



Insights from the hood
(Parenthood, that is) / 6

Description

In retrospect

By **Mona Andrei**

Have you ever noticed how certain events – no matter how insignificant they may seem at the time – stick to your memories like socks to a towel after you’ve taken them out of the dryer?

Sometimes I wonder if these apparent random events don’t have a deeper meaning and that’s why they stay with us.

Having reached “this age”, I have a lot of memories and there’s this one memory in particular that I think about often but don’t know why.

Have you ever noticed how certain events... stick to your memories like socks to a towel after you’ve taken them out of the dryer?

My eldest daughters, about four and seven at the time, were playing in the alley behind our home. I was sitting on the balcony of our third-floor apartment watching them when all of a sudden, my youngest took a hard tumble while running. No one pushed her. I think her little legs just couldn’t keep up with her intentions to be the first one to get to the tree. They were playing tag, and the tree was home base.

Naturally, she started crying (actually it was more like WAILING) and I remember running down the fire escape to get to her as quickly as possible. This part of the memory is vague but I may have flown down those stairs.

“I hurt my kneeeeeeess,” she said as I picked her up.

I need to pause here as the memory of her, so small and sweet, sits heavy in my chest. How I miss my kids when they were young and still mine.



That moment when a heavy pang of longing creeps into your chest while you're writing about your kids when they were young and still yours.

ENJOY THEM WHILE YOU CAN.

(Not yelling. Okay. Maybe I'm yelling a bit.)

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Life updates gone wrong. Or right. I'm undecided.

As I carried her up the winding staircase to clean her up, I remember her tiny arms wrapped around my neck as she sobbed into my shoulder.

Once we reached our apartment, I sat her down on the bathroom counter and gently dabbed at her scraped knees with a damp washcloth. She continued to cry. To the neighbours, I was probably sticking toothpicks into her fresh scrapes. I wasn't.

Nothing I said seemed to calm her down. Devastation had swallowed her whole. Finally, I decided to take another approach.

"It's a good thing you have those knees", I said as I focused on gently spreading a disinfectant across the cuts. "Otherwise you would have fallen on your nose and THAT would have hurt even more."

That's when the crying stopped. She looked at me for several thoughtful seconds then pushed herself off the counter and ran back outside to continue playing with the neighbourhood kids.

Why does that memory haunt me so?

I can't answer that, although I do have theories.

'To say that I miss the little girl that used to fit in my lap is an understatement.'

Today this daughter is exactly 29 and a half. In six months she'll turn 30 years old. To say that I miss the little girl that used to fit in my lap is an understatement.

I miss her soapy smell after a bath. I miss her little-girl voice and bubbly laugh. I miss her long stream of questions. And yes, I even miss the whining and the crying. I miss her innocence and unwavering trust in me, even when I was tired and frustrated and yelling when I probably shouldn't have been.

I miss everything about that little girl. Her crabby mornings and good night hugs. The pink bathrobe she loved and continued to wear long after she had outgrown it. I miss the way she would say she wasn't hungry for supper but then ask for cookies. I miss how she would ask, "what's for yunch?" when she was hungry, regardless of the time of day, and the way she would carefully wrap a fallen tooth in tissue and place it under her pillow for the tooth fairy.



I miss all that.

I know that our kids are our kids, whether they're two, 22, or 32. But now that I've gone through all the stages and can reflect back, I think about how I was torn between a parental need to shelter them and a knowing that I had to encourage them to grow into independent and self-reliant individuals.

Like many young parents (because, I too, was young at one time), I remember questioning myself throughout my kids' entire childhoods.

'Looking back on that day, I'm glad she had the gumption and courage to want to go back out 'into the world' to play with her friends.'

Was I too matter-of-fact that time she fell and scraped her knees? Should I have been more affectionate and let her indulge in her crying a little longer?

Should I have coddled her in a "blankie" and insist that she stay in the house with me for the rest of the afternoon, instead of letting her go back outside?

Looking back on that day, I'm glad she had the gumption and courage to want to go back out "into the world" to play with her friends.

Secretly though, I wish I had made a bigger deal of her scraped knees. I wish I had wrapped her up in a blanket and snuggled on the couch with her.

I wish I could breathe in the soft scent of baby soap on her skin, just one more time.

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From Mona Andrei's forthcoming book, **SUPERWOMAN: Confessions of a Single Mom**, a funny, messy, reflective look at single motherhood

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Mona Andrei is a digital copywriter, writer, and social media strategist with over 20 years of

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