

Joyful moments of being a mother is what makes it all memorable

I'm only 4.5 years into this mothering gig, so you might say I'm kind of a novice. I'm more seasoned than I once was, now that I have a 4-year-old, a 2-year-old, and one on the way. But I have a lot of ground to cover when it comes to parenting, and I know this.

That said, I'm learning every day, as my babies blossom into toddlers and preschoolers. I'm learning what it means to be a mother.

For instance, I've learned that motherhood means sacrifice. Like just yesterday, when I heated up the last bowl of creamy tomato basil pasta and was all set to eat it for my lunch. My kids, who had just finished stuffing themselves silly with peanut butter and jelly and a smorgasbord of items from our pantry, both immediately pounced. You know the ending to this story, don't you? The kids ate the pasta, of course, and I fixed another peanut and jelly sandwich, for myself.

And speaking of sacrifice, how about the hundreds upon hundreds of hours of sleep we mothers sacrifice for our kids? Or how about the enormous sacrifice we all make to the Gods of Style, upon becoming mothers? We've all done it, checked our self-esteem at the door and gone out in public with unwashed hair, dark circles under our eyes, and wearing clothing that smells of sour



by

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milk.

Motherhood means you will always have company, especially in the bathroom. Showers are rarely unaccompanied, and if you are lucky enough to shower alone, you'll be doing so quickly, due to the little person beating on the shower door and hollering at you the entire time. So one might say motherhood means you only have time to shave one leg.

Motherhood is absent-mindedly eating half-chewed, soggy chicken nuggets off the high chair tray. It is wiping a runny nose with your hand or cleaning a dirty face with your saliva. Motherhood is a car stereo that only plays "Wheels On the Bus," and a minivan floorboard littered with sippy cups. Motherhood is crumbs on the kitchen floor, no matter how often you mop. Motherhood is fishing a handful of chewed-up cat food out of a toddler's mouth without gagging.

Motherhood is an all-nighter in a rocking

chair, a feverish child curled up under your chin, as you anxiously wait for the pediatrician to return your 3 a.m. phone call. It's holding down a screaming preschooler as the nurse gives a series of shots, fighting back tears and knowing you would trade places in an instant, if only you could.

Motherhood is buying yet another princess dress that you absolutely do not need, simply because you're a sucker for that look on your little girl's face. Motherhood is excitement over good seats for "Disney on Ice." Motherhood is scouring the Internet for the perfect Thomas the Train pajamas.

Motherhood is slobbery kisses and sticky hands in your hair. It is often disgusting and regularly humiliating, sometimes heartbreaking and occasionally frightening. And yet, it is wonderful and rewarding in a way you never, ever could have imagined. When you watch your toddler chatter happily to herself while watering a small patch of weeds, and you feel as if your heart could burst with joy and love; while at the same time you could weep at how quickly the time is slipping away from you, and you promise yourself you will always remember her this way, in this moment—that is motherhood.

Happy Mother's Day.