

6 Helpful Reminders for the Mom Struggling to Walk in the Spirit

Although all three of my children are now older (and they're all pretty awesome, I might add), I vividly remember those days when mom duty was draining my peace and stealing my emotional and physical energy. Maybe you can relate to having "those days" too.

You know... "those days" when you might snap if you hear one more disrespectful teenager comment or have to deal with one more ounce of girl drama or unfair sports team decisions.

Those days when you find yourself hiding away in the closet and eating Oreos, while trying to tune out the words "Moooooom, where are you?" echoing through the house. Those days spent praying for the supernatural ability to be a happy mom and a positive role model, rather than a frustrated, short-tempered hot mess of a mom who is at wit's end with dealing with hormones, social lives, wardrobe crises, rules being broken and being the maid and taxi driver. Those days when money is low, burdens are high, and you are just plain tired of being a grown-up, much less having to be responsible for other people's emotional and physical needs.

The happy days certainly outweigh the trying days, and I would not trade in a single moment of motherhood for a gazillion dollars. In fact, being a mom has been the greatest blessing of my entire life! Nonetheless, those trying days can zap a positive attitude quicker than one can say "you're grounded." Worse yet, the weight of losing confidence as a mom as a result of frustrations and perceived failures can cause any mom to feel weary and unqualified.

Below are a few tips to help you remember to stay positive, so

you can remain a positive, confident mom and role model for the kids God has placed in your care:

1. Know that you can never love too much.

Whether girl or boy, children need love, hugs, attention and compassion. Love is the basis for their lives, regardless of their age, and has a huge impact on their own self confidence. Don't worry about spoiling your daughter by loving on her too much, or making your son less masculine if you shower him with hugs. God is love, and He calls us moms to be love too—even when the kids are not being lovable. You may not always feel like the perfect parent or be able to buy them everything they want, attend every ballgame or dance recital, and never lose your temper. But you can always make sure they know how important they are to you and that they are loved unconditionally. When our children feel loved, it fills our hearts and boosts our confidence as moms, and reminds us we must be doing something right.

2. Allow yourself to live and learn.

They don't say parenting is a journey for no reason. With each passing year, we learn a little bit more about how to be a better parent and effectively raise our children to the best of our ability. What we did with our first child, we may or may not do with our last, because we've lived and learned some lessons. Give yourself some grace when you mess up, recognizing that each parenting experience, good and bad, is a learning experience. Allowing ourselves to stumble in our parenting, and being willing to either forgive ourselves or ask for forgiveness from our children when needed, helps us build confidence in who we are and what we were called to do.

3. Tune out the voices of criticism.

From the moment you swaddle your newborn infant to the first day your teenager asks to go out on a date, people will be full of advice. Full, I tell you. Sometimes the advice is

valid and helpful, while other times it may be overbearing, intrusive and critical. The trick is learning to filter the advice we receive with our own gut feelings and faith beliefs; appreciate the advice but determine what works best for you and always run your decisions by God in prayer. Just because we may disagree with someone's advice or parenting style doesn't make their ways wrong or our ways wrong. It just makes us different.

Our kids are just that—*our* kids. Although we can seek advice from others and respect suggestions from other moms or trusted resources, what is most important is that we recognize God gave us our specific kids for a reason, knowing that we have been divinely equipped in unique ways to raise them. We may not be an expert in raising someone else's child, but we are the expert in raising our own, and believing that can help us have confidence for those trying days. Trust that God has equipped you to be the mom your child needs and will give you the wisdom to carry out the task of motherhood.

4. Focus on what you're doing right, instead of what you feel you're doing wrong.

It's easy to get hung up on our imperfections as parents—like those times when we leave the baby crying in the crib longer than we should because we were physically exhausted. Or when we punish our toddler for spilling milk because we are already stretched thin. Or when we lose our temper when a teenager speaks disrespectfully and yell regretful words in anger. There is no such thing as a perfect parent, but most likely our parenting successes will far outweigh our mess-ups. If you've been feeling like a less-than-confident mom lately, give yourself a break. Instead of obsessing over your mistakes or shortcomings as a parent, focus on all the good things you do for and with your kids. Instead of worrying if your faults are going to scar them for life, focus on all the sweet and wonderful things you are shaping within them and teaching them. Think positive about yourself, and that optimism and

confidence will equip you to help your children learn to think positive about themselves too.

5. Don't compare yourself to other moms. It's hard not to compare—when you see a mom who lost all her baby weight, manages to keep her kids under control in the grocery store, and keeps them all dressed in cute outfits along with matching bows which might be too big for an adult head, much less a small child's. It's hard not to compare—when you see a mom who seems to have perfect teenagers or young adult kids, who attend bible study every week and seem to never get into trouble. But everything about parenting is a package deal. No mom goes through this journey of parenting without her own set of mess-ups, struggles, successes and failures. Even moms who seem perfect on the outside struggle with insecurities and their own set of child-rearing problems and frustrations too. Remember that if God thought enough of you to bless you with children to raise—whether you gave birth to them, adopted them or have just taken them under your wing—He has also gifted you with the ability to do a great job if you put your mind to it and keep your heart tied to His. Comparison is the thief of joy, so don't let the thief rob you of optimism and confidence in who you are as a person or a mom.

6. Be a positive thinking role model for your kids. You are the only mother your kids have, and you are the right person for the job—but it's important to remember that our attitudes and outlooks are contagious. When we focus on being positive thinkers and asking God to help us break free from chronic negativity, optimism can spread from our hearts into those of our children. Kids need confident moms, and our confidence comes from Christ and knowing that we are not only fearfully and wonderfully made, but loved and gifted with the ability to be the mom our kids need. When we intentionally strive to not only be a more positive person but a positive role model for our children, we play a critical role in training their minds with the habit of thinking optimistically too. {eoa}

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