

Confessions of a not-so-Supermum

We mums can easily become discouraged. I mean, have you ever looked at other mums around you and felt that their lives were ... well ... just a bit more together than yours? Have you looked on Facebook and admired their glorious pictures of family country walks or educational craft afternoons while you, in comparison, feel a sense of achievement when you get dressed before lunchtime or indeed manage to drink a cup of tea that is even lukewarm, let alone hot?

If so, I know how you feel. There have been times when I have felt awash with guilt and envy as watching other peoples' toddlers nibbling on celery and hummus, while knowing that mine would put the whole plate of food in the bin if the fish-fingers and bread even touched each other! And as for sleeping habits! My daughter would only sleep for a few hours, with a rainbow of dummies planted around her for her to grab, while my friends apparently had night-time all sewn up, leaving them with enough energy for a programme of swimming, Zumba and skinny jeans rediscovery.

At one point I decided that enough was enough – I, too, would be an elite and fabulous Supermum! I, too, would surround myself with paints and library books. I, too, would have perfectly ironed towels, manicured nails and meaningful hobbies, while faultlessly balancing my well-dressed children with my exciting career.

I confess that this Supermum phase of my life lasted about a week.

I knew the dream was well and truly over when we invited a family over for a tea of bangers and mash. I was in the kitchen stabbing sausages and liberally distributing potato over the worktops, when I heard one of my small children tell our guests, "Don't worry about knowing when dinner is ready. We always know, because the smoke alarm goes off!"

As I laughed at my own ridiculous pretensions, I couldn't help but wonder who I was trying to impress, and why?

How easily we can create in our minds the image of a superhero mother – a combination of different TV personalities and chefs, the best bits of our fabulous friends and numerous inspirational creatures in magazine articles.

In the process, we set completely unrealistic expectations for ourselves. Perhaps it is no surprise that we sometimes feel inadequate, but it's such a shame that we can be so much harder on ourselves than we are on anybody else.

The truth is that most of us are not bad mothers; we are just busy mums doing our best. Which is why we all need to regularly find time to have relationships where we feel safe and accepted, and where we decide not to compete with or judge each other through our children. We all need friends with whom we can learn to enjoy, rather than just endure, the rollercoaster of parenthood. We need friends who will treat us sensitively and accept us for who we are. We need to be able to help each other to feel good about what we can do, and to laugh a little at how crazy our lives often are.

What mum wouldn't feel a little bit more 'super' with support like that? And with each kind word we say to another mum, we all have the power to make it make it possible.



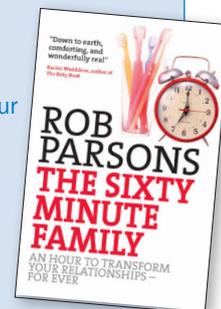
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Cathy Madavan

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