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:Issue #8:



Start . . .

This issue represents the first year of "My Mother Wears Combat Boots," a monthly column written for *Maximum Rock N Roll*. The column first appeared in the September 2001 issue and is still goin' strong. Hopefully it will get stronger with your input. By reprinting the columns, I hope to reach people who might not ever get their hands on an issue of MRR. They have been edited only slightly as to adapt to having them all together in zine format instead of the sepatated, monthly column format.

I am one of those "a lot of people" who are out of the loop of "traditional" parenting. Choosing a different life and parenting style, in the face of the mainstream pressures and expectations that dictate whether you are a "good" or "bad" mother, itself dictates a need for support and networking with others who have similar, progressive views.

Do you have anything to say about food choices, breastfeeding vs. formula, vaccinations, disposable vs. cloth diapering, funny baby shit stories, money (or lack thereof) issues, work vs. stay-at-home, gender coding issues, touring and kids at shows? If you've got a kid, you know the topic list is endless, just like your responsibilities.

If you do, drop a line. It'd be cool to have more voices in the column (and a future book project) than just my own talking about how fabulous, amazing, cute and rockin' my own baby is. Plus, even though she's all that and more, I still sometimes feel overwhelmed, depressed and disconnected from my beloved punk community and need to hear some other punkmoms' perspectives on all that is punkmamahood.

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This issue is available from me for \$1 or postage stamps.

Credits: I wrote everything except for "March," by Kaile Adney and "June," by Danielle Kay.

September -

My three and a half month old baby diverted my attention away from my friend. Her fussiness told me she was ready to be fed again. With several of us sitting around a backyard cookout in plastic yard chairs, I rearranged myself so I'd be sitting next to the other breastfeeding mom. I can't say that feeding my baby discreetly sits high on my agenda, so maybe my rearranging myself with a piddley ninety degree turn away from the crowd's center was a mere gesture. You never know when one of your supposed progressive thinking punk friends will get all uptight because he sees your uncovered tit being used for what nature intended. Yes, it's happened.

So what else does my conversation turn to besides breastfeeding in public? You guessed it - poop. And not just poop, but comparative poop...

How often does your baby poop?

Oh my God, when she doesn't go for a day or two, look out! There's poo everywhere, the yellow soupy sticky shit poo.

Do the diaper covers you use leak? Oh jeez, one time when we still didn't know better than to leave the house without an extra change of diapers and clothes, the shit just exploded everywhere! There we were in this kid's consignment store with bright yellow baby shit all over the floor, dripping down the baby's leg and my arms. We had to yank a little shirt off the sale rack to clean it up before bolting out the door.

Oh yeah! One time the baby was laying on the bed while I was changing her and before I could get the new diaper on her, she projectile shat. I mean, it just shot out of her so fast. We had to get out the ruler to measure the distance she got on that one. It was about a 21 inch squirt.

Amazing.

So, this is my life. Not just the baby shit thing, but the whole being a new mom thing... the diapering, bathing, washing extra clothes, feeding, carrying, strolling, rocking, singing, playing, changing 24 hour a day, seven day a week and still having time for myself thing.

Obviously, becoming a mother has changed my life and

lifestyle as I knew it. I haven't any complaints though, other than trying to find much needed and wanted time to sit alone a while to write something, anything. And then if I do have a few hours after the baby's gone to sleep for the night, do I read, write, get something else done or go to the show a few blocks from my house? When can I think again about playing music or working?

Tonight I write my first column, but not without interruption. My baby doesn't yet sleep through the night, so I need to nurse her back to sleep twice, thrice, sometimes even five times during the night.

I'm making it sound like sleepless torture when really it's not. I look forward to the next day, especially when it's a day like today. Imagine getting to spend the early morning laying in bed, playing little baby games and looking at little baby books. Going to a mommy and baby exercise class. Taking a two hour nap. Roller skating a few miles to and from the downtown farmer's market and the non-profit punk record store, pushing the baby in a red velvet 1950s Italian thrift shopped pram. Watching Daddy move the table in the living room so he can playfully circle pit to Naked Aggression with baby swinging in his arms. Watching Daddy rock the baby to sleep so Mommy can start writing this.



October —

Trying to get the baby to sleep, we loaded her into the baby backpack and strapped her onto Daddy's back. Maybe walking her would do the trick; we tried everything else. We walked a few blocks to the show and that's where I wanted to be anyway. DEAD AND GONE was playing with THE HAM and shortly after arriving, Baby nodded off. Daddy knows I'm always up for a show; he knows that since having the baby, I embrace them with special occasion energy and that a few loud, screaming, rocking bands will fuel a good mood in me for at least a couple days, so he encouraged me to stay.

I wanted to stay right then, but that would have meant me having to walk home alone well past midnight, so I walked back home with him and our sleeping babe. Instead of just hopping on my bike and peddling right back to the show, I clomped upstairs to change my clothes. I understand that changing clothes is not such a big deal, but for me, and probably you, too, changing my clothes to go back to a show is not an action that usually crosses my mind. Since becoming a mother four and a half months ago, however, it's crossing my mind all the time and for two completely different reasons.

Going to shows now for me has become a priceless gem and so a couple times, I tried to look like one, too. Well, maybe not trying for the priceless gem look, but definitely the Hot Mama look. I think it worked once because before I walked out the door, Ernesto told me that if he wasn't married, (to me) he'd hit on me. Ha, ha, but seriously, new moms need to feel and be told they still got somethin' goin' on other than boobs leaking breast milk.

Because I'm a new mom, it's probably easy for you to understand why I don't get to go to all the shows I want. But what am I doing instead of going to shows? Well, at that time of night, I'm either just getting Baby to sleep or just did get her to sleep & am either crashing, too, or staying awake another hour or two just to have a few rare moments of alone time to read or write something like this column.

What I'm doing in the daytime now is also a pretty stark contrast to what I used to do, pre-mom status. I used to sleep late, work part time, go to band practice, and basically do, at my leisure, whatever the fuck I wanted to. But now, I can be found at the Wiggly Baby society, which is a weekly potluck lunch gathering of moms and babies. On a different day, I can be found at Baby Brunch, a small gathering of us new moms at a friend's house. I've been doing various other new mom things, too, basically anything that will keep us from feeling cooped up and isolated in

our little upstairs apartment.

So yeah, I'm out and about as much as possible, with baby on my hip, on my back and in my arms. And although I'm donning the very rare role of Hot Mama night crawler as I mentioned a little while ago, during the day I've found myself even more uncharacteristically going for the opposite look.

You might be surprised how disapprovingly some people look at me because I have a newborn in my arms and tattoos on my legs, chest and back. Not that they can ever see all of them at once, and they're not even all big and colorful or anything, but if there's a glimpse of ink, I have felt some cold shoulders.

And what about the rest of the appearance package? Before, squares just probably thought I was some college girl going through a phase or something, who knows? But now I feel like, solely because of my appearance, I'm being judged with their first impression whether or not I'm a fit mother. I know, fuck them, right? Well, right, but..... Actually, there are a lot of butts.

For one, whether another mom digs me or not, I can't say I really care, but I'd like them to allow their kid to play with mine. That's important to me because I believe kids playing together is necessary. So, for that reason, I guess I've been making myself appear more approachable.

And did you know that all it takes is one phone call from some stranger wing-nut reporting suspicion of neglect to the authorities and you've got to fight them tooth and nail to prove otherwise? It freaks me out that someone could judge me to be a neglectful mother because it seems to them as if I'm neglectful of my own physical appearance. Yes, people do make connections like that in their closed minds and no, I'm not paranoid; it just happened to a friend of mine.

I am definitely feeling something I've never felt before and that's societal pressure, some stereotype of what a mom in this society should look like. Looking at some lame ass mainstream parenting magazines, I see that I'm supposed to wear unsexy knit outfits, that I'm to wear a modest amount of make up and look squeaky clean at all times, even though I've got a newborn who spits up on my shirt several times a day. You get the picture; you probably have your own notion of what a mother looks like.

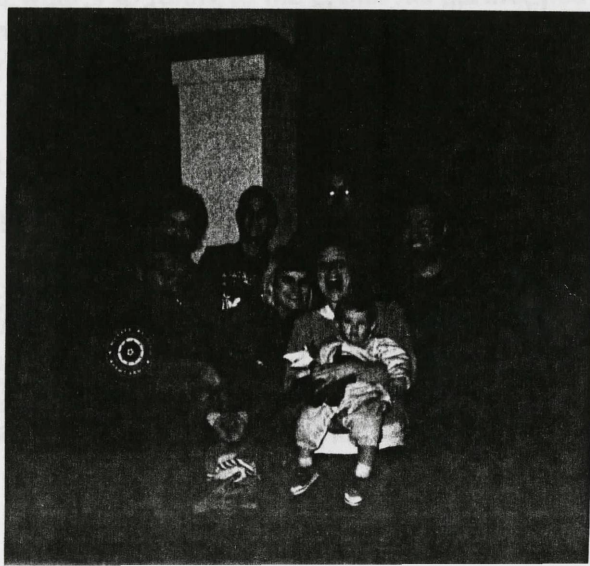
And what's the baby supposed to look like? Well, people can't just let the baby be a baby, it has to be and look like a male or a female.

The gender coding pressure actually started before my baby was born. People would ask me if I knew yet if I was having a boy or a girl. When I'd tell them I wouldn't know until the baby was born, some would be OK with it, but some, in all seriousness, wanted to know how I would know which color clothes to buy and with which color to decorate the baby's room. It was kinda fun telling one of my clueless co-workers that I decorated by selling my drum set.

Of course, after my baby was born a girl, we were gifted with little pink outfits from our families. Luckily, babies grow out of their newborn size clothes quickly. Also luckily, we've been generously given baby clothes hand-me-downs that are all colors but pink. I will admit that I do like to play dress up with her with clothes that are characteristically more girlish than boyish, but unless the clothes are pink, pink, pink, people will still say, "Hi, you cute little guy!"

Just three mornings ago at the bagel shop, three college women were sitting in a booth discussing feminist theory. One was a professor and she was discussing with her two students how the fem-fatale character always exists outside of the mainstream because the dominant patriarchal paradigm will not allow her existence otherwise. Upon walking past their booth to an empty table, one of them commented on how cute my little boy looked in his baseball cap. Quick on his tongue, Ernesto explained that no, our little boy is a little girl and that by dressing her in a light blue shirt and a red and blue hat, we were smashing the dominant gender coding paradigm and raising a fem fatale of our own. Of course, they chuckled.

Citizen Fish
-N- BABY!! :)



November —

First off, I'd like to say that I would never in a million years join a group of mothers who call themselves "MOPS". Although it might be a convenient acronym for "Mothers Of Pre Schoolers," I just can't get past the obvious, encouraged and sexist stereotype of a mother in this society.

Open any mainstream parenting or women's magazine and there you'll see advertisement after advertisement hawking wares to make mom's life easier for juggling baby and housework. There mom will be, center page with her arms thrown up in exasperation, the baby covered in a mess of food, the dog wrapped in the phone cord, dirty dishes on the floor and a caption, "Oh No! I haven't even started dinner!"

Of course, what the advertisement is trying to sell doesn't even matter. Could be anything from paper towels to TV dinners to Mop 'N Glo.

The point of course is, moms are expected to raise happy, healthy, clean children and keep her home and her man happy, healthy and clean too. And let's not forget that she's supposed to look perky and lovely the whole while doing it all.

Since my baby started crawling a few weeks ago, I'll go ahead and admit to rustling some gross tumbleweeds out of the corners, but yeah! and right on! to me and you other moms who think that societal role of Do-All-Wonder-Mom just plain sucks! And the next time you see a mom who looks like she might be feeling like calling herself a member of the MOPS, tactfully encourage her to trade the mop in for a book, record or bike ride.

Moms deserve happiness and health, too. The clean part is overrated all the way around.

And now on with what I originally planned to write about...

After nine years of friendship and living in the same town, one of my good friends just moved. A friend you can count on is enough reason to start missing someone the same day they move, but what's more is that we both just had a baby come into our lives, within three weeks of each other.

This is someone who when we both realized that one day we'd like to have kids, made a pact that if by age 30 we hadn't

done so yet, we'd do so together. So yeah, I'm kinda bummed he and his partner and baby just moved, even if it is only a four hour car ride away to a city where I've always wanted to visit more and have a place to stay.

Nine years ago, he was my boyfriend's roommate. Over the years, he became a fixture in my life; someone who even if we didn't hang out for a while, I know could easily be found to continue where we left off. A few years ago when the boyfriend I was living with insisted I move out immediately, my friend was there for me with a small, doorless, cheap rent room in his house. Even when he was ready for me to move out, too, things were still cool between us.

So, I don't think our pact would have really worked out, but it is kind of funny that I had my baby just two weeks before my 30th birthday. When I found out I was pregnant, he was one of the first people I wanted to tell.

I rode my bike to his house and caught him just as he and his partner were getting in his car to go somewhere. I skidded to a stop and breathlessly told him my excited news. He smiled big and hugged me and I rode off feeling like I could now tell everyone else on my list.

I saw him a week later, again with his partner, and of course all I could talk about with him was being pregnant. He listened enthusiastically and what's so funny to me is that his partner had just gotten pregnant, too, but none of us knew yet.

When I got a call from him some weeks later to meet down at the courthouse the next morning, I just knew what that meant! But as luck would have it, that next morning had me on all fours hugging the toilet bowl with morning sickness. Needless to say, I missed the wedding.

Our babies were born three weeks apart and they're both now in the neighborhood of five months old. I can say they've hit it off pretty well. They definitely smile at each other, hold hands and exchange feet in mouths.

I know how it is most times when people move away from each other; they inevitably grow apart. But maybe since we have

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these babies, they will act as the glue to keep us connected and bolster my budding friendship with his partner. I hope so, anyway. It's so important to me to build these babies together in the progressive, alternative ways we weren't raised. There are a handful of other new punk babes in our community with whom to network and I know the fun will continue, but still, I will miss having them here greatly.

*

Now off on a tangent...remember that reference at the beginning of this column about the lame ass mainstream parenting magazines? Well, I just saw a "10 Reasons You Don't Want Your Kids to Grow Up Too Fast" list in one of them. The #1 reason = Good-bye teething rings, hello nose rings; #3 = The cost of serious sneakers; #8 = Purple Hair.

hahahahahahahahahahaha!!!!hahahahahahahahaha!!
hahahaha!!! haha!! ha! What a fucking joke.

For further explanation, refer to last month's column about Mom and Baby appearances.

*

Obligatory music references... my baby was born to RUMBLESEAT, REINA AVEJA and IMMACULATE REJECTION. I was literally pushing her out and in a breath between pushes, requested the music be changed from REINA AVEJA to IMMACULATE REJECTION because the part of the *Pitbulls Loose in the Hood* song when Jessica Christ from SANGRE AMADO is growling made me feel like I was birthing Satan & I got a bit weirded out.

My baby's first show when she was able to sit up and enjoy what was going on was last Saturday. We sat right up front. Don't worry, it wasn't too loud. The first band, AGAINST ME wasn't playing acoustic, so we had to sit that one outside with the rest of the baby crew, but we were able to return inside for kick ass, Yee-Haw style sets of RUMBLESEAT and LARS DIN. For some unknown reason during RUMBLESEAT, she started a Gene Simmons style tongue trick I'd never seen her do before.

I swear she's started to dance, too. Well, a definite bopping

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anyway. I put on THE BUTCHIES last week and right when I did, she started bouncing up & down. I thought it was coincidence, so I put on the same CD the next day & she bounced again! I'm happy to say it's become a regular thing for her & to a lot more bands, too.



December —

I knew the baby wouldn't come on or before its due date, so I had no hesitation going to work that very day. Some of the women I work with, however, were nervous that I was there, teasing me with remarks like, "Hey, what are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be having this baby today? We really don't want to play midwife here."

I drove home from work that night, my last night of work for an undetermined amount of time. I walked in the door with a shit eating grin plastered across my face and bounced my nine months pregnant self around the living room telling my partner how happy I was that I didn't have to work that oh-so-strenuous part time teaching job anymore.

He quickly laughed at my delusion and told me, "That part time job was vacation."

Yeah, my bubble burst. I guess it was kind of silly being excited about not having to work part time just so I could start working around the clock for no pay check.

So call me silly. Even with my bubble burst, I was excited to be having a baby and definitely not equating baby with job.

*

I took advantage of having a few days just to myself until my full time job appeared on the scene. I cut and dyed my hair, relaxed at my gentle/prenatal yoga class and went to the HOT WATER MUSIC show where we were hoping the baby would be rocked out of me. No such luck.

Didn't happen a few days later at the STRIKE ANYWHERE show either, not even with Cave Dave dancing around atop someone's shoulders with a big pillow stuck up under his shirt, a tribute to my overdue baby.

I went to shows almost every night thinking the sheer loudness and excitement would make the baby want jump out and join the fun. Well, not really. It was more like I was thinking that I had better get a good dose of shows while I could, before my going to shows whenever I wanted luxury was birthed away.

Although I was enjoying my little vacation, call it the calm before the storm if you will, I was ready for the baby to come. The conception was no accident. For almost a year, we hadn't actively tried to prevent pregnancy, even if every month we didn't actively try to make it happen, either.

Some biological clock type thing inside me had sounded its alarm a couple years ago and my intellectual reasoning against having a child

was silenced. As my relationship with my partner developed over time into the stability and commitment it is now, I felt confident we'd be able to provide a kick-ass environment in which to raise a kid.

Given my appetite for touring, traveling and indulgence, I never would have guessed I'd be comfortable with the nesting urges pregnancy bestowed upon me, but it suited me well. I honestly never felt better in my life. Perhaps that had something to do with the fact that the time I was pregnant was the most sober I'd been since the first time I smoked pot on that school field trip in 1982.

I was ready in every way and waiting anxiously, eventually to stir crazy proportions. Every day past my due date I'd try some other trick to help induce labor, but at nine and a half months pregnant and still no baby, I was induced. (I was planning on an out of hospital, natural birth - an entirely different story altogether...)

And I'm really jumping the gun here, making an incredibly long story short by saying that after a difficult birth, days in the hospital and three weeks healing time at home, I was ready for my life to resume again. I was actually anxious for it to begin again sooner than three weeks, but was physically unable to make that happen.

*

And now with a baby who has grown quickly to her present age of six and a half months, I've got an entirely new outlook on work, what it is, how it's compensated, etc.

This is the best job I've ever had. It's the most demanding, challenging and fun job ever, but talk about overworked and underpaid! And true to my nature, I try to do it all and I pout when it's suggested to me that I'm trying to do too much. Maybe it's partly me being stubborn, trying to reclaim my life and lifestyle that will never quite be the same, but I just can't stand to feel cooped up, only playing the role of mom.

Both my partner and I thought it would be different. We brought this baby into the world planning on the ideal situation that care would be shared fifty-fifty. Well, it's not been that way for several reasons. First, I am totally breastfeeding this baby, so I have been on call constantly. In six months, the longest stretch of time I have been away from her is six hours. My partner is a full time student and a part time worker. We decided that I would not need to work for a while because in this town where our rent is the cheapest deal going, it's easy to just scrape by on Financial Aid.

So, I am the primary care giver, which means I do most of the

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baby related work and I have learned far more about this society and myself than just how to meet the needs of a helpless baby. I can honestly say that I had no idea of what I was getting into.

For example, my bandmate, Margaret, has a young daughter. (Actually, two now!) When setting up shows and planning tours, I wouldn't understand when she would have difficulty committing to everything. I ignorantly saw her dilemma as not a dilemma, but a lack of being into the band. I was so wrong! Her desire to be in the band was just as strong as any of ours, if not stronger, because doing something she loved, her own thing away from parent responsibilities was a huge break for her and a refreshing, creative outlet.

Now that I've been full time mom for over six months, I'm ready for a break. And I never in a million years thought I'd look at a paycheck job as having a break! On top of a part time job, I'll still be a full time mom, but at least I'll have something additional going on, away from the baby for a few hours.

Does it suck having "breaks" that are essentially filled up by just having to perform some other responsibility, that I can't just fuck off for a while on a whim? Yeah, kinda. Mostly what sucks is the realization that it's going to be this way for a very long time and that that time will, either fortunately or unfortunately, pass way too quickly & then I'll be, oh my gawd, OLD???

I didn't feel this way even two weeks ago. It literally just hit me one day that I had had enough. I needed more of a break than my four hours a week for my metal working class. Instead of the straw that broke the camel's back, let's call it the shitty diaper that zapped my sanity.....

There I was, trying to get both baby and me dressed and a diaper backpack packed so we could bike to the free Krishna lunch. I got her dressed with little resistance. The bag got packed without a hitch. I put her down to play with a toy while I got myself dressed & I kid you not, less than two minutes later, I returned to see her playing with what at first looked like a little yellow puddle of cat puke.

I was instantly grossed out, but it's not until I lifted her up out of it that I really got bummed. It was her own poop. And there wasn't just one puddle of it. Let's hear it for cloth diapers; they leak. And of course since she crawls already, she had crawled a trail of bright yellow poo all over the floor and all over herself, too.

I thought, OK, no big deal, this is part of the deal when having a sweet, smiling baby. I picked her up so I wouldn't get myself slimed and

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I got back to work because I just couldn't play the role of Mom

hefted her into the tub. Of course, I had just laced my shoes up & had to somehow manage to get them off so they wouldn't get soaked, all the while hanging the baby over my arm, over the tub so no more shit would smear anywhere else.

I got her rinsed, dried and dressed and started in on cleaning up the diapers into the toilet. Speedy crawler baby snuck up behind me and pulled herself up onto the toilet bowl rim, thinking she'd like a splash in the yellow water. Ugh! I removed her from that situation, but she quickly returned, this time behind me to the diaper pail, full of poo water and soaking dirty diapers. UGH! That was it! I quit.

I scooped the baby up, shut the door to the shit infested bathroom, ignored the poo smears all over the living room floor and just started rocking in the rocking chair, holding baby close to my chest and bawling my eyes out. She was so sweet, she just put her head on my chest and her arms out on my shoulders and let me release all my mamma stress.

It took a little while, but the tears stopped and I was able to finally get us both out the door, on the bike and peddled to campus. I was feeling fine when we got there until I noticed that I still had a yellow splotch of shit on my arm. I lost my mind all over again, handed baby off to daddy and then disappeared for a while. I couldn't even talk. I sat on the ground hiding between two garbage cans so no one would talk to me. I tried to read a chapter of my book but couldn't concentrate, wallowing in self pity.

That night when my partner got home from work, he had a brilliant idea. He would quit his job and I would work instead. Bingo! I rolodexed my brain to come up with any job ideas I could.

The next morning, I had a reason to get us up and out of bed instead of just lolling about playing baby games. I got two newspapers and scanned the want ads. Not surprisingly, nothing looked like I wanted to do it. Actually, nothing looked like I really could do it. For some crazy reason, potential employers think they can ask for a whole lot of commitment and responsibility in exchange for part time minimum wage. Since being a mamma comes first, I just don't have a whole lot of either of those requirements for any part time job.

Fortunately, the next day, my friend Kurt tipped me off to a part time teaching job he had just been hired for and they needed more teachers. The ten hours a week teaching plus ten hours paid planning time I could do at home sounded perfect. I applied and had my interview today.

I was expecting to breeze through the interview because of my qualifications and experience, but left feeling defeated. As soon as I told them I was only available the times my partner was not in class because we had to juggle child care, they said, "Oh, it doesn't look like you're flexible enough."

I'm really wondering how people with babies make it work. How do they save their sanity, earn even a modest income and care for their child(ren) themselves without shuffling them off to crowded and expensive day care centers? Where's the ideal, cooperative child care among other parents I envisioned? I've discovered that attempting to organize that is an extra full time venture, one for which I don't currently have the energy.

Complaining? No, I'm not. It's just that there are so many new things to consider every day and I'm learning them as I go. I have no regrets becoming a mother. I look forward to every new day with my baby, getting to know each other better, watching her develop and learn her own new things. That part is fun, but even the fun doesn't come without effort.

As my time with baby passes quickly, I'm hoping the solutions will come equally as quickly. For the mean time, thanks if you've read this far, I know I rambled in every direction & please, if you're a punkparent trying your best to do things not how the mainstream parenting magazines and other societal pressures are telling you you should be doing them, get in touch. What things have worked for you?



CRAPPY
NEW
YEAR!!
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January—

I went back to work because I just couldn't play the role of Mom 24-7 anymore. Since then, I've been working part time and when I'm at work, Dad's on baby duty. This, our first attempt at balance, has been working quite well for all three of us.

Instead of ranting about the importance of sharing childcare responsibilities, I'll just tell you how that first day went for Baby & Dad while I was away at my job's teacher and student orientation meeting. I need a good laugh; although I like our new arrangement, my teaching job is keeping me busier than I'd like to be and with busy comes stress.....

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I was only gone three hours, but each of those hours brought a new surprise to the new Dad on duty.

Things were fine. Baby was crawling around on the porch like she always does while Dad was keeping an eye on her and trying to get something done at the same time. (Mistake #1 - it's either impossible or twice as hard to get anything done when on Baby duty.) When he looked up to see what had her attention, he noticed something hanging out of her mouth. Reaching into her mouth with the standard parent-finger-hook-maneuver, he fished out an earthworm. And it wasn't one of those hard, shriveled earthworms. This one was an alive, wiggling one. Where it came from, we still don't know - never saw one on the porch before or since.

Needing a change of scenery, they ventured off to the big patch of grass in front of the apartments a block away. Baby loves to be outside and was having a grand time playing with twigs and leaves. I guess Dad forgot that this is also the big patch of grass where most of the apartment tenants walk their dogs because what else besides twigs and leaves did Baby find to play with? You guessed it, dog shit.

Dad caught her hand just in the nick of time. Imagine the scene all slow motion style... Baby grabs turd. Baby wonders what this new toy is. Baby is happy about discovering something new and wants a more intimate acquaintance with it. Baby smiles with mouth wide open to greet her new friend.

But here comes Dad with an urgent interception like he's sliding into home plate, "Nnnnooooooooooooo," grabbing her hand just as the prized fresh turd is about to become a snack.

Safe! But now how to deal with the mess a block away from home?

He scooped her up and hustled back towards the house. Baby, of course, is persistent in trying to get her shit smeared hand into her lonely,

empty mouth. He said it was a real battle trying to carry her all the way home, wrestling her small but strong arm down away from her face, not to mention finally getting to the front door and struggling to get his key out of his pocket and into the doorknob to unlock it. Somehow he did it without a smeared shit catastrophe and without dropping Baby.

With Baby cleaned off, things were relatively calm for a while until Dad just happened to look out the window in time to see our car about to get a ticket. He yelled out the window, "Hey, wait!" as he grabbed Baby and dashed downstairs to negotiate with the parking ticket guy. The guy wasn't a complete dick like most of them around here are, but he insisted that the car needed to be moved pronto.

Move the car. No problem, right? Wrong. As Dad went to put Baby in her car safety seat, he noticed that it wasn't buckled down. Useless when it's not buckled and impossible to buckle with a Baby in your arms, Dad had to bang on the neighbor's door and ask him to hold Baby for a minute.

Dad got the car moved, but for some reason Baby needed to throw up that very minute and did so all over our neighbor who was holding her. This wasn't a little baby spit up episode either. He said she started coughing, really hacking, and all of a sudden she just projectile puked all down the front of him. *Oops, uh, thanks for baby-sitting. She's never puked like that before, I promise.*

Within a minute of Dad helping wipe the neighbor's shirt off, out comes the across the street neighbor in whose vast, empty yard Dad just parked the car. "You can't park there without asking! You have to ask first! Blah, blah, blah..."

With sweet Baby in his arms and feeling totally frazzled and worked over, Dad humbly apologized, explained and smoothed things over so the car could stay in her yard for a while.

When I returned home after my relatively leisurely meeting and he told me all that had happened during the last three hours, I of course had to laugh and feel a little sorry for him, but in my head I was thinking, *"Welcome to my world. I've dealt with this new parent craziness for six months straight."*

"Really," I asked, "a live earthworm AND a fresh dog turd? Just last week I was grossed out having to pull a whole, dead roach out of her mouth."

And here I thought her first punk band could be called THE ROACHES. It's nice to know she's got some options.

February -

After a long, full, no-break from baby day, I was all too ready to absorb a show's energy. I even had baby dressed and safeguarded against the Florida cold and walked with her down to where the show would happen, an hour and a half early. Gainesville doesn't start a show before 11, but since it was a Sunday night, I thought there'd be a chance of an early show & I wasn't gonna miss TRUE NORTH, FROM ASHES RISE and BORN DEAD ICONS for anything.

Bummed out at not seeing a sole inside the dark space where the show was supposed to be happening, I turned her around & headed home, bumping into some fellow band freaks along the way who assured me the show was happening, but not until the standard "show time". Cool. I should have known better.

I nursed baby to bed and left her sleeping soundly with Daddy.

I returned just in time and nearly jumped out of my skin and danced on the heads of those who were playing in front of me. Seriously, I was so starved for the rock in the night that I still don't know how or why I contained myself. I sucked in every note just as I had just sucked down every drop of my luscious quart a few minutes earlier.

It looked as if another kid a few people in front of me was also about to explode, and I'm not sure if his suppressed energy burst was speed induced, but he too hid his angst well.

Not until outside, between bands, when I spoke with him did I realize that he, too, was in the same jump-out-of-the-skin mode as I was & we decided that during the next band, we would take the front row over & pelt them with our sure-to-be-sore metal necks of tomorrow morning.

Coupled with needing the show as a way to reclaim some fun of my own, away from my no-break-from-baby day, I was burning with nervous energy from the holiday weekend - and so was the other freaked out kid. We both felt that a long weekend "at home" left us starving for a real interaction with our real, day to day community.

Ahhh, home for the holiday, a time to somewhat look forward to, a time when you're supposed to feel comfy and familiar being among people who've known you most of your life, but at the end of day two, you're chomping at your own bit to escape from the family & the inevitable conversation questions - the same ones, it seems, you're asked every year, "What are you DOING? What do you want for Christmas?"

Only now that I'm, in their eyes, a legit married adult with a baby, it's slightly different & instead of the standard questions (although they still ask when I'll grow up and out of my "punk rock" phase), they're offering advice or, more likely, criticisms concerning bedtimes & food choices.

Choosing to "go home for the holidays" with my baby, I am faced with decisions to make about how we will participate in my white, mainstream, middle class family's consumer culture version of Christmas. How we will participate with my partner's side of the family is easy; we'll just eat a lot of unhealthy food, drink and talk a bunch of shit over a few hands of cards.

Different families have different traditions and now I have the opportunity to create my own & will. Do any of you have any ideas to share about things you do, will do or have done?

March! —

Breastfeed your babies. Breastfeed other people's babies if the need arises. Get help from knowledgeable women - lactation consultants, midwives, breastfeeding mothers.

Do it all the time when your baby is a newborn. It will probably be more physical contact with one person than you have ever had in your whole life, even if you are a sex-fiend or one of those people who is constantly hugging everyone. This is good for your baby and good for you.

Make up stupid names for your breasts, for the milk that comes out of them, for the act of nursing like "ninnies, milkies, nippies, nunus." It will help you on your way to clowndom, and the sillier you act the more your baby will laugh.

Teach your baby sign language for milk and when annoying people are holding your baby subtly make the sign. Sweetly say "my baby needs me now" when your kid lunges at your chest.

Breastfeed in front of all your guy friends (who are surely enlightened feminists anyway). Breastfeed in front of all your girl friends so they'll get over any timidity they may have. When I was pregnant, one of my closest friends admitted that the sight of women nursing their babies grossed her out. I said 'Better get used to it if you want to hang out with me.' Today she doesn't even bat an eye or pause her conversation when I bust out the good stuff for my nine month daughter.

Get lazy; you're lactating after all. Take it easy. Read a book with one hand while your kid is still little and grublike enough not to notice. Listen to records when they are old enough to grab a book out of your hand. Once they are old enough for you to be chasing them around all day, take naps while nursing.

Educate the people you live with about what nursing is like and that you may get severely thirsty while breastfeeding. A true friend is one who brings a glass of water, unasked, at the sight of your baby latching on.

If you are having problems, take a nursing honeymoon, where you and the baby hang out in bed for a few days sleeping, nursing and cuddling.

Don't feed your baby formula. It's not 'supplementing' no matter how much the medical establishment and formula companies call it that. If someone advises you to stop nursing while you are on some medication or taking some herbal formula, call La Leche League and ask them to look it up in Hale's "Medications and Mother's Milk". Most medications are less detrimental to your baby diluted in your milk than breaking the nursing relationship would be.

Breastfeed in public. Breastfeed in restaurants. Breastfeed in parks and on college campuses and on the public transit system and in record stores. Do not make a habit of breastfeeding your baby in a toilet stall. While socially acceptable, this is very unsanitary - and who wants their lunch in a toilet stall?

Take your baby everywhere you can. Take your baby to shows if you want. You might hang out in the parking lot when you realize how loud the music is, but you will still have more fun than staying at home. Take your baby to the movies. You may miss some of the film when your baby stops nursing and starts yelling, but it is still more fun than staying home. Some people act like they expect mamas to stay home until their babies are five years old and well behaved. I say - fuck those people.

Breastfeed with groups of nursing mothers. Think of it as performance art, as role modeling for little girls, as totally natural. Better yet, think of it as subversive, as anti-establishment.

Start a zine about breastfeeding, paint a nursing madonna and child, preface that porno term 'jugs' with the 'milk-' that it deserves.

Make me proud, mamas.

Nursing for nine months plus and loving it in Savannah,
-Kaile 'MilkJugs' Adney

I'm a fan of free stuff. You know, the kind scored out of college students' apartment dumpsters, hand me downs and unsold yard sale goodies left out on the curb. Sometimes, I'll set out looking for stuff that I

need like shelves or a toilet seat. Usually, if I'm patient, I'll find what I'm looking for without resorting to spending money to get it. It's also incredibly fun to score not particularly useful stuff just because it's free. It's the most fun to laugh about the fact that someone probably paid money, and sometimes a lot of it, for something they will have soon deposited into a trash can. In short, I take pride in being able to live fat off of typical American consumers' gluttonous habits.

So, when I found out I was pregnant, I didn't hesitate to fill out a few postage paid postcards that promised free baby products. Of course, I should have known better; free corporate marketing products are not the same as free discarded things. The corporate stuff comes with strings attached. And the longest of those strings is the one to your mailbox. By filling out just a few of those postcards, I did receive some free unnecessary baby things, but I also got myself on a never ending corporate mailing list. I swear, it's like the baby product companies can smell the pregnant women's mailboxes. They sniffed mine out in a big way because not a week goes by that I don't receive a sample mainstream parenting magazine or huge envelope full of coupons and "big savings" offers.

I could go on and on about how it's just plain stupid to fall for those "big savings" offers because you're not saving any money at all when you buy something based on emotion instead of need. And I might go on and on about it later, but for now, I'll try to focus on one of my two biggest peeves of the corporate freebies, my free subscription to Baby Talk magazine, from the publishers of Parenting. (I'll save the other, the Nestle corporation's infant formula marketing magazine, for another column.) It might have been my own stupid fault for filling out those freebie postcards, but these free magazines are also widely distributed through obstetrician and pediatrician's offices, places where parents-to-be and new parents are more vulnerable to corporate marketing. So, if you're a parent-to-be or a new parent, beware! And read on...

You absolutely do not need even half of what these corporate rags tell you that you will need! I repeat, you don't need their shit that you probably can't afford anyway! I understand that my needs will be different than yours, given the fact that we all make different lifestyle decisions. However, if you are interested in knowing how to accommodate a new little punk into your life for very little money, you might find this information useful.

APRIL -

I can't tell you how good I felt about my thrifty, cheap ways when I glanced at the special bonus insert "Everything You Need For Your New Consumer" that was included inside one of the issues of Baby Talk. Thumbing through its 20 odd pages, I honestly saw almost nothing that I had needed to use during the six months that I had been a parent.

1. **Car Seat** — Even if you don't have a car, you will more than likely ride in one with your baby and for that, you need a car seat. This is the one thing that you should not get used. That's because you probably won't know if it has been in an accident, even a minor one, and if it has, you shouldn't use it. Car seats can be expensive and it's usually the super duper looking ones that are more expensive and are actually the least effective. Most counties have a "Safe Kids" type program that provides you with useful, up-to-date information (which is important to know because car seats have had many manufacturer recalls) and a brand new, good quality car seat for a small fee. For example, I attended an hour long information session, paid only \$10 and walked away with a new car seat that was the exact size I needed for my baby's age and weight.

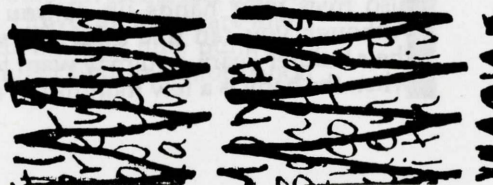
2. **"Nursery" furniture** — I laughed out loud when I saw the pages in the magazine that were titled "Your Dream Nursery for an Affordable Couple Grand." What a fucking joke, right? Nursery, schmernery. You don't need a crib, bassinet, playpen or changing table. And you certainly don't need them to match with some kind of pastel, fluffy bunny theme. More babies die in cribs than they do when they sleep in your bed with you. My aunt offered us the crib my cousin slept in, but we declined. Sure, they raised their eyebrows a bit at the thought of our "family" bed, but they got over it. We were given a bassinet and a play pen, both of which we never used. My mom also gave us my old changing table, but it's not necessary either. It's especially ineffective once the baby is a few months old and squirming all over the place, about to flip over the side when you change his/her diaper. Just put a towel down on the bed & change the baby there.

3. **Carrying and strolling** — You absolutely do not need a stroller that looks like a baby Cadillac. Those monstrous strollers that have the snap-in-place carrier/car seat on top of the stroller base that also doubles as a sleeper are not only ridiculously expensive, but they're heinously ugly and besides, it's just not nice to have your little soft, fleshy bundle strapped down into hard, form fitted plastic all the time. Use a sling! These are a lot less expensive and if you don't want to buy one, all you need is a long, rectangular piece of fabric. Tie it over one of your shoulders, so it crosses your chest with the other end hanging like a little hammock under your other arm. It's nice for the baby to be snuggled tight and it's also easy to nurse the baby when he/she is already so close to the milk source. No one will even know what the baby's up to in there. "Wearing" the baby in a sling also frees your hands up so you can get some things done. Although you can tote a tot this way easily until they're into their toddler years, you may want to give your back a break and when the baby is a few months old and able to hold it's head up,

a little "umbrella" stroller can usually be found at a thrift shop for under \$5. Baby backpacks are also very handy and can also easily be found used for a cheap price. It's fun to ride a bike with the baby on your back; just be sure to have a helmet on the little head! You can get an XS child's helmet and pad it out well for under \$15.

4. **Clothes** — Little babies only get their clothes dirty if they spit up on them or if their diaper leaks. They do not scoot or crawl for several months and they grow out of their newborn clothes very quickly. Therefore, do yourself a favor and do not buy brand new baby clothes. (Please don't fall for the Baby Talk "feature story" on Pajamas. Kids do not need pajamas that have a matching stuffed animal and slippers, not to mention the matching hair ribbons!) Because of the reasons I just mentioned, thrift and consignment shops are teeming with practically brand new baby clothes. They simply grow out of them before they have a chance to wear them out. Also, since your baby will outgrow these clothes so quickly and with little wear, you can always re-consign them in a few months! And even better than the thrift and consignment shops are people with kids older than yours! If you don't know any one with a kid, just wait, you will definitely meet some. Don't be shy to tell them that you'd be more than happy to take any outgrown clothes off their hands. Seriously, we have had to spend almost no money on clothes for our baby & I have about five plastic bags full of clothes just waiting for her to grow into. At this rate, we won't have to buy any clothes for her until she's four. People with kids are generally generous to other people with kids. It's a great cycle to inject yourself into.

5. **Toys** — The same goes for toys as it does for clothes. Whatever you don't get handed down to you, you can find loads of at a second hand store. Dumpsters are a great source for toys too, as is witnessed by the little kid rocking chair, tricycle and fast food restaurant plastic wind-up junk toys we have. Seriously, toys just seem to come out of the woodwork. Family members all the way down to random neighbors and friends will constantly give you toys for your kid. And when the baby is so young, you will have more fun with the toys than he/she will! When you both get bored of a toy, be sure to re-consign it or pass it down to some other kid who you know would love to have something different to play with. Looking at the mainstream baby magazines, you will see that they want you to buy all the "right" toys at the "right" time. Don't believe the hype. Believe me, your kid will develop just fine without all the "right" toys at the "right" time. Your kid might even be better off without those age-specific developmental toys because that way, he/she can learn to decide for him/herself what's interesting without being told what they're "supposed" to be interested in.



6. **Diapering** — You will save gobs of money by using cloth diapers. (And not send ten miniature garbage bags full of piss and shit to the landfill every day.) They are not as much trouble as they sound. We operate with about a dozen cloth diapers, which are really just thin cotton rectangular pieces of cloth folded into eighths, and the same amount of diaper covers. These covers vary in size and style and can always be found used, for cheap. If you can't find the covers in a second hand store, then believe it or not, you can find them for sale on an internet auction site. I was surprised to be able to get five covers that sell for \$15 a piece brand new for only \$15 for all five. If you know how to sew, these covers are relatively easy to make yourself, too. If you soak the used diapers in a diaper pail and wash them every other day, it's easy to keep up with. We don't have our own washer or dryer or anything and we have been able to manage this dirty deed with only minor gross out for eleven months so far. We do use one disposable diaper a day, overnight, because it sucks to have to get up to change the baby in the middle of the night, which is what you have to do with cloth because they're not full of super-absorbent chemicals like the disposables are. (Another reason to use cloth as much as you can.)

7. **Feeding** — I will dedicate an entire future column to this one issue. Breastfeed your baby! There are numerous benefits to both you and the baby and since this column is about being thrifty, consider the fact that breastfeeding your baby will save you at least \$1000 the first year alone because you won't be buying the corporate, chemical infant formula. Ugh, the formula industry is evil, evil, evil — one of the worst global marketing schemes of all time. I sincerely sympathize with you if you are in the less than 2% who are not able to breastfeed your baby and if you are, then the organic soy based formulas are your best bet.

8. **Other** — You do not need a thousand, or even a dozen special towels, blankets, burping rags or bibs. The baby is fine with a regular soft, cotton towel after bath time, just a couple blankets and you can use any piece of cloth for a burp rag. Add one of your punk as fuck safety pins to a piece of cloth around the baby's neck & wha-la, you have a bib! You also do not need all of the chemically derived special, gentle baby soaps and detergents. Any non-toxic, eco-friendly soap will do. Especially nice is the Dr. Bronners all-in-one baby castile soap that is scent-free. Do not perfume the baby with any supposed "baby" products, including diaper rash cream or diaper wipes that have any ingredients that you cannot pronounce. Instead of using the costly, disposable wipes, use little washcloths dampened with warm water. After using, drop them into the diaper pail along with the cloth diapers and wash them all together.

This is in no way an exhaustive list. It could go on and on. So, please let me know if you have any other cost-saving parent ideas! And if anyone criticizes you for not buying "only the best" for your baby, or for buying "used" things for your "new" baby, tell them that you would rather be with your baby than having to be at work extra hours just to have enough money to buy those things that the baby doesn't really need anyway.

MAY—

Although my due date was a little over a year ago and my baby is now a toddler at almost a year old, I feel compelled to write about the topic of natural childbirth. That's because there seems to be a backlash happening against the increasing popularity of women reclaiming what has been absent from their birthing experiences for decades, the right and expectation to be in control of their own labor and delivery. It's very discouraging to see this desire for a safe, natural birth dismissed as "crunchy earth mother" or "New Age Goddess" stuff. OK, so maybe there are some hippified types who are into the natural childbirth thing, but my guess is that the majority of the women seeking this path of laboring and birthing with the least amount of interventions possible are the same women who wish to be in control of all other aspects of their lives as well - which certainly doesn't imply barefoot tree hugging.

*

It never entered my mind to seek prenatal care from a hospital based obstetrician. I automatically sought out the services of The Birth Center, which is a renovated old home less than a mile from our house where two midwives have established their practice. The Traditional School of Midwifery of Florida is also located in my town and therefore, this community seems more in tune with natural childbirth than others.

Today, 95% of American women go to the hospital to have their babies delivered. Few know that births attended in birth centers or at home by qualified midwives have better outcomes. In the hospital, 25% of laboring women will deliver by cesarean, 80% will use some form of drugs during labor or birth, and one-third are pulled out or cut out. There's no medical justification for this.

In America, an important and potentially empowering event has been turned into a medical phenomenon. Pregnancy is treated as an illness and birth, a surgical procedure. While at the lab to get some blood drawn for an anemia check, I had to fill in a little box on the blood form that was marked "nature of illness" with "pregnancy." That felt very wrong and I was offended. Pregnancy is not an illness.

Some of my concerns with high tech. birth are: Why do women have to give birth while on their backs? Why isn't food allowed to be eaten during labor? Why is being strapped to a fetal monitor necessary? Why can't a woman get up on her feet?

Labors go faster when women are able to move. A laboring woman needs to assume any comfortable posture, but being strapped to a fetal monitor makes this impossible. Electronic fetal monitoring seems to make sense, but upon closer examination of the facts, it seems unnecessary. From the first study done in 1975 to the ninth study completed three years ago wherein 65,000 labors were evaluated, all have proved there to be no difference with baby outcomes. However, the maternal outcomes yielded three times more cesareans done on the moms who were strapped to a fetal monitor.

It has also been proven that an animal who is stressed in labor will stop laboring. If labor doesn't stop completely, then elevated adrenaline levels will interfere with the normal labor process. This a natural protective mechanism recognized in all mammals.

Picture this: You're forced to wear a chintzy hospital gown in a small room where it's cold, white and sterile and you can hear the sounds of other women in labor. You are out of the comfort of your own home, receiving medications you were otherwise advised to stay away from during your entire pregnancy, you will probably be cut from your vagina back towards your anus and you're forced to stay in bed due to being strapped to an electronic fetal monitor.

Sounds stressful, doesn't it? Given that scenario, it's not hard to understand why many labors are diagnosed as "failure to progress" and women are whisked away for major abdominal surgery called cesarean. Granted, there are circumstances that wisely call for the intervention; however, these percentages are nowhere near America's current 25% rate.

Each woman alive today is a product of 30 million years of excellence in childbearing. If not, then we'd die out. We have an incredible line behind us of vaginal birthing. So what's happened from 1975 to now so that all of a sudden, 25% of American women can't give birth vaginally and need a cesarean? How can that be when women are born with the body knowledge to have babies?

Hospital birthing is so out of hand because it lacks an essential component of maternity care. 100 years ago, this country lost the balance of midwifery. The American Medical Association all but wiped out the practice of midwifery into a status of illegality. Without midwives, an unbalanced overuse of

technology has taken over.

Birth has been taken away from women and given to a doctor to manage and deal with. Women are encouraged to put themselves in the hands of the OBGYN, instead of being encouraged to believe in themselves and in their bodies. Women are scared into handing over the control of their own bodies.

If a woman is well attended by another woman like a midwife and/or a doula, and is also able to focus in a relaxing atmosphere, she will know she can give birth normally, naturally and under her own power. A woman will have tremendous ability the rest of her life as birth reveals unknown power. Birth is more than just a physical experience. It's a time of amazing empowerment.

Each state has their own laws concerning licencing midwives. If you're pregnant and are choosing to have the baby, make a few calls to find out what the laws are in your state and what services are available in or near your area. Also, if you don't have insurance and don't qualify for Medicaid, choosing out-of-hospital birth is considerably less expensive than a hospital birth. (On average, 80% less) Even after seeking out the information and you decide that you would be more comfortable choosing a hospital based obstetrician's care, then please, trust your instincts and honor your fears. They're definitely legitimate. But at least after learning all available options, you can say that you made your own choices and didn't just blindly follow what has become relatively unquestioned, standard birth practices initiated by a bunch of rich, predominately white male doctors calling themselves the AMA.

Note: Because of my state's laws governing midwifery, when I went two weeks past my due date, my midwife was required to transfer me to the hospital. There, I still received the support of my midwife as a doula and during labor, was able to avoid any pain medications such as an epidural. So, after all was just said about the virtues of natural childbirth, even though my birth wasn't as "natural" as I had hoped it would be, I still believe it's the ideal and encourage more women to seek it out.

JUNE—

I can remember my mother explaining to me that after her and my dad's divorce, she thought no one would ever want to date her because she had luggage. What a weird way to describe my brother and me - luggage. I always thought of my step-dad as being this great, noble man because he married my mom even though she had luggage.

During my own pregnancy, many of my single mommie friends told me how they felt guys would never want to date them because they had kids. I can somewhat remember agreeing with them - thinking men didn't want to deal with kids who were not their own.

I think the only one who disagreed was my friend Amber. She told me that if a guy likes you enough, he will deal with the situation, regardless of how he may have felt about kids before.

I'm not sure if it was my mother or my daughter Sadie's dad (who also told me that no one would ever love the mommie side of me) who made the notion stick in my head that no matter what guys had crushes on me, they wouldn't want to go out with me because I had a kid. I refused to believe that any guy was ready for the responsibility of my Sadie and me.

So when I started dating Tom, I was apprehensive about everything. I kept stressing to him the seriousness of dating someone with a kid and that there were certain things that I wouldn't be able to do because Sadie came first and foremost. I told him that there would be times when I would feel like I would be stopping him from doing what he might rather be doing and stopping us from what we might rather do.

He gave me constant reassurance that he would rather be hanging out with us.

I remember being angry because I thought it was unfair that I had to worry so much about how Tom felt about Sadie while her father could just date whomever and not have to worry about "the luggage" because he only saw Sadie a few days a week.

Over the past year, my opinions of men dating women with children have changed a lot. I now know many great guys in our community who love kids and who wouldn't think twice about dating a woman with kids.

I don't know if I consider this something noble like I did for so many years with my step-dad, but I do look at it as men in our community working towards a better future that starts with our kids, whether the kids are biologically theirs or not.

-Danielle Kay

JULY-

Ten easy steps I took to help insure that my babe will have some punk rockin' tendencies:

1. I found out I was pregnant while on a two-month hitchhiking and train hopping free-for-all. I actually got pregnant only four days into the trip and took a pregnancy test four weeks later. Gawking at its positive result, I decided to keep on with the trip since it would be my last one of the sort for quite a while. Oh yeah, the only tape I had with me for the two months was a Subhumans tape. Aawww, baby's first lullabies.
2. Four months pregnant, I jumped aboard an opportunity to play on a three-week tour. My little fetus & I played a show every night, helped carry only light loads, slept fairly comfortably on floors and an occasional bed, ate healthy groceries instead of greasy fast food crap, drank pregnancy tea instead of the usual free beer at the gigs and stayed out of the way of cigarette smoke relatively well.
3. Happy Halloween! Five months pregnant, some girlfriends and I played as Bikini Kill at a party where Minor Threat, Black Sabbath and X also made Halloween cover appearances. At this stage of development, the nerve endings in the baby's ears that enable her to hear sounds are not connected, so all she really heard of the night were vibrations... but they were punk rockin' vibes!
4. At six months pregnant, I continued going to shows. I absolutely swear that at the Born Dead Icons show, the baby started kicking as the band started playing. I'm talking about a wild thump in my gut with their very first note!
5. Not feeling like going out so much, I began sewing some little baby pillows out of purple and green polka dot and cow print faux fur with sheets of uncut patch printed canvas. You've never seen how cuddly a Subhumans or Hot Water Music patch can look when it's on a fluffy baby pillow! Next came the same material sewn into a shoulder diaper bag.
6. At seven months pregnant, I added a few zines to my bedside pile of zines to read before the baby comes: *Hip Mama* and *The Radical Mother's Voice*.

7. During my eighth month of pregnancy, a bandmate and fellow mom helped out with instilling some DIY punkness in utero when she dyed up a batch of black newborn sized onesies, complete with "circle A" and "Reina Aveja" designs batiked on their fronts. You know these were a hit at the baby shower! My poor mom just rolled her eyes. Previously that day, she had commented that the red & black "circle A" flag hung above the baby's awaiting bassinet didn't really "go" with the soft green and pure white of the bassinet. After the baby shower, I waddled my +32 pounds pregnant self down to the Fugazi show. At this stage of development, the baby can hear music now, although it has to be played pretty loud since her ears are plugged by water and vernix, a white coating like cream cheese that protects the baby's skin from the increasing concentration of its urine in the amniotic fluid.

8. I gave into the "nesting" urges that I had read about in my pregnancy books. I taped up old show flyers I had been saving and framed and hung some pictures I had taken of some of my favorite bands. Babies do a whole lot of lying around before they can roll over or crawl and need a lot of "stimulating" things to look at, right?

9. I rode my bike every day, including on my due date and worked my weekly volunteer shift at the local punk rock record store that day too.

10. Days past my due date and still no baby, I decided I had better go to a few shows. I hoped that the baby would be rocked out of me. Really. When Hot Water Music didn't do it one night, I went to see Strike Anywhere a few days later. Unfortunately, they didn't do it either, even though they tried. Over two weeks past my due date, I finally pushed my baby out while listening to Reina Aveja and Immaculate Rejection.

I think my hard work to pass along the genetics of punk rock has paid off. Before she could even crawl, she started bouncing on her well padded, cloth diapered bottom to The Butchies. She really gets going to Cavity, too. Just yesterday, at a thirteen-year-old friend's birthday party, she immediately started dancing when a Ramones song came on. Really.



AUGUST—

A guy recently got in touch with me, not because he's a parent, but because he wanted to know if I use cloth diapers for my daughter. He said that his mother used cloth diapers for him and his siblings, except when they were traveling, and that he thinks cloth diapers are cool because the disposable ones are a waste of resources.

I told him that yeah, I do use cloth diapers for my daughter and like his mom, use disposables when traveling. When I was about seven months pregnant and getting into "nesting" mode, I started collecting all the essentials for taking care of a newborn and of course, the question of diapering needed to be answered. I automatically thought of using cloth because the disposables did seem to be a terrible waste of resources. During my investigation into the matter of how a cloth diaper even works, I also found out more about what's wrong with disposable diapers.

But before I get into those reasons, I do want to say that it's true that disposables take less work and are therefore more convenient. Duh, that's why they're so widely and almost expectedly used. And that's why I completely understand why a lot of parents choose to use them. When you've got to change a baby's diaper on average of 15 times a day for the first six months on top of all the other sleepless child care duties, the last thing you want to do is have to wash them too. Ariel Gore, the editor of Hip Mama zine, I think summed it up nicely when she said something along the lines of *Why is it the moms who are first asked to give up a little convenience to help save the planet? If you are choosing between your sanity and cloth diapers, by all means, choose your sanity & use disposables.*

So, if you are able to deal with the little extra work and won't resent it & take it out on your sweet little punkin, here's a little information I uncovered that helped me decide that cloth diapers are worth the hassle. Plus, if you have a partner like I do who sympathizes that I did all the physical work to carry the baby for nine months, plus the actual birthing and now breastfeeding, you can negotiate for diaper washing to be their job. You'll still have to deal now and then with carrying a wet, soggy one in your backpack until

you get home and with scraping the shitty ones into the toilet, but at least you won't have to haul that stinky diaper pail to the laundrymat twice a week.

First, disposables consist of a waterproof polyethylene outer layer (but some new are available with a "cloth like" outer layer), an inner layer made of wood pulp and a water repellent layer. Many brands have added fragrances and perfumes as well. There have been hundreds of complaints made to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission about rashes, allergic reactions to chemicals, perfumes and plastics as well as injury due to foreign objects like wood splinters and metal scraps found in diapers themselves.

There is no safe way to dispose of them. You can't just flush them down the toilet. Most people simply toss the pissed and shat in diapers into the garbage. Throwing them in the trash adds about 84 million pounds of raw poo to the environment each year. Raw poo is then dumped in landfill sites breeding viruses and bacteria. Live polio has been recovered from these landfills. Approximately one-third of the solid waste of small town America consists solely of disposable diapers.

Calling them disposable really isn't accurate. They are non-biodegradable and will be around forever. Some estimates are that 30% of the U.S.'s non-biodegradable garbage is disposable diapers. Of course, you can buy the "green friendly" types of disposables that are biodegradable and chemical-free, but they are expensive and can be hard to find unless you're shopping in a bigger health food type store. The regular ones are expensive enough. During the 2-3 years that your baby will wear them, they will cost about \$1000 more than using cloth diapers.

Until recently, all babies in this culture were diapered with cloth. It is just within the last 25-30 years that disposable diapers have appeared on the market. Now, many new parents have never seen or felt a cloth diaper. Instead, they learn about diapering from prime time TV ads. I myself didn't have any idea about using pins, about how to fold a cloth diaper, what kinds of diapers to buy, how to make them or how to wash them. So, after some months of trial and much error with different kinds and ways, here's what worked

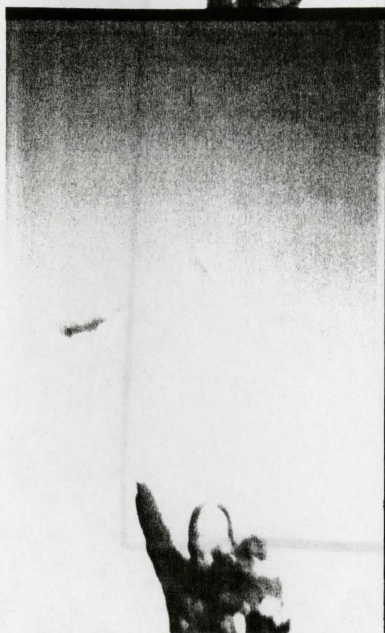
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easiest for us:

The diapers themselves are just big, thin rectangular pieces of cotton. We fold them into eighths and lay one into an outer covering called a diaper cover. You then wrap the diaper up and around the baby as you would a disposable. The covers we use have velcro tabs, so I've never had to worry about sticking her with a diaper pin. Diaper covers can be found cheaply in thrift stores or believe it or not, on internet auction sites. You can also, however, find them for expensive prices in different baby stuff catalogs or for medium prices in most stores that sell baby goods. Buying a few and then using them as a pattern to make more is cheap and easy, too! Wouldn't a few of your darlin's bum covers look darling with a patch sewn on the backside?

In the 1950s, diaper services flourished. Now, because of disposable diapers, the larger cities and suburbs are usually the only areas with diaper services. Diaper services are slightly more expensive than home laundering, but quite a bit less expensive than disposable diapers. We don't have a diaper service where we live and couldn't afford one anyway, so my partner hauls them to the laundry mat about twice a week. Now that our daughter is 15 months old, she goes through fewer diapers than she did during her first six months and the poopy ones are easier to clean off now, too.

And since I'm talking about diapers, I'll mention diaper rash. In a study of one month old babies, those in disposables had 3 times the number of rashes and 10 times the number of severe rashes than the cloth diapered babies. But if you do have to deal with curing a diaper rash, the best cure for it is fresh air! If you've got wood or tile floors and can handle a little mop-up action every now and then, allow baby some nudie-kazoodie time each day. Have them run around naked when outside! Never use powder with talc! It's no good for baby! If there's no rash, there's no need to use diaper rash ointment as a "preventative". It can block air circulation.

And one last money saving tip - don't buy the disposable baby wipes (save them for traveling) - use a little, soft washcloth with warm water instead and wash them along with the diapers.



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