



A Letter to the Expectant Mama

9 True Clichés About Motherhood

by Christa Melnyk Hines

Dear Mom-to-Be,

Baby showers bring a host of instructions from seasoned moms and well-meaning friends. As a new mom, I grew weary of hearing input like “sleep when the baby sleeps.” And, since I stubbornly refused to heed this sage advice, I suffered from sleep-deprivation-induced, splitting headaches as a result.

As part of our global sisterhood, moms can relate to certain universal truths about motherhood, even as all of this advice starts to sound clichéd. Here are a few truths that not only help with life in general, but with parenthood in particular.

“This too shall pass.” When you find yourself rocking a colicky baby at all hours, this comforting mantra is like a blinking light of hope beckoning you forward. In fact, I still whisper this oft-spoken phrase to myself in times of stress, and it hasn’t let me down yet.

“I get by with a little help from my friends.” Don’t underestimate the value of a supportive network of mommy friends. Take it from me, connecting with other moms offers a pressure release valve when you need to talk out your worries and frustrations, much to the relief of your frequently called-on pediatrician.

“The days are long, but the years are short.” When steering through a tearful toddler tirade or slogging through sick days, you’ll want for nothing more than the clock to skip ahead to a less exhausting time or place. When well-meaning

individuals would tell me, “Enjoy these days...they go so fast,” I wanted to give them a swift kick in the derriere. But I understand why they said it. Those long days are somehow swiftly becoming bittersweet memories.

“Mother knows best.” Know your own heart and mind. I recall standing in line at the store with my two-week-old son who slept safe and sound in his baby carrier. “What a tiny baby,” said an elderly woman behind me. “How old is he?” When I told her, her voice hardened. “In my day, I wouldn’t have left the house until he was at least six-weeks-old.” As a sensitive new mom, admonishments like this bothered me despite following doctor’s recommendations.

“Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.” You will gain a new respect and appreciation for individuality and the word “quirky.” Many kids have curious interests. My son has loved cars since he was two. Not sexy sports cars, mind you. Cars like the 1988 Ford Taurus station wagon and the AMC Gremlin make his socks go up and down.

“Keep calm and carry on.” Your ability to remain calm in crisis may surprise you. I learned this about myself when my youngest was three. Across the room he chirped, “Look at me, Mommy!” I looked over to see him grinning while hanging upside down like a bat from the top of the oak mantle of our stone fireplace. “You need to get down,” I said coolly to avoid any sudden movements on his part. I swiftly walked toward him and lifted him down. I still shudder, imagining his brains splattered across the rough-hewn gray stonework below.



“Being a mother is the world’s hardest job.”

Emotionally-charged days with screaming kids may drive you to retreat behind closed doors, curl up in a fetal position and sob. You may tell yourself that mothering is too hard, and you aren’t getting any of it right. But surrender isn’t an option. You’ll pick yourself up, throw cold water on your face and get back out there. This is good time to call an understanding friend for moral support.

“No guts, no glory.” On especially exasperating days, you might fantasize about packing up and abandoning this motherhood mess you got yourself into. But you won’t run away. Children have the distinctive talent of breaking and repairing your heart daily. You won’t think twice about accepting their viselike hugs and sloppy kisses. You’ll tuck sentimental notes away for safekeeping that sing your praises in childish scrawl, gussied up with stick people holding hands.

“Put on your own oxygen mask first.” While pregnant with my son, my doctor and loved ones concerned themselves with how I was feeling. The minute my son arrived on the scene, he naturally became the center of our universe. I forgot how much I still needed to nourish my body and spirit if I was going to be an emotionally stable and healthy mother. Getting out the house, taking walks, joining a supportive moms group and returning to my interests reduced my anxiety levels and helped me feel more content.

As you prepare to dive into the thick of motherhood, you’ll find these sayings will gently assimilate themselves neatly among life’s forthcoming milestones, tragedies and triumphs. And sooner or later, you’ll turn to congratulate a new mom and out will pop the words you swore you’d never say, “Enjoy these days. They go so fast.”

*Freelance writer Christa Melnyk Hines is the mom of two boys. She is the author *Confidently Connected: A Mom’s Guide to a Satisfying Social Life*, a resource for moms seeking asylum from isolation and an out-of-whack social life.*



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