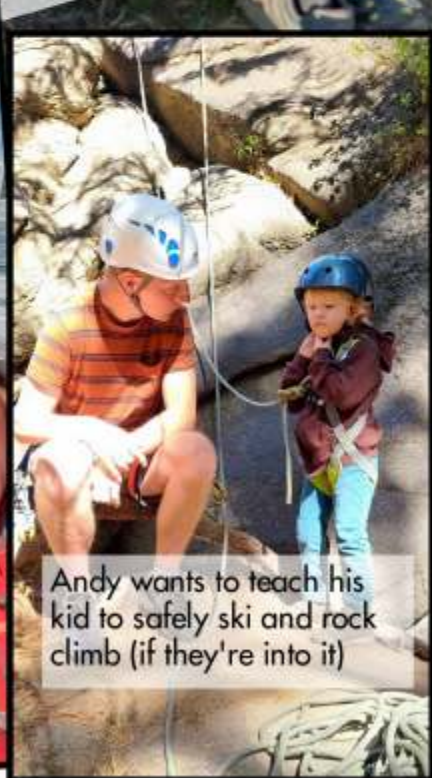


We took Sisu camping in the trailer a few times in his first months. We'll do the same with our kiddo.

## DREAMS FOR OUR CHILD...

We want our child to grow into whoever they want to be. We want them to live with compassion and understanding. We want them to have a healthy and positive understanding of where they came from.

We'll encourage when they need it, challenge when appropriate and console when thwarted.



Andy wants to teach his kid to safely ski and rock climb (if they're into it)

## ~ OPEN ADOPTION ASPIRATIONS ~

For the birth parents, we want them to feel respected and valued; at ease in their relationship with us and our child; like they can communicate freely -- without judgment and accepted as they are.

For our child, we want them to be at peace with their story; proud of who they are; to be accepting of the relationship they have with their birth parents, and feel loved beyond belief by all of their family.

We know from experience that relationships have their ups and downs, and take work to thrive. We vow to make our relationship with our child's birth family the best it can be by being open, honest, forthright, and compassionate. We cannot wait to meet them, whoever they may be.

# Calvin and Hobbes

BY BILLY WINTERSON ©1995

WOW, IT REALLY  
SNOWED LAST NIGHT!  
ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

EVERYTHING FAMILIAR HAS  
DISAPPEARED! THE WORLD  
LOOKS BRAND-NEW!

A NEW  
YEAR...  
A FRESH,  
CLEAN  
START!

IT'S LIKE HAVING A BIG  
WHITE SHEET OF PAPER  
TO DRAW ON!

A DAY  
FULL OF  
POSSIBILITIES!

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IT'S A MAGICAL  
WORLD, HOBBS,  
OL' BUDDY...

...LET'S GO  
EXPLORING!