

Hello, Darling

THIS IS MOTHERHOOD | FEB 2014



BEAUTY IN THE MESS

MOPS

A COMEDY ABOUT ~~CHAOS~~ *Life*
MOMS' NIGHT OUT
WHAT COULD GO WRONG?



Ever wonder when life became so chaotic? You're not alone. Get ready to see your world on the big screen in **MOMS' NIGHT OUT**, an endearing, true-to-life family comedy that celebrates the beautiful mess called parenting!

IN THEATERS SPRING 2014

STARRING ...

SARAH **DREW** SEAN **ASTIN** PATRICIA **HEATON** TRACE **ADKINS**
DAVID **HUNT** ANDREA **LOGAN WHITE** ROBERT **AMAYA**
ABBIE **COBB** HARRY **SHUM JR.** KEVIN **DOWNES** ALEX **KENDRICK**



Watch the trailer for the movie that was the hit of MOMcon 2013!

MomsNightOutMovie.com



THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED.
FOR FUTURE INFO, GO TO FILMRATINGS.COM

© 2013 Provident Films LLC. All rights reserved.

AFFIRM FILMS



SOMETIMES WE JUST NEED



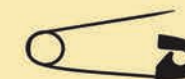
A RECIPE



OR AN EXPERT TO TELL US WHAT TO DO



OR A MOM TO ADMIT THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO HER



OR A CUTE VIDEO WITH TIPS TO MAKE MY LIFE EASIER

SOMETIMES WE NEED THOSE THINGS ALL AT ONCE.

hello Darling

THIS IS MOTHERHOOD.

JOIN THE HELLO DARLING COMMUNITY AT MOPS.ORG/BLOG

CONTENTS

welcome

to your new MOPS magazine. We've taken the best of what you've loved about *MomSense* magazine and poured our creative energy into a new magazine created just for you! *Hello, Darling: This is Motherhood* celebrates you as a unique woman and mom. We'd love your feedback at magazines@MOPS.org.

 **How about you?** Look for this icon throughout the magazine for topics you can discuss in your MOPS group and with your mom friends.

CEO & PRESIDENT
MOPS INTERNATIONAL
Sherry Surratt

DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP
& MARKETING
Mandy Arioto

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Carla Foote

EDITOR
Mary Darr

CONSULTING EDITORS
Melissa Caddell, Tally Flint,
Alexandra Kuykendall

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Cynthia Young

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR
Bre Graziano

ADVERTISING
Jennifer Evans

COLUMNISTS
Mandy Arioto, Dr. Henry Cloud,
Dr. John Townsend

ADVISORS
Dr. Mary Manz Simon
and MOPS Advisory Team



COVER IMAGE © CHRIS GRAML/GETTY IMAGES

- 4 **WE LOVE**
Trazy Hair, Mom Talk, Soup with Hearts, Kissing and Quiet Time
- 5 **THE MOPS MOVEMENT**
International Exchange by Tally Flint

ESSENTIALS TRIED & TRUE

- 8 **RAISING GREAT KIDS**
Great Stepfamily Relationships by Dr. John Townsend
- 10 **DIY**
Resurrection Rolls
- 12 **MOMSnext**
First Comes Love, Then Comes ... Wait a Minute!! by Susan Besze Wallace
- 14 **PLAY**
by ProductiveParenting.com

SIMPLY PUT

- 17 *What You Said, Giggle, Tips from Mom Ph.D.*

HONESTLY TRUE TALES

- 26 **KINDRED**
Be There by Mandy Arioto
- 28-31 **MOM STORIES**
UpClose with Sarah Drew
Helmets for the Homeless by Wendy Hagen
Yes to the Mess by Stacy Edwards
- 32 **HERE'S WHAT I KNOW**
My Health Matters by Sherry Surratt

HOW TO:

Talk about the hard parts of the Easter story PAGE 11

Talk with your child about the opposite gender PAGE 13

Encourage your child's identity to blossom PAGE 22

QUIZ:

Take Care of You PAGE 32

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

EMAIL US
magazines@MOPS.org

VISIT OUR BLOG
MOPS.org/blog

FIND US ON FACEBOOK
facebook.com/MOPS.Int

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER
@MOPS_Int

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE IDEA
Find writer's guidelines at
MOPS.org/writers-guidelines

WRITE TO US
MOPS International,
2370 S. Trenton Way,
Denver, CO 80231-3822

BEAUTY IN THE MESS

Our mess is obvious — piles of toys, laundry and dishes. The emotional messes and hurts.

Relationships falling short of expectations. The mess of not being loved enough, the mess of brokenness or abuse. And not just the out-of-control mess, but also the complicated, the interwoven.

Parts of our mess are easier to hide or harder to control — deep in our heart, under carefully constructed lives and coping mechanisms.

So where is the beauty?

There is beauty in glimpses of our stronger selves — speaking up for our needs or rising up to protect a child. Glimpses of purpose in the midst of the mundane and the dailies. The realization we have stretched and grown more than we thought possible.

The beauty and hope in God, who is bigger than our mess.

The beauty of connecting with other moms, over the silly and the momentous, so that together we affirm our beauty in the mess.

20
SWISS CHEESE MOMS, SWISS CHEESE KIDS
by Kelley Gray, M.A., L.P.C.

23
THE WHYS BEHIND MY LIES
by Cassidy Doolittle

24
MY STORY: MESSY AND IMPERFECT
by Dawn Grieco

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 5 *Hello, Darling: This is Motherhood* is published quarterly by MOPS International, Inc. 2370 S Trenton Way, Denver, CO 80231 (previously published as *MomSense*). Advertising in *Hello, Darling* magazine does not necessarily imply editorial endorsement. All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ **FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT SUBSCRIPTIONS, CONTACT 888-910-6677.** Postmaster Send address changes to *Hello, Darling* magazine, 2370 S. Trenton Way, Denver, CO 80231-3822, 888-910-6677. Canada Publication Mail Agreement No. 40029733. Registration No. 126028836RT0001. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to MOPS International, Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7.

© 2014 MOPS INTERNATIONAL, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Printed in USA. MOPS® is a federally registered trademark. MOPS International does not guarantee content or endorse independent websites.

WE LOVE

A COLLECTION OF FAVORITES FROM MOPS ONLINE



TRAZY HAIR

What I Tell My Daughter About Her Hair

by Alexandra Kuykendall

“... When we’ve tried to tell her that her hair looks “crazy,” as a way of saying, you want it to look nice, and combed and acceptable. You don’t want to stand out too much because ... well ... we’re not really sure why except that we’re prone to conformity. Her response is simply, “I want trazy hair!” Arms crossed, ready for a fight. In a sense, you can’t convince me crazy is not good. I like my hair the way it is. End of story ...”



READ THE REST of Alexandra’s blog at MOPS.org/what-i-tell-my-daughter-about-her-hair. Her book *The Artist’s Daughter: A Memoir* is available at MOPShop.org.



SOUP WITH HEARTS

Want to make chicken soup filled with love? How about these cute little heart-shaped carrots?! Perfect for Valentine’s Day. You could put them in soup, add them to a veggie platter or simply serve them as a snack with a side of ranch.

Link to directions at MOPS.org/heart-carrots.

Created by Jaime @ sophistimom.com
Pinned at pinterest.com/mops_int/

Used with permission.

kissing

The wedding kiss is based on an ancient Roman tradition whereby the exchange of a kiss signified making a contract.

Husbands who kiss their wives before leaving for work live 5 times longer than men who don’t! And frequent kissing reduces stress and lowers bad cholesterol for better heart health.

Parenting takes a toll on mom and dad. Rejuvenate your marriage with date ideas and a kissing quiz. MOPS.org/mobile.

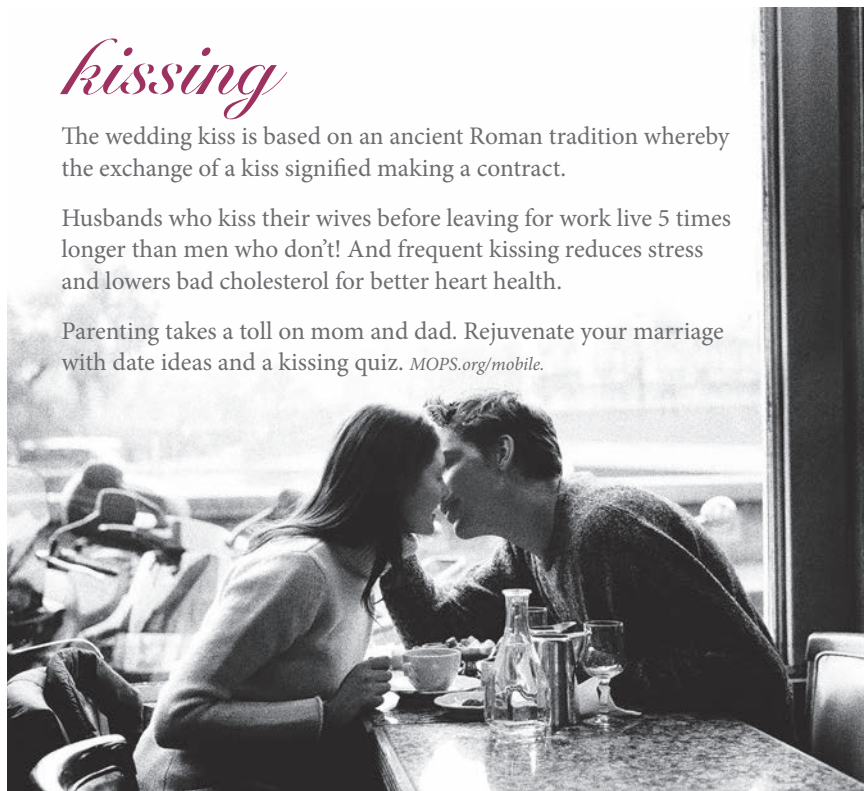


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK SOUP BOWL DRAWING BY ALECSA/THINKSTOCK

QUIET TIME

“Just last week when I was putting my baby to bed I asked my 3- and 6-year-olds to play quietly and they WERE sooo quiet. I went to get them, and they’d drawn all over each other and cut each other’s hair. Gotta say it was hard not to laugh, and oh what a mess!”

Posted by Elisabeth @ facebook.com/MOPS.Int



MOM TALK

We took to the streets asking people if they could speak mom language. We asked, “What’s an episiotomy?” See what they said at MOPS.org/we-speak-mom-language.

Originally tweeted from twitter.com/MOPS_Int



Visit our blog Hello, Darling: MOPS.org/blog

facebook.com/MOPS.Int

twitter.com/MOPS_Int

pinterest.com/MOPS_Int

THE MOPS MOVEMENT BY TALLY FLINT



PICTURED: Susan Lee (left) and Lavi Dreana caught up with each other at the 2013 MOMcon in Kansas City, Missouri. They attended workshops in leadership and personal development to help support their MOPS groups.

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

ONE MOPS MEETING. That’s all it took, and Lavi Dreana wanted to bring MOPS to her community in Oradea, Romania. During a short visit to the states, Lavi had attended a MOPS meeting at Pine Lake Covenant Church (PLCC) in Sammamish, Washington. And that gathering birthed a partnership spanning two years and 7,000 miles.

Lavi and her husband had worked with PLCC through missions opportunities, and MOPS Mentor Susan Lee had often voiced the benefits of MOPS. But Lavi caught the *vision* of MOPS at that first meeting — moms coming together, supporting each other. And she decided that Romania needed MOPS. When she discovered there wasn’t an existing group in Romania, she reached out to Susan to help her start one.

The two women launched their action plan. Susan sought guidance and resources from MOPS International along with the backing of the PLCC leadership and MOPS group leadership team. And she prepared a four-woman team of seasoned MOPS members to travel to Oradea. Meanwhile in Romania, Lavi pulled together what would become the first Romanian MOPS Leadership Team. She tasked them with designing a retreat

weekend for moms to coincide with the US group’s visit.

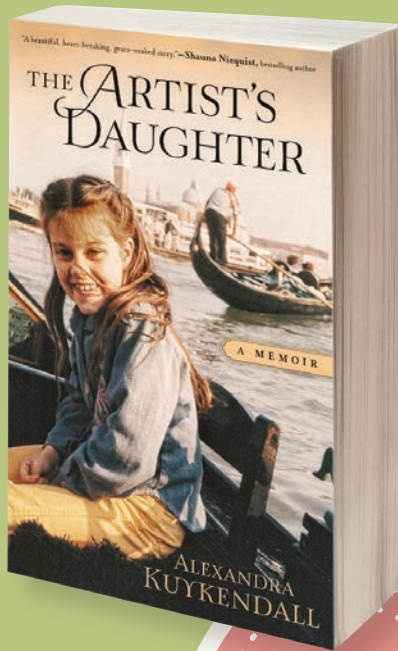
“This trip wasn’t solely about leadership training for the new MOPS leadership team,” explained Susan. “It also ignited the vision of MOPS and empowered the women to believe *they* could actually be a part of this outreach.”

Today, the two MOPS communities consider each other sister groups. They share updates and connect through their Facebook pages. They swap prayer requests and encourage each other. The PLCC group also hosted a consignment sale to raise funds to provide the Romanian moms with a Moms’ Night Out — a culturally rare and welcomed treat. Susan also hopes to set up a mentoring network between Leadership Team members.

“We’ve learned what it means to love one another, mom-to-mom, sister-to-sister,” reflected Susan. “I’m just an ordinary mom, with a pile of unfolded laundry, and a dishwasher waiting to be emptied. There’s nothing extraordinary about me — I have no formal training in leadership or international relationships, and certainly no training in public speaking.” And yet, here she is: One *half* of a partnership that God is using to make a *whole* lot of difference in the lives of moms.

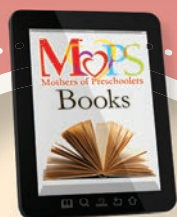
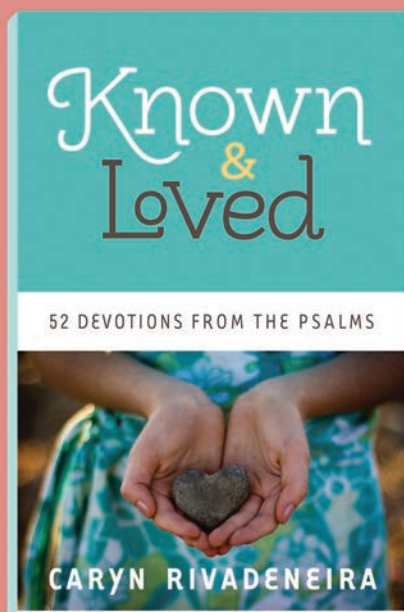


Tally Flint is a freelance writer and editor. She lives in Denver, Colorado, with her husband and four children (9, 7 and 5-year-old twins).



Discover your own story

& Realize God's love for you



All MOPS titles are also available as e-books.

MOPS books are created just for you!

MOPS titles are available 24/7 **MOPShop.org**

WE LOVE OUR SPONSORS

They help us do what we do: support & nurture moms around the globe. Visit their websites, and tell them MOPS sent you.

Antiquities

MOPS.org/antiquities



MOPS.org/BOZ



MOPS.org/brightpeak



MOPS.org/compassion

MOMS' NIGHT OUT

momsnightoutmovie.com



MOPS.org/OCC



MOPS.org/mobile



MOPS.org/SimplyFun



MOPS.org/worldvision

ESSENTIALS

TRIED & TRUE



PEARL LIGHTSTOCK



14
million
stepmothers live
in the U.S. today.

42%
of adults have a
steprelationship
(stepparent, step
or half sibling,
or stepchild.)

(Source: smartstepfamilies.com)

DRAY/THINKSTOCK

great STEPFAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

BY DR. JOHN TOWNSEND

BEING A STEPPARENT is a great opportunity: *You have the privilege of nurturing the development of a child who is not your biological offspring, but who will be strongly influenced by your ways and words.* But step-parenting also is a challenge with the many variations in family arrangements.

Here's the bottom line: Stepparents have the responsibility of their stepchildren without the legal authority. They're responsible to help nurture, care for and provide structure for their stepchildren. But they're limited in terms of what they have the legal authority to do. So if the biological parent says, "Back off," the stepparent has to back off. That's not the case if the stepparent adopts or has been granted custody or guardianship of the child by the court.

Here are some tips to help you have the best possible step-parenting experience:

Accept and support your spouse's authority. Your stepchild is the primary responsibility of his or her biological mother and your spouse. Don't argue about or fight your spouse's authority. Accept that reality and work within the system. Tell your spouse, "I love Sally, but ultimately, she's under your authority and your ex's. I want to support your parenting and nurturing of Sally and don't want to try and override you. Tell me how I can help you." This will help your spouse trust you and welcome your support.

Engage your stepchild through relationship, not authority. Your responsibility is to connect deeply with your stepchild on a personal and emotional level. Help her to love and trust you, instead of waving the flag of "I'm the boss." How do you do this? Start by listening to her, by being present and by entering into your stepchild's world — whether it's playing games with a young child or

watching movies with older kids. When a stepparent enters into a child's world, the child should begin to respond warmly. And she also should begin to listen to your advice and ultimately follow your leadership.

Be sensitive to your stepchild's internal struggles. You may be a really great stepparent, but your stepchild may still feel a deep desire to have her biological mom and dad love each other and parent her together. Nothing personal toward you, she simply wants an intact biological family and can't write off that deep longing. Be gentle and patient as she grieves and lets go of that desire. She may see you as "the intruder" or "the bad guy." Don't react. Be loving and positive with her. In time, she should see your love and care as real and good, and then she can say goodbye to her original dream and embrace you.

Respect the other parents. As much as possible, be warm and aligned with your spouse's ex and the other stepparent. The Bible encourages us to try and live at peace with everyone. If you have contact with the other parents, be pleasant. Don't get in turf wars that embarrass your stepchild. Stay out of competitive battles. You're preserving your stepchild's emotional life and helping her to move on in life with several adults who love her.

WHAT YOU SAID *as a stepmom*

"I think you have to work harder than you do with birth children, so I take special outings alone so that we can bond and grow" — Heidi

"Failed at the step parenting, but I tried everything I could to bond with them. The most important thing ... the parent of the child needs to be in agreement with you ... without the two of you being a team, you have no chance." — Linda

"I've been a stepparent for eight years, and at first, I let them set the pace of our relationship. Two of the three were quick to warm up to me, the third took a while feeling like he was being disloyal to his mom. Now, eight years later, they treat me much like their mom." — Marla

"It's an ongoing battle. I try to be kind and loving, without taking over as a mom since they already have one." — Sara

(Source: MOPS survey on Facebook)

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, psychologists, leadership coaches and the authors of many books, selling over 5 million copies, including *Raising Great Kids*, *Boundaries*, *Boundaries with Kids* and *Mom Factor* — as well as the hosts of the syndicated national radio program "New Life Live."

Want more? You can experience the wit, wisdom and understanding of Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend through the Solutions Audio Club. Each month you'll receive four exceptional audio recordings by the doctors, mailed to your home. Their biblical solutions for relationships and life's challenges will help you invest in the future of those you love, so enroll today! For more information or for a complete list of their extensive resources and speaking engagements, call (800) 676-HOPE or visit their website at cloudtownsend.com.



DIY

ESSENTIALS

RESURRECTION ROLLS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY Vanessa Kruse

Use this DIY recipe to share the Easter story with your kids.

The marshmallow represents Jesus. After he died on the cross, his friends went to prepare his body for burial by anointing him with oil and spices (roll the marshmallow in butter and cinnamon mixture). He was wrapped in his grave clothes (crescent roll) and placed in the tomb (oven). After cooling and opening the baked roll, you'll see the marshmallow is gone. Just like Jesus has risen from the dead! He's alive.

**April 20 is
Easter
Sunday.**

Read the story of Holy Week and Easter in Matthew 26-28. You can read different versions at Biblegateway.com.



YOU'LL NEED:
(Makes 8)

8 large marshmallows

4 tablespoons butter

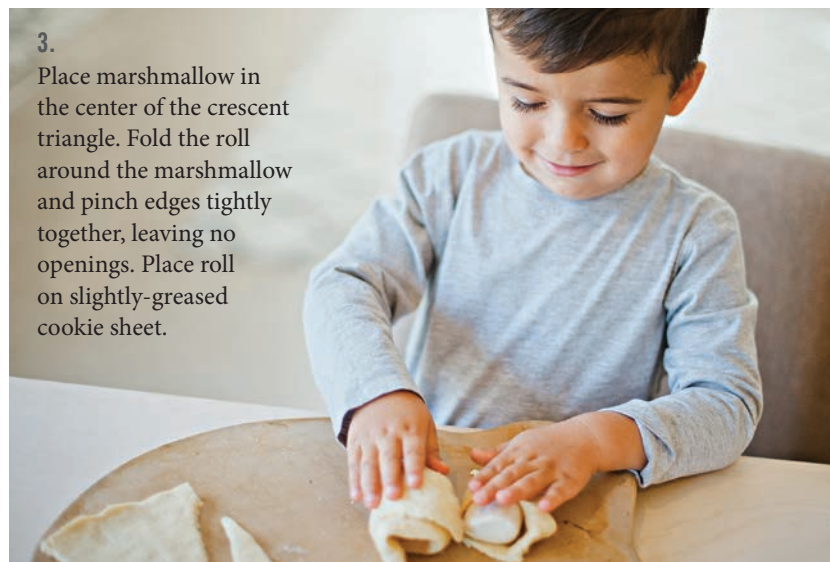
1 tablespoon cinnamon mixed with 3 tablespoons sugar

One can of refrigerated crescent rolls

1. Separate the crescent rolls into eight triangles and place marshmallows in a small bowl. Melt butter in a shallow bowl. Mix sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl.
2. Dip and roll each marshmallow in melted butter. Then roll marshmallow in the cinnamon/sugar mixture.



3. Place marshmallow in the center of the crescent triangle. Fold the roll around the marshmallow and pinch edges tightly together, leaving no openings. Place roll on slightly-greased cookie sheet.



4. Place the cookie sheet in the oven and bake at 375 degrees for 10-12 minutes or until crescents are light golden brown.
5. Allow to cool before serving. When you break open the roll, you'll see the marshmallow has melted while cooking, leaving only the puffed roll.



HOW TO:

Talk about the hard parts of the Easter story

BY AMANDA WHITE

1

STAY ON YOUR KIDS' LEVEL.

Don't show your kids the *Passion of the Christ* movie. Do show them pictures from a kids' Bible. You don't have to tell them about the whips that had bone and glass on the ends.

You can tell them that the soldiers hurt Jesus before he died. Let them see the seriousness without seeing the gore.

2

RECOGNIZE THEIR UNDERSTANDING.

Kids only understand what they understand. When my 4-year-old son hears that Jesus was nailed to the cross, he thinks about Handy Manny from the TV series. And that's fine with me! I want him to understand the Easter story at his level. Focus on the meaning of the resurrection: Jesus came back to life to show us he's God's Son and that there's life after death.

3

FIGURE OUT WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOUR KIDS BASED ON THEIR AGE & UNDERSTANDING.

For sensitive or younger readers, I recommend the book *Easter in the Garden* by Pamela Kennedy and illustrated by David Wenzel.



This book tells the story of the son of the gardener where Jesus' tomb was. While in the garden the boy observes two events: a nest of eggs hatching and Jesus' resurrection. Although the author deals with the crucifixion, you never see it. You only experience the little boy's sadness. My preschooler was wide-eyed the first time we read this book.

Amanda White is a mom of two who blogs at ohAmanda.com.



Easter in the Garden. Copyright © 2008 by author Pamela Kennedy and illustrator David Wenzel. Published by Ideals Children's Books, www.idealsbooks.com. Used by permission of the publisher.



good question

What should a parent do when the opposite gender starts coming into clearer view for kids? Talk about your experiences and standards at MOPS blog. MOPS.org/when-kids-notice-the-opposite-gender

JENI JANIE GRILL/BRENDI IMAGES/CONRIS

FIRST COMES LOVE, THEN COMES ... *wait a minute!!*

BY SUSAN BESZE WALLACE

EYES GREW HUGE around the dinner table as my son made his announcement.

"I have a Valentine ... Maybe it's a girlfriend ... Yeah. It's a girlfriend."

My heart raced in a decidedly non-Hallmark direction. I felt pure panic when I heard that my second-grader might have eyes for a girl — or that a girl might like him.

Has the word "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" come up at your house yet? What was your reaction? *"Innocent childhood stuff,"* or *"You're staying home until you're 18?"*

Somehow I kept a straight face when I asked my son what "Valentine" and "girlfriend" meant to him. He wasn't sure,

except that everyone had one, and he thought this particular girl was "the most interesting choice."

Unsure what felt appropriate, I had a great discussion with our school counselor about these matters. Her advice for parents' initial reactions: *"I'm so glad you told me."* *"How did that make you feel?"* And, *"It's nice to admire someone for good qualities."*

When discussions of the opposite sex come up with your kids, considering their maturity levels and showing respect for any child being discussed is crucial. This probably isn't the time to launch into a birds-and-bees talk. It's also not a time for teasing or making snap judgments. Your overreactions can scare your child out of confiding in you.

Instead, let your child do most of the talking to find out what's truly being said. My first-grader was upset recently about hearing girls "use a bad word." Turns out, he didn't know what "sassy" meant. What a great discussion, and a lesson in restraint for me as I considered what level of "sassy" to address.

As parents, we set up a belief system with our words, actions, media preferences and openness. A lack of thoughtful conversation about the opposite gender also can form kids' beliefs. Friends and commercials will fill in your gaps!

So is it appropriate to have a boyfriend or girlfriend in elementary school? Well, obviously dating is out, and according to most elementary school codes of

conduct, so is everything else that adults would associate with those words — even hand-holding. My counselor friend said that if your child talks about kissing games or physical contact, talk to the teacher immediately. Safe personal space is non-negotiable. Here are some additional tips:

Set your own family code of conduct now, and stick to it. Think through what you want them to be saying in a couple of years (or not saying). What's cute for a preschooler to say sounds very different a few years later. If you're encouraging "boyfriend talk," you're normalizing it. Same with using terms like "hot" or "chick." They stick.

Explain to your children that their feelings aren't bad. And tell them it's OK to *like* all types of people. Being dismissive of them "liking" someone may make your child feel dismissed. Take feelings to heart, even if you don't take them too seriously.

Not all kids, or their parents, are ready for more mature steps. So keeping things at a friendship level for now is preferred and less likely to result in hurt feelings or distractions to learning.

Know what your kids are seeing on TV. Like second-hand smoke, commercials for shows we'd never dream of letting them watch can float in and make impressions about what's OK to do and say.

Above all keep listening, and let your family's values be what speaks loudest to your kids.

HOW TO: Talk with your child about the opposite gender

1+ LISTEN ACTIVELY.


Pay attention to what your elementary kids are doing and saying. Don't overreact to or over-talk every comment your child makes.

2+ TALK IT OUT.

Discuss what it means to be a gentleman and a lady. Talk about how destructive gossip is. "She likes so-and-so" banter can turn hurtful.

3+ SET BOUNDARIES.

Monitor play to ensure language/activities are appropriate. And identify polite and respectful words.

 **How about you?** Share with your MOMSnext friends about ways your family deals with the boyfriend/girlfriend issue. Use this article as a conversation-starter. Are there areas you feel inadequate in this conversation? Share openly about your struggles and reach out to your friends for ideas and perspective.



Immersed in a world of all things boy, writer and MOPS speaker Susan Besze Wallace prays often for the girls in her sons' schools, and for her future daughters-in-law.

PLAY

ESSENTIALS

by ProductiveParenting.com

POINT & FLEX

6 to 9 months

WHAT TO DO: Place your infant faceup on a blanket. Hold your infant's foot in a pointed position and say "point," and "flex" when the foot is flexed flat. Then move the foot in the opposite position while saying "point ... flex." Eventually your infant will point the foot when you say "point" and flex the foot when you say "flex."

VARIATIONS: Do this fun exercise with both the right and left foot.

2 to 3 years old

LAND & SEA ANIMALS

MATERIALS: Download photos of land and sea animals: dolphin, whale, horse, lion
WHAT TO DO: Children are fascinated with animals and their homes. Put animal photos from the land and sea in front of your child. Take one of the photos and ask your child if the animal lives on the land or in the sea. Put the sea animals in one basket and the land animals in another basket.

VARIATIONS: Schedule a trip to the zoo and aquarium.

ONLINE RESOURCE: Go to MOPS.org/animal-activities to find a link to a free printable worksheet for your preschooler to cut and paste animals in their natural environment.

3 to 4 years old

ROUGH & SMOOTH

MATERIALS: A drinking glass, sandpaper
WHAT TO DO: This activity helps your child understand the concept of rough and smooth. Show your child two objects, one that's rough (sandpaper) and one that's smooth (a glass). Have your child feel the items and use the words rough and smooth to describe how each feels. See if your child can find other items in your home. For example, a wool rug might be an example of rough, and a hardwood floor might be smooth. The possibilities are endless with this activity.

VARIATIONS: Ask your child to put all of the rough items in one container and the smooth ones in another.

4 to 5 years old

NOCTURNAL & DIURNAL ANIMALS

MATERIALS: Photos of nocturnal and diurnal animals

WHAT TO DO: Talk with your child about animals that are active during the day (diurnal) as opposed to animals that are awake during the night (nocturnal). See if your child can identify any anatomical differences between animals that need to see, hear or hunt by night as opposed to those who are awake during the day.

VARIATIONS: Take your child to the zoo's nocturnal house.

ONLINE RESOURCE: Go to MOPS.org/animal-activities to find a link to a free printable worksheet.

5 years and older

LIVING & NON-LIVING

MATERIALS: Two bags for collecting objects
WHAT TO DO: Weather permitting: Enjoy taking your child on a nature walk in the woods or park. Give your child two bags labeled "living" and "non-living." Have your child collect items that are or were living, (leaves, acorns, sticks, etc.) and items that are non-living, (rocks, dirt, etc.) Discuss the differences between living and non-living items.

VARIATIONS: Pick an item and have your child describe why it's living or non-living.

These activities originally appeared on ProductiveParenting.com and are reprinted with permission.

To receive additional daily activity suggestions based on your child's age, visit ProductiveParenting.com.

Emily Rempe, cofounder of ProductiveParenting.com, is a former MOPS Coordinator.



ELEVA GREY/THINKSTOCK



MAKE A RESOLUTION TO ADD SOME PEP AND PIZZAZZ TO YOUR RELATIONSHIP THIS YEAR WITH THE DATE PLAN-O-MATIC!

This super fun date idea generator will help you come up with creative dates for you and your sweetheart. Designed specifically for parents of little ones, we've got ideas that will fit any budget, whether you have a babysitter or not!



GET THE DATE PLAN-O-MATIC ON gloo

- ▶ Download gloo from the App Store or Google Play
- ▶ Enter invite code: MOPS
- ▶ Sign up and start dating!



RAISING FUNDS CAPTURING MEMORIES

Helping groups like yours raise thousands of dollars.



Photograph Before February 28th, 2014
add \$200 to any earned bonus!
Call Today for complete details.

To qualify your group, mention offer (mops2014) when you schedule your program. Additional restrictions and limitations apply. Void where prohibited.



Antiquities
UNIQUE PORTRAIT FUNDRAISING
1-800-871-6255
www.antiquitieskids.com

SIMPLY PUT



WHAT YOU SAID

OK, ADMIT IT — THE LAST TIME YOU AND YOUR HUBBY HAD SEX? (Intentional baby-making sex doesn't count!)

Knowing how important sex is for a healthy marriage, the results from a recent MOPS mom survey are encouraging! More than 67 percent of moms surveyed reported they had sex in the past week. But almost 20 percent hadn't engaged in sex for a month or more. Here's what else you said about how long it had been: **"Today!"** * "First thing in the morning, before the kid wakes up. Takes a little getting used to if you're not a morning person, but works better than coffee." * "Now that we're trying for #3, REAL sex seems to have been forgotten." * "Can't remember ... sometime while I was pregnant ... my baby is almost five months old." * "It's been a month, which really makes me so sad! But we are both so tired at the end of the day."

DID YOU KNOW?

300

NUMBER OF QUESTIONS AN AVERAGE CHILD (AGES 1-9) ASKS DAILY.

That's one every 2.5 minutes. Four-year-old girls ask the most (up to 400 a day). And it's OK to find answers on Google — nine out of 10 of us do. (Source: truthdive.com)

TIPS FROM MOM, Ph.D.

BECAUSE MOMS ARE THE EXPERTS, WE ASKED YOU, THE MOMS!

How do you teach kids not to interrupt when you're talking to someone else?

The number one tip from Mom, Ph.D., is to have your kids come up and hold your hand or place their hand on your arm to get your attention. Then, you squeeze or pat their hand to acknowledge them and to indicate that you'll be with them in a sec. The international mom "one minute" finger also helps. The moms admit, this takes some training, so practice with your kids. Manners get a special pass if a kid is potty-training — the pee-pee dance halts any mom convo!! (Source: MOPS survey on Facebook)

giggle

KIDS SAY THE SILLIEST THINGS

MOM: Why were you in time out?

3YO: Because I kicked Arwin.

MOM: Do we kick our sisters?

3YO: No.

MOM: What should you have done?

3YO: Hit her?

... SHARED BY AMY ...

My new baby girl was only a couple of days old when my sister-in-law, who has no children, was holding her. My 3-year-old noticed quickly when his baby sister started getting fussy. He looked at my sister-in-law, gestured to her chest and stated, simply, "The milk's in there."

... SHARED BY KRIS ...

"I'm potty-tamed."

... SHARED BY EMILY ...

(Source: MOPS survey on Facebook)



Do you spring clean?

If not, don't fret; it's OK, almost 1 in 4 of us don't. And at least 99 percent of those are new moms, right?

(Source: cleaninginstitute.org)

But, if you gotta, then make it a party!

Invite friends over to make non-toxic household cleaners. Find directions at MOPS.org/non-toxic-household-cleaners. Put on party hats, turn up the music and clean together for a few hours. Clean another friend's house next time.

Your Presence is Requested

Join the Mom Community

facebook.com/MOPS.Int
twitter.com/MOPS_Int
pinterest.com/MOPS_Int



ONE GIRL IN THE KITCHEN/GETTY IMAGES

DO YOU
SEE BEAUTY
IN YOUR STORY,
EVEN WHEN
IT'S MESSY?

Beauty

IN THE MESS

“
Children have
the right to be
crummy soccer
players or
uncoordinated
ballerinas without
being rescued
from these
experiences.
”

PAGE 20

“
*My past
beckons me
to repeat
what I saw
and lived,
but I'm
striving
to resist its
whispers.*
”

PAGE 23

“
My life changed
when I realized
that we all have
struggles and
no one has it all
together, no matter
how shiny the
outside exteriors
may appear.
”

PAGE 24

SECOND PART
IN A TWO-PART
SERIES

SWISS CHEESE MOMS, *swiss cheese kids*

BY KELLEY GRAY, M.A., L.P.C.

“Mom, help!! YOU get me dressed! It’s too hard for me.” “Mom — YOU pick up my toys!! I don’t want to!!” Moms experience these negotiation moments every day. Deciding what we should do for our children and what they should do for themselves is a normal part of mothering. But a mama who feels intense pain over her children’s struggles and failures or who battles with controlling or excessively taking care of her kids to the neglect of herself will experience negative ramifications for years to come. And so will her kids.

AS I CONFESSED in Part 1 of my November *MomSense* article, I’m recovering from this codependent pattern of behavior and still have to be aware of my tendency toward parenting that way. When my pre-school daughter was struggling, I rescued her. Just swooped in with a fix and made it all better — Poof! No more pain, Baby! But was I doing her a favor? Maybe in the short run — there was no more crying for her and no more stress for me. But in the long run, what was I teaching her? Was I being intentional in my parenting or accidentally enabling?

If you’re afraid this is describing you, don’t panic — breathe deeply and stay calm. It’s likely you’re a person of wisdom seeking truth and self-awareness. That is a gift to your child and something of which to be proud!

What Does Healthy Child Identity Look Like?

We’re all born like Swiss cheese, full of holes that hunger to be filled. Adults are responsible for fulfilling their needs through awareness, resources and relation-

ships. As parents, we’re responsible for determining the wisest ways of filling our children’s needs and empowering them to meet some needs themselves.

Great parenting requires a tremendous amount of time, energy and commitment. But sometimes a parent’s involvement with her children *exceeds* what’s “healthy” — and her child’s identity development suffers. This happens for a number of reasons. Mom could simply be mirroring her own mother’s behavior. Perhaps she had a painful childhood that she hasn’t resolved, and she’s protecting her kids from feeling the terrible pain she endured. Maybe mom is meeting her own hidden needs by being too doting or trying to fulfill her unrealized dreams via her child.

Sometimes a parent isn’t able to see her kids as separate from herself. She unconsciously projects her own identity onto her kids. The parent believes her child’s shortcomings are her own failure, and she finds those feelings utterly intolerable. It may sound something like this:

“You can’t wear that outfit — it doesn’t match. You know you can’t pick out your own clothes.”

“We don’t leave toys outside. Mom will carry them in for you.” (*Even though you’re 9!*)

These parenting dynamics can result in many difficulties. Kids who are treated like an extension of their parents don’t know what their responsibilities, gifts and weaknesses are because their parents have inserted themselves into every learning opportunity. This can result in either low self-esteem (“I can’t do anything by myself.”) or overly inflated self-esteem (“I can do everything ... and I never lose!”). Codependent parenting takes away the middle ground of accurate self-understanding.

Unconsciously, the aim of these short-sighted parenting choices is to raise a safe, pleasing, mini-me. But what happens when that child no longer has his parents to please and mirror? He’s in for an identity crisis without his external regulators.

Parents who micromanage their child’s identity are like vending machines dispensing quick calories ➔ CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

“
Parents who micromanage
their child’s identity are like
vending machines dispensing
quick calories in the form of
decisions and values ...
”



ZOONAR/THINKSTOCK

in the form of decisions and values: “Do as I say, and don’t ask ‘why.’” Micromanaging can lead to rebellion when kids see their parents as the only supreme authorities. Children need multiple identity-shaping voices speaking in concert including: friends, coaches, teachers, their grades, their failures. Great parents help kids understand and assimilate all of this feedback through the years thus co-creating a healthy self-image.

Healthy parenting empowers kids to become self-aware and self-directed. It models the necessity of kids differentiating themselves from others (including parents). We should be terrified of hindering our children from becoming who they were designed to be, even if they’re extremely different from us. Our children are supposed to replace us in the future generation, not replicate us.

Pain & Consequences: Important Teachers

A child who is allowed to take risks and feel the pain of failure is being given developmentally appropriate challenges. She’s discovering her unique — and realistic — blend of strengths and weaknesses.

Kids need to experience the pain and consequences of developmentally appropriate risks and failures. But, they also need to process these experiences with parents who don’t say, “I told you so — you should’ve listened to me!” Discerning parents ask open-ended questions

full of curiosity: “How do you feel about that? Why do you think it didn’t work out? What did you learn for next time?” Lovingly processing a child’s successes and losses helps him form a realistic view of self.

However, children of codependent parents have much less experience with risk-taking and failure. They struggle to understand consequences and taking responsibility for their actions, as well as the importance of grieving their personal limitations.

Actions have consequences — you get out what you put in. If you don’t work hard, you don’t (shouldn’t) earn much. If you don’t show up for practice, then you can’t play the game. But understandably, parents may try to protect their children from consequences. Be willing to empathically hold your child in her pain. Good pain is her teacher.

Grieving our personal limitations is an essential tool in the maturity toolbox. We all need to realize that we’re not good at everything. And yet we’re still lovable and valuable. Children have the right to be crummy soccer players or uncoordinated ballerinas without being rescued from these experiences.

Mothering is such messy work and identity formation is no small task. We must be mindful of how we help and hinder our little ones in becoming the unique souls they were created to be. ☺

Kelley Gray, M.A., L.P.C., is thrilled to be recovering from codependency while managing her private counseling practice. She lives in Colorado with her husband and two girls. Follow her at kelleygray.com or on Twitter @kelleygray77.

☺ How about you? How do you feel when your children struggle or fail at something? Can you plan more margin in a few areas of your schedule to help your young children do some of their own self-care activities — since it’s always faster to do them yourself? Share with other moms what’s working for you in this area and ask for their ideas.

good question

Discuss as a family how each member is unique. Frame what you notice with an attitude of wonderment: “Jackson really likes big groups of people, and Daddy likes to visit with one friend at a time. Isn’t that neat how we’re all different? But we all care about treating our friends kindly. What other things do you notice about our differences?”

HOW TO:

Encourage your child’s identity to blossom

BY KELLEY GRAY, M.A., L.P.C.

1

FREQUENTLY ASK YOUR KIDS WHAT THEY THINK.

Don’t immediately answer their 239th “why” question. Turn the question around and see if they can figure out the answer. This helps them pause and grapple.

2

MODEL AND EXPLAIN THAT WE’RE ALL DIFFERENT.

Talk about physical differences between people and also the unique personalities we have. Don’t compare yourself to other adults. Point out the strengths of others.

3

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR SHORTCOMINGS.

Don’t pretend you have it all together. This subtly teaches kids it’s OK to explore their world — to try and fail many times before discovering their niche.

4

TRY NEW THINGS.

Provide diverse experiences and learning opportunities to reveal kids’ aptitudes and interests. And empathize with your kids during hard, new experiences. “Well that wasn’t super fun, huh?”

5

DON’T TRY TO TALK THEM OUT OF THEIR FEELINGS.

Express appreciation for how hard they’ve tried doing challenging things.

6

GET THEM THINKING.

Ask questions to encourage exploration: “What did you learn from that? Are you glad you tried? Was there anything fun about that experience?”

THE *whys* BEHIND MY LIES

BY CASSIDY DOOLITTLE

I GREW UP WATCHING my mother painstakingly save money and avoid my dad’s temper. She discreetly poured powdered milk back into the gallons, emptied ibuprofen into the Advil bottle and disguised ground turkey as hamburger. All of this was done with the greatest secrecy and always followed by, “Don’t tell your daddy.”

This became my “normal” and was reinforced so effectively because when Dad did happen to find out, his anger burned so loud and long that I learned her dance steps quickly.

So when I married after college, I unsurprisingly began practicing the same little deceits: Hiding a new skirt under the couch, covering up the coffee stain with a rug, blaming the dog for my broken glasses. When my husband discovered my cover-ups, he was floored, and at times angry. Not because of what I did, but because I was hiding something so trivial from him. I tried to scale it back and not “get in trouble” with him either.

Years went by without the lies, but last week whether from exhaustion or the stress of motherhood, I regressed. I accidentally bought a different brand of mayonnaise, and instead of just using this brand openly, I found myself scraping the mayo into the old container and quietly replacing it in the fridge.

The next time I made Steve a sandwich he said, “This mayo tastes weird. Is it the same kind?”

Panic. Armpit sweat. A too-easy lie. “Yeah, it’s the same kind.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes! It’s the same kind. Look at the jar.”

But his taste buds weren’t fooled. Instead of pressing the issue, he just looked at me for a long second then went back to eating his sandwich.

Yes! I had gotten away with it. I breathed a sigh of relief, but instantly felt choking regret.

I was lying to my husband about *mayonnaise*.

No. I wasn’t going to drag this baggage along for another minute of my marriage.

I took a shaky breath and told my husband the truth. He knew I had lied and was hurt and confused. What followed was a pretty emotional conversation about my past, my dad and the “whys” behind my lies.

By letting my husband in on what I was doing, he helped me see that my gut reaction to avoid scathing anger did not apply to him. He wasn’t my dad. He didn’t care about new skirts and coffee stains. He cared that we had an open and honest relationship ... even about mayonnaise.

My past beckons me to repeat what I saw and lived, but I’m striving to resist its whispers. And I know I can do this only because God’s words are stronger than my past and urge me to “forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead.”

What’s ahead is what I make the future, not what I was branded with as a child. I pull and push and fight against the temptation to give into my tendencies. As we restructure our family tree and create new, alive and thriving branches, the fight has never been more vital or more worth it to me. ☺

FLUSE/THINKSTOCK

☺ How about you? What are some family patterns that you grew up with but you don’t want to relive in your current family? Schedule time for an honest conversation with your spouse if you are married, to talk about any patterns you want to change. Share this article as a conversation-starter. Find a trusted friend to talk with and ask for support. If you have more serious patterns, ask your MOPS leaders if the church has counseling resources available.

Cassidy Doolittle is a psychiatric nurse turned SAHM who lives with her family in Texas and is involved in a local MOPS group.

MY STORY

messy and imperfect

BY DAWN GRIECO

THE MORNING WAS COLD and dark when I opened my eyes to my toddler climbing all over me, begging for breakfast. All I wanted to do was stay in bed. Eventually, I mustered the energy to get up and get dressed. It was a miracle that I even made it to MOPS that day.

That morning Margie opened up to our group about her struggle with postpartum depression. She spoke about realizing that getting out of bed wasn't supposed to be painfully difficult. She shared about how she overcame the shame of taking medication and her triumph over lifelong depression.

I heard myself in her story. And hope stirred within me. I realized I wasn't alone. Before the week was up, I called my doctor's office and began taking an antidepressant. The step of taking medication was admittance that I needed help. And this first step was hard for me.

The only person I had ever known to take an antidepressant was my father, who took his life when I was 19 years old. Because of my family history, I carried around a stigma most of my life about people who took medication. But Margie's vulnerability and willingness to share her experience helped me overcome my fears

WELL SAID

“
We can see God in our story, which is why we're called to be storytellers. To tell others the stories of our lives — about the things we've endured and survived, the areas where we've failed and succeeded, and the times we've questioned and doubted. Because in all of these stories, others can see what God has done for us.
And we can see it too.”

.....
by Caryn Rivadeneira,
from *Known and Loved* (Revell,
2013) available at MOPShop.org.



and take the steps to move forward with my own story. The next few months were marked by a calmness and stability that gave me the strength to willingly go back and look at my past.

My life changed when I realized that we all have struggles and no one has it all together, no matter how shiny the outside exteriors may appear. I saw my tendency to hide the messy, imperfect parts of me. And I found a way to open up about my insecurity as a wife and my fear of failure as a mom. I trusted the women around me with my broken heart that had never properly healed after losing my dad.

Attending MOPS that cold winter's day showed me how deeply I need community. And I learned the power of an individual story. Eventually I shared with the women in my group about how God was helping me deal with my past despair. And I spoke about the shameful parts of my life that were once unmentionable. Now I'm watching God turn my mess into a story of hope and encouragement.

.....
Dawn Grieco and her husband, Mark, have three children. She's served in many leadership roles at MOPS of Kennett Square, Pennsylvania.



MIKE WATSON IMAGES/THINKSTOCK

HONESTLY

TRUE TALES

JULIA DAVILA-LAMPE/GETTY IMAGES

be there

BY MANDY ARIOTO

IF YOU AND I WERE NEIGHBORS and shared regular cups of tea, cookies and conversation, you'd already know most of my secrets. You'd know that I only scrub the toilet if guests are coming over and that I can't stand talking on the phone because I'm terrified of awkward conversations. You'd also know that every once in a while, I feel restless — a feeling that comes upon me when things feel status quo and boring.

Sometimes this mothering gig can get boring. Monotonous. Like I'm living in a parenting version of "Groundhog Day." Breakfast, lunch, laundry, soccer, dinner, dishes, bedtime, repeat.

I love my kids so much that it hurts my guts. That. Much. And I wouldn't trade the opportunity to raise my three brilliant and beautiful human beings for anything in the world. I am, however, willing to admit that the rhythm of caring for small kids is demanding and repetitive.

Over my 12 years of bearing and caring for my kiddos, I've pursued other work alongside that role. And, I confess that the ordinary, no-frills tasks such as doing dishes, breaking up sibling fights and managing bedtime have proven to be the most challenging part of my work life. Not only because they're inherently difficult or unpleasant, but also I'm more susceptible to doubt the value of these ordinary tasks.

Enter restlessness. And the nagging feeling that I should be doing more, being more, that taunts me from the sidelines.

When the restlessness sneaks up on me, I try to remind myself of a conversation I had around a dinner table with five sage women whose current role in life was grandmothering. I spilled my guts to

them and exposed the secret I was afraid to share: *I was restless in more ways than one.* Restless because my children would not sleep unless I held them in my arms. Restless because mothering was hard and I longed for adventure and achievement.

They all nodded and smiled and then shared the truth that they all knew: I simply needed to choose to "be there." They reminded me to find the beauty and the importance in whatever moment or stage of life I found myself today.

The demands, limits and celebrations of life have varied greatly. There was the chapter where I juggled dating four different guys at a time with dismal results, or when I danced for a professional ballet company or when I could barely get out of bed after my dad died suddenly. Or my current chapter of raising three kids as a full-time working mom. Each stage of life has its own unique potential for restless wandering or wide-eyed embraces.

Today is an essential part of my current chapter. I'm reconciling my restlessness with the profound gift that I give to my kids each day by caring for their very real repetitive needs. And when I have the eyes to see, I become aware that pig tails and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and bedtime stories make the most beautiful "there" I've ever witnessed. Today is bursting with life and meaning. Even washing the dishes, which is sometimes hard for me to believe.

I'm choosing to make peace with the rituals of monotony. To not be so worried about my restlessness or what my travels or career will look like in five years. I'm choosing to "be there" in this stage of mothering, today.

Mandy Arioto is a mom of three who has transitioned from sippy cups to soccer games. She's learned that the best way to love her tribe is by loving herself.



SARAH DREW

MOTHER OF MICAH (1) // ACTRESS // FORMER PERFECTIONIST

You might recognize her from her role on “Grey’s Anatomy.” Now you also can see her in the new movie “Moms’ Night Out,” about mom friends who just want a peaceful grown-up evening, while their husbands watch the kids.

How similar is the “Moms’ Night Out” story to your own? The similarity is the journey that Allyson goes through in the film — she’s trying to do everything for everyone; she feels like she isn’t enough for anyone and that she’s a failure. My journey in my life is very similar — I’ve spent a lot of my life being a perfectionist and being held prisoner to this standard of perfection that I’m never going to live up to.

What happens in Allyson’s journey is that she comes to this place of freedom — even though it’s told in this fun, comedic way, there’s a deeper message. That resonates with my own experience. I have gone from a place of being owned by perfectionism, to letting go and learning to trust God.

How do you experience the mess in mothering?

One week Micah was refusing to eat — we would bribe and do everything we could think of. It was so stressful, and I took on too much of that stress. My husband, Peter, is more patient and graceful. I remember sitting at the table with Micah and trying to get him to eat — and I didn’t want to yell at Micah, so I yelled at my husband. “He’s just not eating; he’s just not going to do it.” And I remember Peter saying, “This is not my fault. I will eat what you put in front of me, don’t yell at me.” Sometimes the stress of parenting makes us snap at each other.

What does beauty in the mess mean in your own life?

I spent much of my life trying to do everything right and please everyone — my parents, my husband, my friends. Ultimately it was because I didn’t feel like I was loved by God — that’s why I was trying so hard to make sure everyone else loved me. In the process, I lost the actual sense of who I was because I would change my personality depending on who I was with. I would be a certain way for a certain person — because I knew they liked me that way.

I did a lot of therapeutic work over the last few years — before I had my son, Micah. I came to this place where I could see who I really was and understand how God designed me — I was specifically knit together in my mother’s womb. I’d been seeing myself through a liar’s eyes and had to move toward seeing myself through God’s eyes.

Talk about the beauty in mothering. Micah has forced me to slow down and live in the present. I spend a lot of time in the past or future — disconnected from now. He is so present in the moment — just staring at a hummingbird and how amazing it is. When I slow down and am present, it becomes the most glorious thing I have ever seen in my life.

And mothering has led to a depth of love that I never felt before — deep love, epic love.



Sarah Drew on the set of “Moms’ Night Out,” the new family comedy from AFFIRM Films and Provident Films, in theaters May 2014.

WHAT SHE SAID

BEST MOM TIP:
Sleep training — a sanity maker. Don’t get weak in the knees when kids cry. Our lives were transformed when our son could soothe himself back to sleep. We now have evenings together after he goes to bed.

3 WORDS FRIENDS USE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MOTHERING:
Scheduled, hopeful and chill

BEAUTY PRODUCT YOU CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT:
Chapstick, can’t stand dry lips

IF YOU COULD BE A COLOR OF CRAYON:
Purple — rich and majestic and queenly

FAVORITE BOOK:
Pride and Prejudice

MOM STORIES

HONESTLY

HELMETS FOR THE HOMELESS

BY WENDY HAGEN

MY 5-YEAR-OLD SON, Elijah, and I were cleaning up the playroom together. You know — the cluttered, toy-filled disaster that greets people the moment they walk in your front door? I believe some people call this space a living room. Weird. I asked Elijah what we should do with his huge and talkative Clone Trooper helmet.

“Elijah, you’re not really into Star Wars much these days. How about if we give this helmet to someone else?”

He said, “OK. Let’s give it to a homeless person.” Bless his heart.

Food? Nah. Shelter? Nope. Education? No thanks, but I would really love a Clone Trooper helmet.

I didn’t want to crush his thoughtful heart, so I said gently, “Well, I don’t know if any homeless person is going to want to cart this helmet around.”

A light bulb went off in his head, “Then let’s send it to Anthony in Kenya!” The kid really has a heart of gold, even if his ideas are not so practical.

So if you know any homeless or poor person who is in need of a helmet that says, “Cover Me!” “Sir — we’re taking heavy fire.” “All units — fire at will!” “The mission always comes first, Sir!” “I’m on my way.” “We’ve got you outnumbered!” “Green light. GO! GO! GO!” “I’ve got a baaaad feeling about this, Sir.” Please let me know.

And may the force be with you ... in your living room.

Wendy Hagen is a former child actress with no criminal record and author of Totally Desperate Mom. Visit her at wendyhagen.net.



FLUSE/THINKSTOCK

yes to the mess

BY STACY EDWARDS

YESTERDAY I WOKE UP with a sweet face just inches from mine. “It’s raining, Mama,” she whispered. “Can we go out on the deck and play in it?” I shook my head, “No.”

By mid-morning, the rain had stopped. But for the rest of the day, I was plagued with the thought, *Why couldn’t my kids play in the rain?* I ran through all of my reasons: *They would get all wet. That would mean a change of clothes, a.k.a. more dirty laundry. The carpet would get wet when they came back inside.* All of those things would probably be the result from playing in the rain. But what bothered me was that sometimes “No” is just my default response.

Sometimes, I say “No” because I tend to be an overly worrisome mom. *Can we run outside with bare feet?* “No.” After all, they may step on something sharp. They may slip and fall. Maybe they will stub a toe. Maybe aliens will visit our neighborhood and only steal the children whose mommies did not make them wear shoes.

Other times, I say “No” because it’s not convenient for me. *Can we play with our paints?* No. If we do that, I’ll have to gather all of the art supplies. Then, we will need to change into some different clothes. The baby will be trying to get into everything. And afterwards I’ll need to clean the brushes and stuff.

Then there are times I’ll say “No,” just because. (My daughters just came to the door and asked for some chocolate. I said, “No,” without a second thought.)

I need to give “Yes” a try. Yes to staying up beyond bedtimes. Yes to blanket forts in the living room. Yes to playing outside with the kids and ignoring the laundry for a little while. Yes to playing in the rain.

I have to go, now. I need to get my kids some chocolate.

Stacy Edwards is a trucker’s daughter, a pastor’s wife, a freelance writer and mom to four girls ages 1-9. Find her at servantslife.com.

ENHANCE YOUR DAILY DEVO

Chosen by women for women, **The Message: SOLO Women’s Devotional**

features 180 relevant topics designed to enhance your daily interaction with God’s Word and includes a journal to express timeless lessons of faith.



NAV PRESS
www.navpress.com

Available at bookstores everywhere

QUIZ

TAKE CARE OF YOU

1. Best temperature for a shower ...
A As hot as possible
B Warm
C Cool
D Shower? When do I fit that in?
2. Best stress-reliever ...
A Doing something creative
B Eating chocolate
C An intense workout
D Time alone
3. Ideal amount of sleep ...
A Sleep, who sleeps?
B 4–6 hours
C 7–9 hours
D 10+ hours
4. Best energy-rich breakfast food ...
A Breakfast bar
B Protein shake
C Oatmeal
D Leftovers on my kid's plate

ANSWERS

1. B A hot shower can strip your skin of oil and lead to dry, itchy skin. Use warm water and a moisturizer after your shower.
2. All of the above, but go easy on the chocolate.
3. C Adults do best with 7–9 hours each night. Try napping when kids nap.
4. B Protein shakes provide energy boosts. Add in low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese for extra energy.

HERE'S WHAT I KNOW

MY HEALTH MATTERS

“Tell me what you ate for breakfast today.” A simple question, but nevertheless one that irritated me. My doctor was standing with her hand on her hip looking accusingly at me over her glasses.

“Uh, breakfast. Well, I thought about it,” I said.

I could tell my answer didn't thrill her. “Don't you work for an organization that works with moms? What do you tell them about eating healthy and taking time for themselves? Do you ever suggest eating a decent breakfast?” she asked.

Oh for crying out loud, I thought. I had come in for a routine checkup because I was having trouble sleeping and generally feeling lousy. I hadn't come in for a lecture.

I had to admit though, she had a point. How can I run an organization that helps women be the best they can be and not pay attention to my own needs? I squirmed in my paper gown.

The doctor tapped impatiently on her clipboard and waited for my answer. But I didn't have a good one. Then she pushed me by talking about two things: decision and roadmap.

Decision. I know what healthy eating is, and I know rest and exercise are important. I also know the power of margin in my life and what it feels like to be running on empty. So why do I allow my busy life to run the show? It's not lack of knowledge or know-how. It takes a moment of definite decision when I say, “That's it. I'm changing this.” Sharing this moment with a friend is a great start.

Roadmap. As a kid, we'd always go on vacation by car. My dad had his trusty roadmap by his side with the correct route already mapped out. He knew when to take each turn. This applies directly to my plan of self-care too. I need to have a plan, preferably one that's written down, reasonable, makes sense and predicts my probable success.

The big question: *How important is my health to me?* If my health really doesn't matter to me, then I can just keep doing what I'm doing. But if it does matter, I have all of the tools to do something about it. And so do you.

So are you with me? I'm throwing down the gauntlet of indecision and lack of planning and getting serious about taking care of me. I'm starting with breakfast (not a banana in the car) and taking a few minutes every day just to sit quietly and recharge (not while catching up on email).

God gave me this one and only life (and my one and only body) and I'm not wasting one more day.



Sherry

Sherry Surratt
CEO and President,
MOPS International
Follow me @SherrySurratt

How about you? Talk about this with your MOPS friends — what would your doctor say to you about self-care? What decisions do you need to make? How can you help each other with a roadmap? Don't try to change everything at once, pick one area of focus for a healthier you!

You, mom, are a financial powerhouse.



Moms play an important role in the financial lives of their families. As a mom, whether you work in or out of the home, you are a guiding force in your family's finances and your economic contributions impact your family today, tomorrow, and for many tomorrows to come.

You have the world's most important job – being a mom.

You are invited!

Enjoy free resources and custom offerings crafted to help you with the money side of motherhood.



PREPARE guides

How-to guides on a variety of topics to help you learn the basics today so that you can plan confidently for tomorrow.



Shine™: Worksite coverage for the most important job – being a mom

A unique offer available exclusively to MOPS members that combines term life insurance and disability income insurance.



Live intentionally, Learn simply, & Work purposefully

An assortment of tips, tools, articles and resources designed to address real life questions and concerns related to money.

Visit brightpeakfinancial.com/MOPS



A CHRISTIAN NOT-FOR-PROFIT DIVISION OF THRIVENT FINANCIAL

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, based in Appleton, WI 54919, is the issuer and underwriter for brightpeak financial products which are only available in CO, GA, IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, NE, NV, OH, PA, TN, WA & WI. Visit brightpeakfinancial.com/disclaimers to learn more.

MEMBERSHIP is ... **THE** state OF belonging
MEMBERSHIP holds something **BIGGER** > than ourselves
being **A PART** OF AN INTERNATIONAL **COMMUNITY** OF MOMS.
MEMBERSHIP is a catalyst 4 positive CHANGE ;
Leading MOMS 2 Discover hope* **FILLED** INSIGHT &
WE **ARE NOT** ALONE **IN THE** Journey OF **MOTHERHOOD**.

MOPS MEMBERSHIP LEADS WOMEN TO **jump** IN &
Know brave is always **WORTH IT** **MEMBERSHIP** SAYS
moms NEED mom **Friends** & **THE** **WISDOM** OF **Mom**
MENTORS. **MEMBERSHIP** tells moms you
ARE NOT just here **BUT** Here **FOR** **A** **PURPOSE**