

Mothering Takes Guts by Raelee Peirce

It's true, everyone has good mothering days and bad mothering days. There are definitely times that are worse between you and your child - when you feel drained by the daily tasks of keeping up with clutter, providing nutritious meals that require coaxing and prodding in order to be eaten, and stretching for patience when there's crying or whining over everything.

You know that wave of overwhelm at the end of the day when you take in the full picture of parenting and you feel like a failure or that there must be something you're missing because this is so much harder than you imagined. Why does it look like everyone else is adjusting so easily to this life of pretend play, marathon afternoons at parks, and getting used to a low roar from sunrise to sunset?

How wonderful it would be to push the "stop" button on this merry-go-round of mothering for awhile, jump off to sit quietly, alone, close your eyes and take a deep breath and just have some time of reflection, clarity, and respite.

Where can you begin in shifting your experience of mothering from one of hardship and struggle to one of satisfaction and contentment?

1. Acknowledge that mothering is a spiritual task. It requires you to develop your [character qualities](#) more than applying an intellectual skill set.

2. Know that the character qualities that are needed to parent well are within you. Some of these qualities may be more developed than others, but all of them are there, lying in potential. You are capable of being gentle, patient, loving, compassionate, confident, self-disciplined, responsible, orderly, joyful, enthusiastic, peaceful, and assertive.

3. Appreciate what you do well. Mothers overwhelm themselves with their failings and their shortcomings, never noticing and praising themselves for the things they do well.

Perhaps you keep an orderly home,
or you're very creative with your children,
or you have a gift for finding the humor in things each day,
or your children are very secure because of your confidence,
or you are good at following through with consequences rather than threatening,
or you make a mean pancake breakfast,
or you are wonderfully affectionate,
or maybe you have an incredibly loving marriage,
or you find strength in your faith,
or you have found a supportive tribe of mamas,
or you know how to ask for help...

Whatever your gifts, talents, and abilities, however small, give yourself credit. One way to do

this for yourself is to see it in another mom. Think of one of your favorite mama friends, call her up and tell her something you love about her. It's even more powerful when you can attach it to a character quality.

"Jen, I was just thinking about you and thought I would call you up to tell you what a loving friend and mother you are. We don't tell each other this kind of stuff often enough and it may sound weird, but I want you to know that I see your compassion and hear your kind words toward your kids and it really is great to have you as a friend and role model of those qualities."

4. Change your attitude. It's so easy to complain and do a half-ass job at something you find mundane or somehow not fulfilling *enough*.

Have you become negative about being a mom? Or have you become overly critical of yourself or of your child? Becoming cynical, negative, and jaded about motherhood is very culturally acceptable right now. It's cool to hate this job.

Somehow it's believed that if you find any joy in creating a home of rhythm and nourishing yourself and your family through order, healthy meals, and being a primary caregiver than you must be a simple, uneducated, unambitious "housewife."

Certainly I'm not suggesting that you suddenly exclaim that being a mom or being home is "just the most wonderful thing that has ever happened" to you or even "amazing" or remotely enjoyable at times. It's about embracing something that is different and that is pulling and pushing at you on a deeper level than you've, perhaps, experienced.

Anything in life that poses a challenge is *your* spiritual work.

But this can be a unique time for you to nurture qualities within yourself that may otherwise have never been developed. It's a time for you to go inward, to pull closer to yourself, your spouse, your children, your home, your faith.

Perhaps you thought you always knew yourself, knew your talents and skills prior to becoming a mother. I'm suggesting that knowing who you really are, knowing your strengths and your areas of growth, are just now surfacing. Don't run away from the chance to grow and learn from the process.

5. See each day as practice for staying in the moment. The world today is about the past or about the future, but rarely about the here and now. Being a mom of young children is all about the present.

Sure, you can spend the next 5-7 years remembering the past before you had children or you can spend it thinking about "when you get your life back" and return to work or when the kids are in school full-time.

Or you can take a breath, relax, and be present to the little ones needing you right now. When you read them a story, listen to the words and enjoy it along with them. When you give them a

bath, acknowledge that those little legs and arms will be big before you know it. Be in it. Be an active participant of your own mothering experience.

A good mom is not a mom who has found her passion in caring for small children, baking bread, and growing organic basil. A good mom *is* a woman who has the guts to grow from the journey.