

It's just a phase

In 2017, mum and Instagrammer, Sharon Hankes, took to social media to remind parents everywhere that:

On the days you feel like you can't make it, just remember you can. And that this is just a season in life. You blink and they are 8. Then 28. And then they are parents, resembling a you, you once were. So take it in, mama. Let them climb into bed with you any hour of the night. Sing that song they requested for the 10th time. Hold them a little tighter when all they want is to shower with you and feel your skin against theirs. Maybe in raising children you lose your mind a little bit. But, boy, do you find your soul! Embrace the exhaustion. The overwhelming. The hard days. And all the joy.



These words are perhaps a response to the notion, understood by parents of toddlers the world over, that “the days (and nights) are long, but the years are short”. The early years of parenting are a paradox of a seemingly endless run of sleepless nights and “will they ever...?” moments alongside life changing so quickly. One minute they're the tiny newborn in your arms and the next, they're a walking, talking toddler with their own ideas and opinions.

The truth is, it is all just a series of phases, some of which you'd love to last longer than others. So how do we savour the fleeting moments, while not losing our heads in the long, long nights?

For the phases that seem to last too long

Whether it's watching your 49th episode of *Fireman Sam* in one morning, or finding an unexpected, small, wriggly visitor in your bed for the can't-remember-how-many-nights-it-is-now, how can you more than just survive the more tiresome, trying seasons?

- **Talk to other parents.** There is huge support in community. Parents who walk a few steps ahead of us are a wonderful source of support, encouragement and advice. No matter what struggle you are currently facing, there will be others who have experienced the same sleepless nights, testing tea times or squabbles over the toys. They will be able to offer you some practical advice and an arm around the shoulder.
- **Seek help.** Sometimes more expert advice is needed, whether from the GP, childcare providers or health visitors. Whether it is to help you address particular challenges with your child, or to help you manage the stress that these tricky phases may cause, never be afraid to seek guidance from the professionals.
- **Remind yourself that it really is just a phase.** This may sound obvious, but it can help to put things into perspective to take the long view. Reminding yourself that no child ever left high school sucking on their soother can help to remind you that “this too shall pass”. Honestly, it really *won't* always be this way.



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

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- **For the phases that pass in the blink of an eye**

There were tears in our house the day 'Pobbus' was more accurately named 'Thomas' for the first time; another symbol that our tiny human was growing up and changing. Sometimes we would love to press the pause button and remain in the moment forever, yet time marches on. So how do we savour those beautiful moments?

- **Slow down, pause and enjoy the moments.** Sometimes it helps to stand still, breathe in the moment and create photographic memories in your mind. Remember, they won't always want to hear the story of the little red engine –so tell it one more time, absorbing the way their hand rests on your lap as you do so. You'll both remember such moments in years to come.
- **Create a record.** Whether it's a journal of the funny things they said, a photo album of candid shots or videos of natural, unrehearsed family interactions, capturing a record of precious moments gives you something to enjoy long after this phase has passed.
- **Remember to look forward too.** There are many different phases still to come for you to enjoy together with your child, as they continue to grow and develop with you.

It really is all a phase. Try to remember this in the middle of the long nights, and look for the things that cause you to smile in each new day.



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