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Bringing Home Baby, Again



*It takes at least a year to find a new normal after having a baby.
What about when you bring home a second or third child?*

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Chapter One: An Introduction

Those first few weeks and months were quite bumpy as we adjusted to life with three children! My husband and I were both very shocked at how long this process was taking. "It's our third baby after all", I thought. "We should know what we're doing!"



Introduction

I remember the day we brought our third child home from the hospital. It was a memorable afternoon snuggling with our newborn and introducing him to his big sister and big brother. I remember the older siblings' excitement in meeting this sweet, precious baby. My eldest couldn't stop looking at him and hugging him and asking to hold him. My daughter, who was not quite 2 at the time, followed the baby and I around. She would copy whatever I was doing. If I would change his diaper, she would change her baby doll's diaper. If I rocked the baby, she would rock her baby. Since my husband was given a generous amount of parental leave, we spent those first few days enjoying our freshly expanded family with little concern for anything else.

A Bumpy Ride

Yes, a family of five felt wonderful. This bliss, however, was short-lived as my eldest came down with a mild case of pneumonia. He hadn't been feeling well for a few days and my husband and I were both concerned. Friday afternoon brought a doctor's visit and multiple prescriptions. As my son began breathing treatments, I noticed my daughter tugging at her ears. Then, she developed a fever. Sunday afternoon was spent in the after-hours clinic followed by antibiotics and an ear infection diagnosis. Now I was really worried about my newborn baby. We did our best to keep the older children away from him, but he got sick as well. He tested positive for RSV at 2 weeks old!

Little did I know that this was just a taste of what was ahead. The cycle of sicknesses lasted forever! A child would get sick, 2 days later another, 2 days later another! I started tracking our sick days on a calendar hopeful it wasn't as bad as it felt. I stopped. It *was* as bad as I thought.

Those first few weeks and months were quite bumpy as we adjusted to life with three children! Figuring out car seat arrangements was insane! Learning new nap schedules and getting the baby to sleep, somewhere other than my arms, was incredibly difficult. Getting everyone dressed and ready and loaded in the car took concentrated effort and teamwork. It was survival mode for a very long time as we struggled to find our new normal.

Shouldn't We Know What We're Doing?

My husband and I were both very shocked at how long this process was taking. "It's our third baby after all", I thought. "We should know what we're doing!" As my son approaches his second birthday, I can see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. We have found a new rhythm as a family of five and are starting to truly enjoy our moments together. It didn't happen overnight and it came through many mistakes and sleepless nights. Lots of sleepless nights.

Ironically, the turning point came, long before our circumstances changed, when a seasoned mom of three boys shared these words: "It takes at least a year to find a new normal after having a baby. Every. Time."

Every time a child is added into the picture, the ENTIRE family will need at least a year to get a handle on the changes that come with the new addition." When this sage advice sunk in, everything changed! Well...everything did not change but my perspective had a major overhaul. I learned to live in grace as I now understood that every member of the family needed to adjust to our new addition.

Come along!

I'd like to invite you to join me in the chapters that follow as I share some tips I've learned and advice I've heeded. I'll share with you the mistakes we made along the way and share experiences and stories from others on this same journey of finding a new normal after the addition of a new family member.

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Chapter Two: Finding a Rhythm

Life before baby was different. You managed your finances a certain way. You spent your free time doing things you wanted to do when you wanted to do them. Then baby came along and changed ...everything.



Finding a Rhythm

Life before baby was different. You managed your finances a certain way. You spent your free time doing things you wanted to do when you wanted to do them. Then baby came along and changed the money priority, the activity priority, the leisure...okay there's no leisure now. It's another person fighting for your time and attention. It gets even more difficult with the addition of a second or third or more! Although your heart multiplies with each darling bundle of joy, your time is divided exponentially. This is why developing a rhythm that works *with* your new family dynamic is so critical. It's not going to come overnight, but you *can* find a pattern of life that works for your expanding family!

Here are 4 tips to help you on your quest for a new family rhythm

#1 Take it Slow.

Take it slow. If you hear nothing I am saying, hear this: I beg you, implore you, plead, admonish, strongly advise that you take it slow. Very. Slow. Receive the meals for as long as they are offered. When the meals stop, eat take out! Do whatever it takes to stay sane in the early weeks and months postpartum. The mommy guilt can be strong with this one. We didn't take it slow and this still lives on as our biggest parenting fail to date. And it happened with every single birth! We tried to bounce back way too quickly. I went back to work too quickly. I literally wore my third child through an entire summer of working because I loved what I was doing so much, but it would take me 5 hours to do what I could do in 30 minutes with a good night's sleep and childcare. Bless my little heart! Please. Learn from my postpartum haze. Take it slow.

#2 Look for Natural Emerging Patterns

As life begins to stabilize, take some time to observe your family and your daily activities. Observe what is happening on a daily basis without any amount of mind power. For example, our dinner was consistently on the table about an hour later than our normal dinner time. So dinner time changed. When we brought home our third child, my husband started taking the older two children to school on his way to work. It was meant to be a temporary fix out of necessity, but it turned into a new rhythm for our family. Often these patterns will appear to be failures but, in reality, it is just the new normal emerging! Did you notice that you have cooked grilled cheese for dinner every Wednesday for a month? Instead of looking at it as a nutrition fail, look at it as a pattern that you and your family can rely upon. Grilled Cheese Wednesday it is! Instead of beating yourself up over things that are not the same, celebrate the new constants that are forming. Find sustainable patterns and rock them, momma!

#3 Be Willing to Experiment

Getting your children on the same schedule is not easy. It will require some give and take and some serious trial and error. Coordinating naps was such a beast for me. For a while, I was putting one child down for a nap just in time for another to wake up. I treasured the one-on-one time but I didn't have any time for laundry, rest, or creativity. I was exhausted. Through experimentation, I was able to get all three kids on the same schedule. Remember how my husband was taking the kids to school? We added early care so he could get to the office earlier which meant he arrived home *earlier*. All the mommas say "hallelujah"! We also simplified our menu. We made a list of easy to execute meals and a list of all the grocery items needed. We posted it to the fridge and followed it as best we could. For a season we had a 7 day menu that we repeated every week. We literally ate the same thing each week. Tuesday really was Taco Tuesday in our house. Was it boring? Yep. But it worked. As the kids age and more sustainable rhythms have emerged, I've gotten a little more creative in the kitchen. In that season, however, a 7 day menu worked.

#4 Ask for Help and Don't Feel Bad About it

I recently heard an interview with Shauna Niequest where she said of seeking help: "Most of us have a deep well of people who would love to care for us but we don't let them because we don't think they'll catch us." When I had an unexpected C-section with my third child and everyone got sick at the same time, I reached out because I was so scared. I just couldn't handle it. I HAD to ask for help. The most amazing thing happened when I did. Friends came out of the woodwork to help bring meals, clean my house, and take our kids on adventures so mommy could sleep. One precious woman would text me every week and say: "I am on my way to Kroger. What can I pick up for you?" It may be humbling to ask for help. It was for me but the gift of love and support was so overwhelming it made a little humble pie truly worth it.

Change Happens

I am not a loud person. I like order and a neat space. Having three kids, however, has made my house a loud and messy place. The laundry piles up weekly and that drives me nuts. The minute I say I have mastered a system for the dishwasher the dishes mysteriously appear overflowing in the sink. Dear precious mommy, be okay with the laundry piles even though you swore that you would do a load a day. Give yourself a break if you are still depending on take out when you really thought surely by now you'd be well on your merry organic way. Having a baby is life-altering. Give yourself grace. Family rhythms are as unique as musical rhythms. Sometimes the tempo is fast and upbeat and other times it's slow and purposeful and sometimes it just feels like a toddler banging the keys!

There's a time and place for all of it. Keep going, my friend. One day you'll look up and notice that your family has found a new normal. You'll think: *"This is who we are and how we live now. I love us."*

Chapter Three: Sibling Love

Having more than one child is a fun and beautiful adventure. It is also complicated and messy! As your heart multiplies, your children feel the impact of your divided time.



Sibling Love

Having more than one child is a fun and beautiful adventure. It is also complicated and messy! As your heart multiplies, your children feel the impact of your divided time. Just like mom and dad, children also have to wrestle with what they are feeling and it often manifests in childish ways. They are children after all. You can wade through all the emotions by finding moments to focus on them, celebrating their new role in the family, and making sure they know how much you love them. It takes time and effort but you can help them adjust and, ultimately, grow to like this alien life form taking over their space.

Here are 13 Ways You Can Help Your Child Adjust to a New Baby

#1 Plan "just you & me" Outings

Right after our youngest was born, my husband took our eldest to a glow-in-the-dark putt-putt place. Although the concept of putt-putt escaped him, the time alone with daddy very much translated. From this adventure, we determined we needed to create one on one time with each child as often as possible. Some people call this dating their children. We have done this sporadically on occasion. As our children get older, we'll start putting actual dates on the calendar.

#2 Bring a Child Along for Errands

Every errand or pit stop can be turned into a few minutes alone with mommy or daddy. Recently, I needed to pick up a few gifts for upcoming birthday parties. My husband suggested I take our eldest along and grab lunch while we were out. It was a very special outing for *just the two of us* that ended in ice cream! My son's love tank was definitely filled that day!

#3 Verbally Share Your Delight in Spending Time Together

This means saying out loud some version of: "I am so glad I am spending special time with you right now!" Our actions paired with sincere words can make a huge difference! These little love deposits can make the time your child is *losing*, because of the demands of a newborn baby, a little easier to handle.

#4 Stagger Bedtimes

Once everyone is on a pretty consistent routine, space out each child's bedtime so you can have special one on one time reading books or playing a game or doing your favorite activity. It may only be 10-15 minutes later than other siblings but that time together is golden.

#5 Say "yes" as Often as You Can

When there is a baby in the house we have to say "no" quite often especially when newborn feedings and nap times are the priority. This can be so frustrating to older siblings. When you can say "yes", do so emphatically. It speaks volumes to their little hearts when you agree to watch a program together or play a quick game at the table. When you do have to say "no" because of the demands of the new baby, your child can take it in stride instead of blaming their misfortune on the new addition.

#6 Help Them Through the Behavior Issues

When our daughter was born, it never occurred to me that this could affect my son so much. We had talked about the arrival of his baby sister and did what we could to prepare him for her arrival. His aunt had even given him a baby doll that looked just like a baby fresh out of the hospital complete with a hospital bracelet. Even with our prepping, he started acting out. He loved his little sister but he was having trouble processing all those big emotions and made a lot of poor choices. I am so thankful for preschool teachers who *got it* and assured me that he would even out. Understand that your child is adjusting to a new life as well. Work with teachers and caregivers as your child(ren) wade through all the emotions they are feeling. It is never okay to hit or act out in a way that brings harm to them or others but understanding *why* they are acting out goes a long way in how we respond to their behavior and help them process their feelings!

#7 Have a Spontaneous Get-Away

I have yet to meet a child who did not enjoy a bit of intrigue. Look for ways to slip away unplanned for a few minutes with your child. The day before my eldest started Kindergarten, we slipped outside to eat ice cream while his younger siblings napped. It wasn't planned. I just looked up at his sweet face, remembered the ice cream in the freezer, and invited him to come with me..quietly. Before I knew it, we were whispering and giggling and tip-toeing outside to enjoy our sugary feast together all the while talking about school!

#8 Get Sitters

Babysitters are not just for dates. You can get a sitter for the other children while both parents have a special outing with one child. I love when my husband has a date with one of our children. I treasure even more those times when we can share that memory together. Recently we were both able to walk our son into his kindergarten class on the first day. That was made possible because of the kindness of a friend who watched our other children.

#9 Talk About It

Find ways to talk them through this transition. Talk about how grown up they've become. Find ways to hash out their struggles and be willing to admit to them that the adjustment is hard on you, too.

#10 Make Events Out of the Mundane

Each of our children has the opportunity to check the mail with daddy during the week. There's six days of mail so it works out well for our kids to check the mail twice each week. It's a 45-second round trip from the front door to the mail box and back but each child treasures this time with daddy. So much changes when a sibling is added in, find traditions and activities that your child(ren) can count on when so much is uncertain.

#11 Solicit Their Help with Baby

Find ways to make your child "mommy's helper". He can help retrieve a diaper. She can pick out baby's outfit. They can turn on the noise machine. They can help close the door when baby goes down for a nap. Find ways to invite your children into this new world with baby.

#12 Provide Special Privileges

Make *bringing home baby* a rite of passage for older children as they can now stay up later, or do a special activity during baby's nap time. Allow them to watch special programs while baby naps. Big brothers and sisters get privileges that babies do not!

#13 Affirm Your Love for Them and Their New Sibling

Your child needs to know that you love them deeply. They also need to know how much you care for their new sibling. Find ways to tell them how thankful you are to have all your children in your heart and in your arms.

Embrace the Adventure!

Bringing home a baby changes everything. What we fail to realize, however, is how deeply this affects other children in the home. To a child, what comes with the addition of each sibling is *their loss* of time with you. Kids are very resilient but that doesn't mean that the loss of prime time with you isn't impacting them. That is why it is so important to find ways to spend one on one time with each child. The more loved and secure a child feels in his relationship with mom and dad, the better the relationship with his siblings will be. Yes, devoting time to assure each child feels loved can be a daunting task, but it's not impossible. Embrace the challenge of loving each of your children well.

Chapter Four: Romance After Baby

Romance. It sure looks different from the day you married to the day you find yourself rocking an inconsolable babe in the middle of the night.



Romance After Baby

Romance. It sure looks different from the day you married to the day you find yourself rocking an inconsolable babe in the middle of the night. We all know it but until you have kids it is really hard to understand how much it affects your marriage. Although children are a gift, you have to work at it to keep your marriage a priority. Dates are an obvious way to keep the romance alive, but it isn't always possible to find or even afford a sitter.

Here are 5 tricks my husband and I have learned along the way to help keep the romance going even when kids make it complicated.

#1 Stroller Dates

When we only had one child, my husband and I would strap our son into the stroller and we would walk around IKEA talking and dreaming. It was a perfect date. Our son enjoyed the scenic people-watching and we enjoyed the time *alone*. I know a couple who would load their kids into the car, with their jammies on, and grab take out. Then, they would drive around for a few hours while their children slept and they talked. They would often go to the state border! Whatever it takes to get alone time with your spouse, right?! I have friends who do date night's in. We've done this before. You can get the kids to bed and make a special evening together watching a movie or baking cookies or some other favorite past time. Find activities that are still doable while kids are sleeping or in a stroller or in a pack 'n play. The point is to have adult conversations, dream a little, hold hands and date!

#2 Coffee Dates

We now have three kids and limited opportunities alone. We've started having coffee dates in the mornings. While the kids sleep, we sit in the family room sipping our home brewed coffee and talking. It's not very glamorous but it is nourishing our relationship. Each morning, we are bridging the gap that having lots of kids and little time creates. I want to note that rhythm was very important in making this happen as well. Until I could guarantee the baby was going to sleep through the night, getting up early for coffee was *not* going to help our marriage! It may not be a coffee date for you and yours but find a DAILY activity that you can look forward to that provides adult conversation without the constant interruption of little ones.

#3 Resource Free or Affordable Childcare Programs

Couples need times away from their children! In our area, both our church and a local non-profit offer Parent's Night Out programs on a regular basis for a very affordable price. These are priority one in the Parker Household! We block our calendars on these dates. We know that our children will be well loved and cared for and we can have much needed time alone without breaking the bank! The kids have a wonderful time and my husband and I come back refreshed, more connected as a couple, and better parents. There is likely similar programs in your area. Sometimes, you just have to know where to look or who to ask.

#4 Schedule Time Together

I remember sitting in a MOPS (Mother of Preschoolers) meeting this past spring listening to a panel of women sharing their wisdom on how they kept their marriages alive while their children were little. The honesty and ideas that came out of that session were gold. The most priceless advice was to schedule time together both for conversation and intimacy. There will always, ALWAYS, be something or multiple little someones clamoring for your attention. You have to make the decision and steadfast commitment to date, get away without the kids, and remain intimate. It will not just *happen*. Put a big X on the calendar. Schedule reminders. Carve out times to make your relationship a priority.

Having kids has a way of removing the spontaneity of all things romantic but please, still be romantic even if there has to be a big red circle on your calendar reminding you to be intimate with your spouse. I know there will come a time when scheduling quality time alone with your spouse won't be so hard, but until then do what you gotta do!

#5 Ask for help

Whether this is your first baby or your fifth, you and your spouse just can't do it alone. In our situation, family is not nearby but our church and life group have become our family. If it had not been for the love, support, and willingness of our friends, I have no idea how we could have cared for our children, when our second and third child was born. We all need a village. Find yours! Plug into a church. Get involved in a small group. Get to know your neighbors. If you're near family, please invite them into your life and resource the free babysitting! Connect with people who can help you keep your marriage a priority. Swap babysitting with other couples. Watch their kids one week while you have a date, then they can watch your kids while you get a date! You need this. Your spouse needs this. Your kids need this.

Romance with Kids is Tough!

Jon Acuff said recently: "Toddlers are amazing, but they are also a crisis. They never stop moving, like raptors constantly testing the boundaries of their containment for weak spots. Your life is upside down when you have young kids." Let's own the fact that kids make our marriage relationship difficult. You can, however, find ways to stoke the romance flames between spit up, meltdowns, and night terrors. It will get better. And it's going to take work. Keep pursuing one another. Your definition of romance may need to change for a while but your love for one another doesn't have to.

Chapter Five: Kids and Social Life

Your social life looked a lot different before kids. A night at the movies was no problem. Stay out late? No big deal. Having kids brings the spontaneity and late nights to a screeching halt.



Kids and Social Life

Your social life looked a lot different before kids. Before kids, a night at the movies was no problem. Stay out late? No big deal. Having kids brings the spontaneity and late nights to a screeching halt. And if they don't stop, someone is paying for it. My husband and I learned the hard way. We tried to continue our work, volunteer, and social life at the same break-neck speed as *before kids* only to crash and burn. Our children were cranky, they were missing naps, they weren't really on a schedule at all, and were acting out and whining all the time. We had to learn to slow down, say "no" more often, and create boundaries. Slowing down, however, doesn't mean you have to say goodbye to friends and hanging out. It's just looks a little different.

Here are 5 Ways to Maintain a Social Life *After Kids*

1 Invite Friends Over after Your Kids are in Bed

I recall early in our marriage, before kids were on the radar, having game nights with a couple in the neighborhood. They had an adorable 6 month old little girl. They would put her to bed and then we would play games late into the night. It was so much fun and it never really occurred to me that the location of our game playing was more out of convenience for this couple than anything. Now we are the ones inviting people over after our kids are in bed for game nights. We also started having friends over to watch movies. Our friends don't seem to mind coming our way and we are able to have adult conversations and interactions without the interruptions of little ones.

2 Invite Friends into Your Family Time

I've mentioned that many of our friends are like family so we are learning to invite our friends right in to the chaos. They become honorary uncles and aunts to our kids and we treasure the time with our friends and delight in seeing them interact with our brood. We've even invited friends to join us at Chuck E Cheese. Now that's friendship right there, folks. Friends with no kids who willingly give up their Friday night to spend time with you, your kids and a mouse.

3 Playdates

One of the gifts and challenges of having kids is that when you're raising littles your friends are often raising littles as well. Inviting them over after kids are in bed can be tricky. Find kid friendly environments in which to hang out. Enclosed playlands are golden. Like many with small children, we spend way too much time at Chickfila but it's a great place to feed the kids and then send them off to play while the moms catch up. Library storytimes and playgrounds are also great. I do want to mention that these are not the kind of social interactions where you pour your heart out to your BFF. This is a scattered social time. Diapers, pottytraining, dripping noses and runaway toddlers can make your time spent together very choppy and misaligned. It is still worth it, however, to get a few minutes with another human being who gets you. The time spent with someone who has been and always will be your friend is a treasure. Even if kids have changed the way it looks.

#4 Girls Night Out

It is so important to have that kid-free time with your friends especially if you are knee high in baby wipes and Doc McStuffins episodes. This one is probably the easiest in *theory* to practice. Your husband stays home while you hang out with the girls. Something always seems to happen, though.

- The baby gets sick.
- You have a really crummy day.
- Your husband gets home late from work.
- You didn't get a shower.

Please don't let the unexpected chaos of the day keep you from having time with friends. It makes you a better mom and wife. Dad can handle a sick baby. Call your friends and update them on your delayed arrival and get that shower in. I'm an introvert. It's hard for me to get time with friends simply because of my inward tendencies. It's ten times harder with kids but I know I need it and try to make it happen. So from an introvert, please take time for you, away from your kids, to get out and *be* with your friends.

#5 Invest in Babysitters

Friendship is important and this is one area where a babysitter here and there is worth the investment. About once or twice a year, our LifeGroup takes advantage of our church's Parents' Night Out and we eat out as couples. Our kids are well taken care of and we can enjoy each others company without the interruptions of little ones. We've also met up for a meal together near the Thanksgiving Holiday. Your friendships are worth it. You are worth it. Get a sitter and enjoy your friends.

Kids and Friends, Friends and Kids

Kids make life complicated and they put a lot of things on hold but friendship should not be one of those things. You just have to learn to work the social life around the needs of little ones who need naps and require consistent bedtime routines*. And your friends? They are gracious and understand a lot better than you'd expect.

*I want to note that my kids still have meltdowns. We still push their limits at times because we need and crave time with other adults and that's okay!

Chapter Six: Your Body After Baby

Your postpartum body represents a love-hate relationship. This body gave birth to a beautiful gift that you adore but it's hard to not loathe the frumpy form staring back at you in the mirror.



Your Body After Baby

Your postpartum body represents a love-hate relationship. This body gave birth to a beautiful gift that you adore but it's hard to not loathe the frumpy form staring back at you in the mirror.

What do we do when the body that birthed the most beautiful babies doesn't feel so beautiful?

Here are 5 things you can do to regain your body after baby.

1 Learn to Love Your Body

A healthy self-image is very difficult to maintain before kids, so after having a baby it can be torture to stare back at the reflection in the mirror. Please remember this:

"You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body. How you made me is amazing and wonderful. I praise you for that. What you have done is wonderful. I know that very well." Psalm 139:13-14 (NIRV)

This verse is amazing. Consider how powerful it is now that you've given birth! God knit your sweet child together in your womb. God made your child wonderful. The act of growing your precious baby inside of you was a wonderful act of God. Your amazing body didn't cease to be amazing once your child was born! Love your body where it is right now.

This is honestly difficult for me as I approach 2 years postpartum carrying extra weight from my 2nd and 3rd pregnancies. I'm not talking vanity pounds, either. I'm working hard to get to a better place physically but having babies and getting older makes these changes quite a bit more challenging. I need to love my body as it is on my way to where I'd like it to be. I encourage you to do the same.

#2 Move Your Body

It's hard to find time for yourself and to exercise with children around. It may take some creativity but you need to love yourself enough to make it a priority.

This past summer, I would do a plank when I woke up and when I went to bed and, on my best days, take a 25 minute walk in our back yard while the kids played. I literally walked the fence line. It wasn't glamorous and it was so monotonous but it got the job done!

Now I'm walking to pick up my son from school as often as I can. There are other options as well. Most gyms provide childcare and there are many mom meetup groups that walk the mall or local parks. I know a mom who does CrossFit first thing in the morning while her husband stays home with their sleeping children. When she gets home, he leaves for his workout. That's making it work!

#3 Eat Better

Notice I didn't say cut out certain foods or try this eating plan. Just eat better. Ask yourself each day: "Am I eating better today than I did yesterday?" This is hard for me. I've eaten the wrong things for so long that I am having to learn how to eat the right things again. I've invited friends to help me on this journey. As you learn to eat better, I encourage you invite people to help you on your journey as well.

#4 Don't Compare!

I know you know this but very few people go from their maternity clothes to their pre-pregnancy clothes in those first few weeks. Now some do and that is very awesome for them but most women take anywhere from 6 months to 2 years to settle into a comfortable post-pregnancy weight. Notice I said comfortable. Sometimes the number on the scale is not the same, but a number on the scale or a tag size on a pair of jeans does not define your worth. Love yourself AND your postpartum body. This is your journey and the method and progress will look differently from woman to woman.

#5 Count Your Blessings

When the reflection you see in the mirror is not as lovely as you recall in years prior recall the blessings those stretch marks and your poofy belly produced. Mine are Dom age 6, Charlee age 4 and Devin age 2.

You Are Mom

The addition of children affects the way you take care of your body. Learn to love your body right where it is, take better care of it, don't compare, and count the blessings that your body birthed.

I'll leave you with one final story.

Recently, we changed the sheets on our bed and tossed the old ones in the laundry room. Our eldest jumped into them like a pile of leaves and sighed saying: "This blanket smells like mommy!!" It melted my heart. It also made me think of the many times as an adult I've caught the fragrance of my mom after an out of state visit. Whether it was on the seat belt in the car, on the couch cushions where she slept or in the sweater I loaned her, the feeling her scent evokes is just beautiful. My thoughts toward my mom are sweet and so tender. I love her because she is my mom not because of a number on the bathroom scale. Please know that you are loved by your precious children and you are loved no less because of your size but loved all the more because you are MOM.

Chapter Seven: When the Advice Doesn't Work

Parenting has and always will be hard, and although there are some excellent strategies and advice available, we all have to forge our own parenting path.



When the Advice Doesn't Work

My husband and I started our parenting journey almost six years ago. As a matter of fact, this time last year, I was approaching my third trimester with my first child! Oh the advice I would give *first-time mom* Patty! Here are three things I would say to myself across the table at a coffee shop if I could go back in time. But since I can't go back in time, perhaps I can save you dear mom some trouble.

#1 Ask for Help

Please ASK FOR HELP! If I could, I would go back and tell myself: "Stop acting like you've got it together!" I can't tell you how many times, I would hear people say to me: "I don't know how you do it." I wish I had been brave enough to say, "I don't. Can you help me?" I would have included my husband more in the earlier days as well. He wanted to help but I looked and acted like I knew what I was doing. He helped as needed but let me do the heavy lifting of child rearing because I was too stubborn to let him in. That is until I got overwhelmed and had a meltdown in the middle of the night while he slept. That night changed everything and birthed our team parenting approach. It was a hard lesson, but as a result, I began to realize that just because I gave birth to these kids it didn't mean I instantly upgraded to the *super-mom* model. Newsflash: we will never be super mom.

#2 Throw Away the Books

Please throw out all of the parenting books! Well, maybe not all of them. The ones that promote a certain rigid system or project a specific end result do not even deserve a place on your dusty shelf. Books about parenting need to be approached like a buffet. Take what looks good and give it a try. If it doesn't taste good, you don't have to keep eating it. When reading a book or an article or a blog post, yes, even my words, consider who you are and your family dynamic. Does the idea seem like something that could work? Give it a try. If it doesn't seem like a good fit, don't try it!

I am not the first and I most certainly will not be the last to say this: Children need love and their basic needs met. If you love well and take care of their needs, the rest will eventually fall into place. The goal of parenting is to raise responsible, kind and loving adults. I promise you, your child's college admissions counselor will not care AT ALL if your child slept through the night at 8 weeks.

#3 Trust Yourself

Breathe and trust yourself. You've got this precious momma! You know what's best. There's more advice and opinions and methods about parenting than there are people in the world! With all that wisdom and perspective, it could be very easy to become overwhelmed and fearful of making mistakes and choosing the wrong path for your child. Let me set you at ease with these two sentences.

You will make mistakes.

You will raise confident, kind, beautiful children who will love you despite the mistakes you will make.

BOTTOM LINE

Parenting has and always will be hard, and although there are some excellent strategies and advice available, we all have to forge our own parenting path.

Hear this: You are, no doubt, the BEST person to mother your precious few. Why? Because you love your children fiercely. If you don't know the answer, you will search, experiment, cry, pray, and try, try, TRY again until you figure it out. You are in it for the long haul. And that super power, precious momma, is more valuable than all the parenting advice in the world.

You've got this brave momma! Go change the world one diaper at a time.

-Patty

Meet Patty

Embracing motherhood one milestone at a time.



Hi there!

I am a mid 30's native Floridian living the dream in North Texas. As the saying goes, I wasn't born here but I *got here as fast as I could*. I've been married to my dear sweet husband, Marshall, for 9 years. We have three darling children, who were born in Texas, ages 2,4,6.

My passions

I have worn many professional hats during my adult life but my favorites are in the church and non-profit sector. I currently stay at home with my children while writing and communicating on a free-lance basis.

My hobbies

I love reading, writing, music and movies. I love to decorate my house and dream up ways to celebrate life.

You can read more about my adventures in motherhood here:

pattyparker.me

Photo Credit: [Captured Photography](#)
By Emily

PATTY parker

Want to Read More?

Motherhood is a journey. Join me and other mothers as we brave this glorious calling that comes with a pretty sweet title: Mommy.

[Check out my website!](#)