



Dear Diary

Taking time to take it all in

By Kelli Wheeler

Below is an entry from my journal, dated January 3, 2007, part of my New Year's resolution to pick up my journal again—my long-lost lifetime friend (oh, if you could read the teenage years; Bridget Jones ain't got nothing on me!)—and write something every day this year. Even if the only thing I write is "Help!"

Dear Diary,

I had a ton of things to do today: clean up after putting away Christmas decorations, organize and put away new toys in kids' rooms, exchange Christmas gifts, do bills, go to Costco, exercise—and none of that included the day-to-day operations of being home with the kids (who still have not gone back to school yet).

No wonder I had a hard time getting out of bed and facing the world today!

But every day for the last seven years, I have started my day the same: have my "babies" join me in

bed. At the very least, Mommy gets a "morning hug and kissie," something that's getting harder and harder to wrangle from 7-year-old Logan. Many times we snuggle together. Lots of times we talk about our plans for the day. Countless times we play some sort of game together: Crazy 8s, snakes, mommy and baby kitties—whatever they come up with.

I can't imagine starting my day any other way.

It is so easy to go full speed ahead to tackle the never-ending list of things to be done. To figure out ways to keep the kids busy, or passed off, so I can get things accomplished. It feels so good when I've succeeded in completing many of my goals for the day!

But when I go to say my prayers at night and thank God for my happy, healthy and safe children, sometimes I hear their echoes from earlier that day when they've asked to do or play something together and I've put them off. Or I hear my own echoes of "Go find something to do"; "Go play outside" or "Go clean your room,"

and my most guilt-wracked hindsight words, "My job isn't to play with you all the time!"

**Keep in better touch
with distant friends.
Make time to pick
up the phone and
reconnect.**

Sometimes I'll even hear the serenade of "Cats in the Cradle" by Harry Chapin about the dad putting off his kid with "*but we'll have a good time then, you know we'll have a good time then*" and before he knows it his kid has grown and he's missed out.

Now I know I'm a good mom, a hands-on mom who should have no guilt about the amount of quality time I spend with my kids, but as they get older it seems to have become easier and easier to tell them to go find their own fun. When they were little, it was up to me to provide it, model it and lead the way. Now, I feel like a mother trying to wean her litter by getting them to realize they can use their imaginations, each other and their plethora of toys to entertain themselves. Go explore! Be creative! Don't always look to Mommy for your fun! But this tough-love stuff is hard, even though I know it helps them grow and progress in life.

Today, though, amid all the urgency to get things done, I just stopped for a moment to freeze time and take in, really absorb, both how

quickly my "babies" are growing up and how little they still really are.

Even though Logan's body is that of a much older boy, and his play, speech and tastes are maturing quickly, his profile as he ate his lunch is the chubby-cheeked baby boy I still see. His legs still swing and kick under the table as eats, unable to touch the ground. His body instinctively rocked to the children's music on TV as I caught him singing some words to the "baby show" "Backyard Gang."

Then there's Whitney in her giant 5 1/2-year-old body, with her long blond hair and her thoughtful and amazingly accurate insight into her expanding world around her, still needing to sit on her knees in her chair to see the TV. She still loves music just as she did as a baby, and I wonder if she will ever be able to do two things at once with that creative brain of hers. It's either eat or watch TV; she still can't do both. And as most always, she is eating in her underwear.

It is a life snapshot I will tuck away with the others.

Goal: Keep in better touch with distant friends. Make time to pick up the phone and reconnect, because time slips away so easily and life changes in an instant.

Column idea from my girlfriend Amy: *Use It or Lose It*. Keep Mommy brain stimulated with continuing education or self-fulfilling projects. It reinvigorates your mind and your life.

Kelli Wheeler lives in Arden Oaks and is a mother of two. She can be reached at kellimwheeler@aol.com. ●