



The Making of a Mother

Magical moments are what make motherhood special

By Kelli Wheeler

It would be easy to argue that the second you find out you are pregnant, you have become a mother. The growing of another human being inside you, scientifically or even miraculously, makes a woman a mother. And of course giving birth, whether you've been sliced open or pushed something that big out of somewhere that small, is a pretty darned good argument for becoming a mother.

There's also all those nights when your husband would have slept through a burglar manically slamming through all the drawers in the room, but you were awakened from drooling-face-smashed-in-the-pillow sleep by the whimpers of a feverish child. That would definitely make you a mother.

The comforting of your child, not sure whose heart aches more, yours or your baby's after he receives the first harsh words spoken by another child; the kissing of a bloodied boo-boo or catching vomit in your hands on the way to the toilet without revulsion but with loving concern; eating the left-behind remnants of your child's half-eaten meals—all are a mother's rites of passage.

Aren't you a mother if you devote a majority of your day to providing meals, cleaning the ever-present signs of children, keeping track and organizing a mind-numbing itinerary of events and commitments, ferrying children to school, playdates, extracurricular activities?

Certainly all these things are a part of motherhood (and, besides pregnancy and giving birth, could be fatherhood as well, but we're talking Mother's Day here, guys, so just chill) but at what moment do you look at yourself in the mirror and say, "I am the mother that I hope my children will remember"?

For kids, the nurturing is a given. The sacrifice is expected. The day-to-day operations are what make them feel safe and secure. But being the mother that they will one day grow up and try to emulate is also made from moments not bestowed by nature or nurturing and falling under the normal job description of motherhood.

The making of a mother is those times you step out of your comfort zone to seize a memorable moment. It's when you put aside something you know you should do in favor of "why the heck not?" It's seeing the world through your child's eyes and realizing it is your reason for living at that moment. It is forgetting the responsibilities of motherhood and enjoying the perks.

Despite everything else you do for your children in the name of motherhood, these are the experiences your children will remember forever. Always having clean socks pales in comparison to the time Mommy and me went off the trail at the river to hit some jumps on our bikes.

For my friend Michelle, the making of a mother is hearing her 3-year-old daughter boast as she shows off her bubblegum toes, "Me and Mommy got our toes done today at the salon!"

For my friend Amy, the making of a mother is staying up all night the day

before her 4-year-old son's birthday party and seeing the sparkle in his eyes as he exclaims, "Did you see the pirate ship cake my mommy made?!"

For my friend Kim, the making of a mother is watching her oldest daughter share a breathless report of the Pipevine butterfly lifecycle she witnessed after they collected caterpillars together at the river, exclaiming, "We saw a butterfly come out of its chrysalis!"

I like to collect all these shared moments to inspire me and remind me that being a mother is not just about making sure the kids get a bath before bed or teaching good manners. It's more than reading stories at bedtime and caring for sick children. I don't want to be appreciated for having drawers full of clean laundry and remembered for always yelling about picking up toys so that I can have a spotless house.

There are so many elements that make up the whole of being a mother. All are vital and important, and each contribution to the development of your child is a worthy effort. But if you want to put the icing on the cake of motherhood, don't forget the most important ingredient in the making of a mother: stopping and enjoying your children.

I'll leave you with one of my own recent making-of-a-mother moments. The Blue Angels were in town, and hearing the roar of the planes overhead I rushed my kids outside, asking them if they wanted to see something cool. As I tried to explain why the planes were so amazing and we desperately tried to see them through the trees, my son

disappointedly pointed out we would have better luck if we were higher. Looking at our roof and fighting against my mother's safety code, I threw caution to the wind in favor of an extraordinary moment.

Easily climbing on our roof, the three of us—my 6-year-old son, nearly 5-year-old daughter and myself—squealed in awe at every streaking jet maneuver we saw. And what a magical moment when directly over our heads all six Blue Angels roared by, seemingly close enough to touch. The kids screeched, "Did you see that? Wow!" and my own heart soared with delight at our shared amazement.

When our own personal air show was over and I was basking in the moment, I thought, "Who the heck cares how we were going to get down from this roof?" ●