

Finding joy in the journey of motherhood

I absolutely love watching my daughter grow. She is 3½ years old. Every day for her is one big adventure and I get to go along for the journey, and provide the oversight! Of course, parenting is certainly no walk in the park and so I'm having to find creative skills that I never knew existed. For example, how do you get a toddler to willingly brush their teeth when they are refusing to do so ... every day?



My own personal journey of motherhood hasn't always been straightforward. When I found out I was pregnant, I was in the hospital for the second time about to undergo further surgery after a lumpectomy a few months earlier. As part of the standard pre-op tests I was asked to do a pregnancy test. It came back positive! The poor nurse was terrified to convey the result, as she had no idea whether this news would be welcome or a devastating blow. One moment I was preparing to go into surgery with all the uncertainty that brings and the next I was given this momentous but amazing news! It was almost too much to comprehend but, after several years of waiting, with no assurance we would ever fall pregnant, we had been given the news we longed for.

As a result, the surgery was put on hold. I was kept under a watchful eye because the operation would need to go ahead should the pregnancy not have progressed. Thankfully it did and, at six months, I was able to back to hospital for the second procedure. At the same time our home was in the middle of a major modernisation project. It was full speed ahead in that department and we just managed to carpet the upstairs by the time the baby arrived.

I found the first couple of years being a first time mum exhausting. Looking back that shouldn't have come as a surprise. In fact writing this article has helped me understand why I found it all so difficult. Having had to face a variety of procedures to deal with breast cancer, and all the effects on my body that brought, all the while working flat out on the house and then for a newborn to arrive – what was I expecting?! I went into complete survival mode for over two years and had little to no capacity for much else. My bedtime became 9.00pm every night. Friends said it would get easier but after a year and a half it didn't feel like that to me! I began to wonder whether I was a total wimp.

During those first couple of tough years there were moments of joy despite all the day-in-day-out demands. For example, I remember the day when I had built my daughter's mobile for her cot. She sat in her cot looking interestingly at it, but when the music started and the animals rotated her little face just lit up. She began to reach for each animal with her unsteady arms and little hands, giggling as each one passed right by her nose. That remains such a precious memory.

Everyone's journey is so different but what I have learnt is that, as hard as it feels at the time, it is so important to savour those wonderful little moments of joy – even when you feel at your wits' end. Knowing that it *does* eventually get easier helps too.



Care for the Family's aim is to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties.

Care for the Family, Garth House, Leon Avenue, Cardiff, CF15 7RG
Tel: 029 2081 0800 Email: mail@cff.org.uk Web: www.careforthefamily.org.uk
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