



Insights from the hood
(Parenthood, that is) / 10

Description

How parenting changes us – The good, the bad, the ugly

By **Mona Andrei**

Isn't it odd the way that once we become parents, we suddenly notice how everyone around us, including the neighbour's dog, seems to be better at it than we are?

I'm not even kidding. When my first-born was two and a half years old, that neighbour's dog had a litter of puppies. She loved to lie on her owner's back deck with her head held high while her well-behaved puppies contentedly snuggled up against her. Meanwhile my kid was throwing a tantrum because it was time to come in for her nap. Momma dog had seven offspring under control. I was barely managing my one. She felt superior. I could see it on her face.

Not only did I feel inadequate in my parenting abilities, but things started coming out of my mouth that I never thought I would say.

The ugly

Stop wiping your runny nose on my pants.

What are your toys doing in the cat's litter box?

No, you can't wear your Superman cape as a winter jacket.

Did you wipe your bum?

Okay. Who bedazzled the shower curtain?

Before I had children I was chill and carefree, I swear. And then I became a mother and suddenly it was like I had to instil all these rules or the world, including my house and sanity, would fall apart.

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The bad

The other thing that happens to us when we become parents is that we lose a little bit of our confidence. I'm thinking that this is because with new responsibilities, comes the opening of the door to advice – wanted and unwanted – from everyone we come into contact with. It's as though we're wearing a t-shirt that says, "I just had a baby and lost all my common sense. Please tell me how to be a human."

And for a while we go along with it. We listen to our parent's advice on discipline. We sit quietly as our in-laws tell us about the importance of maintaining a strict bedtime routine. We even pay attention to what the older ladies at the grocery store have to say about teething and it's many surprise symptoms such as diaper rashes and sleepless nights.

Since becoming a mother, I've received more advice on how to parent than on any other topic. And it seems that the more people have told me how I should (or shouldn't) do something, the more I felt like I wasn't managing well at all. From "don't let her play with sticks, she'll poke out her eyes" to "he should just do what he's told, without you having to negotiate with him."

This is because when everyone has an opinion on you, your kids, and your parenting, you begin to question yourself on EVERYTHING.

Is 7 pm too early to put them to bed?

Should I make her eat all her supper or is saying "two more bites" letting her get away with it?

How much computer time is too much before his brain turns into mashed potatoes?

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The good

Then comes a time when you realize that everyone telling you how to parent is making you question your own sense of self. This is when you decide that all the interference has to stop.

You're polite, of course. You still listen (or rather, let them talk), but you begin to pay attention to how what they're saying resonates with your own principles and values.

And then you remember that no one knows your kid more than you.

"Play with sticks? Of course you can play with sticks," you say as you recognize that sticks are a great way to get them to play outside with their own imagination. (And besides, has anyone ever really poked their eyes out because they were playing with sticks?)

"How about if you wear your cape over your winter jacket," you rationalize as you think to yourself: *Why the heck can't he wear a cape in public? And where's my cape???*

'... you begin to use your own wings and learn to accept that sometimes you'll even make mistakes. And guess what? That's okay. After all, our parents made mistakes and we turned out okay.'



All in all, becoming a parent is a process of noticing a change in the things that come out of your mouth, losing a bit of your confidence, and realizing that you've perhaps misplaced some pieces of yourself.

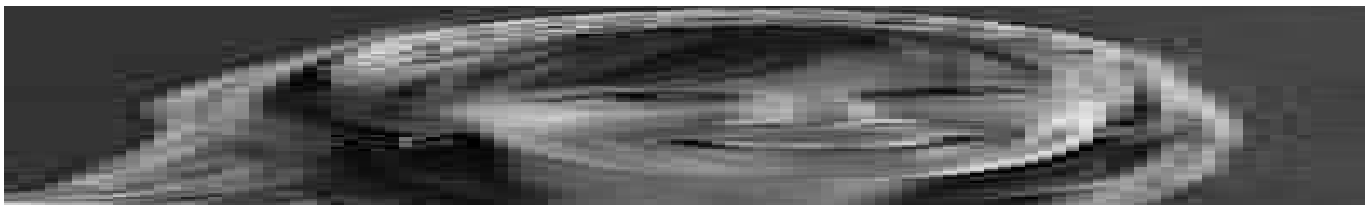
And just as you start to come to terms with all of this, you begin to use your own wings and learn to accept that sometimes you'll even make mistakes. And guess what? That's okay. After all, our parents made mistakes and we turned out okay.

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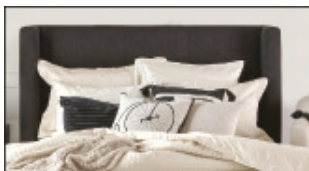
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Mona Andrei is a writer and top 100 humour blogger. Her personal blog, [Moxie-Dude.com](#), is where she writes about life update gone wrong. Or right. She's undecided. This article is an excerpt from her book, *SUPERWOMAN: A Funny and Reflective Look at Single Motherhood* (Cynren Press), which will be available later this year. You can follow her on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



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Date Created

February 2019