

EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY:

Becoming a mom

BY CARA MAKSIMOW

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Since many of us were little girls, we dreamed of being a mommy. Personally, I would practice for hours caring for my baby dolls by feeding them, brushing their hair, cuddling them and protecting them from my annoying sibling. I had baby names picked out since before I even hit puberty. All of those hours romanticizing led to expectations of one day being the perfect mom.

We had so many opinions on how to parent long before we had children. Let's be real, we've all witnessed someone else's children acting up and thought to ourselves how we'd do things differently. Parenting looked so easy before we became parents. I remember those judgmental thoughts that would pop into my head about a mom out in public whose kids were out of control. That would never be me. Right?

And then I actually had kids.

Expectations not matching up to reality start early. After all, look at all the celebrity moms with adorable little baby bumps that become runway ready after what seems like no time at all. The increase in bra size and an excuse to eat more because it is "for the baby" seems like a dream come true.

That is until the hemorrhoids, leg cramps, and bra burn started to happen. Yes, bra burn. It happened to me. The last month or so of pregnancy I was tortured by the pain that came from the rubbing of my underwire bra between my baby belly and my breasts. I could not wait to get home from work every day to take off my bra just to be able to breathe. I definitely did

not expect that to happen!

So now you are a mom. Expectations of rainbows, sunshine and puppy dogs right? Your baby sleeps, eats and poops on a beautiful schedule. Well, at least that's what all the books say. You nap when the baby naps and you have all the time in the world to cuddle and nurture and savor the early months of bonding. All of that is there, you will have beautiful moments of bonding and bliss for sure, but let us not forget the spit up, dirty diapers, sleep deprivation and crying spells (you and the baby).

The reality is, you are no longer in control. From the moment you get pregnant that baby has taken a priority in your life. Delusions of perfection fly right out the window and that leaves many of us with frustration, and well, mommy guilt.

The good news is you're not alone. Even better news; perfection is not the answer. The reality is so much more interesting than the expectation. You are human. And along with being human comes imperfections and flaws that figure themselves out through trial and error every single day.

When our expectations don't match our reality, we start to wonder what we are doing wrong. The answer is nothing.

Being a mom is hard. You will make plenty of mistakes along the way. The problem isn't the messy, stinky, loud and chaotic reality of motherhood. The problem is we expect it to be different. When our expectations don't match our reality, we start to wonder what we are doing wrong. The answer is nothing.

You are embarking on a journey filled with boogers, crap and a whole lot of humility, but most of all, adventure and love. Embrace it, expect it and forgive the imperfections.

Here's an excerpt from the opening of my book "Lose that Mommy Guilt, Tales and Tips from an Imperfect Mom"

"As the baby grows the mommy guilt grows. It doesn't matter how good of a mom you are, you will find a way to beat yourself up over something.

I am here to say that it does not have to be that way. As moms we are amazing

and we don't recognize it enough. The next time you find yourself in an emotional place and the mommy guilt starts to grow—stop and breathe. Remind yourself that you can do this. It will be okay.

All moms feel mom guilt, some more than others. We all want to be perfect. Guess what—you will be far from perfect and that's okay. You got this. You do not need to let perfect get in the way of amazing parenting."

So remember to embrace the spit up stain on your blouse, toys covering your living room floor and the middle of the night feedings because, trust me, they will be gone sooner than you realize. For all those mummies out there just know you are amazing, fantastic, human and real. ■

***For more stories and tips on topics from breastfeeding and play-dates to food allergies and head-lice check out the new book, "Lose that Mommy Guilt, Tales and Tips from an Imperfect Mom."**

