

There are times when you feel like you're a reasonably good Mom, but there are also times when you wonder if you've done your best, given enough attention, attended to situations as well as you could have. Maybe it's that we are so consumed in the present that we lose track of the past.

We forget those glorious moments that were unplanned, the spontaneous moments of fun and freedom. We remember the time we dragged people to the parade despite the headache and sickies, we remember the time we ranted at a child for a poor choice of words, and we debate our stupidity on situations where we see our kids in tears but can't remember why.

I'm full of doubts at times. Did I spend enough time with my babies? Why does the time seem so fleeting? Why do I feel like I didn't? Why do I only remember hurrying a baby off to nap hour so I could mow the lawn, workout, or steal a moment on the computer. Why do we remember, with all consuming knowledge, that moment we blew up, the time we acted like the immature and stupid parent we can all be at times?

These thoughts have consumed me as I've felt the need, ever pressing in on me, to step away from social media. To reconnect with my family, to make peace with who I am and where I live. To create memories afresh with the new ages my children are, to bring a sense of connection back to my family.

It's not that my family is falling apart. My kids are happy & healthy. We see each other daily, we laugh and talk. We discuss the books we've read, the school assignments we complete. We discuss the struggles family and friends seem to be going through and offer suggestions for how we can help. I feel it all, I see it all, but something is still missing, or is it?

And then I realise. I'm consumed with the knowledge that time is fleeting. That my children are growing faster than I can keep up with and before long they will be out on their own and **I** am not ready! So, I reflect back on the past and scream for a do-over dwelling on every poor choice I feel I've made.

Then, like an oasis in a desert, a home movie surfaces and we watch. I see the laughter and joy on my children's faces as I merely say their name, or play a simple game of peek-a-boo

with them. I don't see the tired me I remember. I don't see the consumed and busy me I remember. I see the laundry in a pile in the hall because the child, full of joy and laughter, is awake and calling my name. I see signs of business around me, projects left where they are so I can play with my child.

And peace, it settles on me, if but for a moment. I am aware that the failure as a mother I have suddenly convinced myself that I am, is not true. I may be busy, I may make mistakes, but my children don't dwell on that. They dwell on that moment Mom stopped what she was doing and ran to see the bug they found. The time it snowed and Mom, full of childlike wonder, thrilled them all by dashing out the door and making snow angels.

They gasp in astonishment at the snowman in the video, taller than they are because they don't remember it, but they do remember the time Mom whispered in their ears and pulled them from their beds at two am to rush outside and play in the snow. How she whispered to them, in hushed tones and giggles, not to be too loud so we didn't wake the apartment complex. The wonder of the yellow street lights, the quiet muffled hush that only snow covered scenery can bring, and the pale purple sky surround my memory, but not my children's.

They remember Mom, giggling and tiptoeing, telling each person to make tracks in the freshly fallen snow before others awake. Everyone holding hands so little ones don't slip on the hidden ice. They wonder at making a half dozen snowman around the complex at two 2am, all to bring surprise & delight to the other residents when they awake. Will Mr B be surprised when he sees that smiling snowman? Will Mrs G be shocked to see Mamma's hat upon her snowman's head?

I can't help but fight tears as we reflect, each in our own way, on past memories. I, lost in myself absorbed ways, see that I was not the poor parent I thought I was. That I did not let all the distractions around me consume me, that I did stop in the moment and enjoy it, all though I may no longer remember each of those things without the home video or photo to remind me.

But my children remember the carefree moments, the delight and wonder of it all. They beg

for more details about the clothes they are wearing, the silly things we are doing and why, and in that moment of remembering I can breathe easier. I can exhale and reflect back that I have done my best, most days, and that my children will remember *those* days.



While digging through some older writing journals, I stumbled upon this entry from 2017. While I do not remember the exact day that I wrote this, I do remember the long wrestle I was dealing with in regards to my parenting.

In the years that we cared for my mother-in-law, I found that many sacrifices in the home had to be made in regards to how I cared for my children. It was a constant struggle of emotions as I sought to seek the balance that was ever slipping from my fingers.

As my eldest was quickly approaching eighteen, I felt the ever pressing moments ticking by, one after another like sand slipping through my fingers. I yearned to slow the clock and take the time to do all those things we'd planned that had been side lined by the needs of an elderly woman we all loved.

I wanted a do-over for all the bad days and mistakes I was sure I'd made, and then one day while finding five minutes to run a dust rag over the hall shelf of books and videos I stumbled upon a DVD my own parents had mailed to us years earlier. In Dad's boxy script it reminded us that it was from our home video camera we'd left with my parents upon our international move.

Dad must have found the videos left on the device, burned them to DVD, and then included them in one of the many packages that were sent our way. In all the moves the DVD had been dutifully packed and unpacked and placed upon the shelf, and yet we'd never found, or made, the time to pull it out and watch it.. until that fateful afternoon when the kids asked what was on it.

It was a soothing balm for a hurting heart. A reminder that there had been simpler times in the lives of my children and we'd taken full advantage of them. Each memory washed over me like a whisper of hope, and with them came the details fast and furious.

It washed the guilt away, and in its stead left behind the reminder that despite the difficult moments, love had always been there.

The above picture is of myself and my oldest son, from many many years ago when he was two. Ironically he's wearing a hand knitted sweater made by the very grandmother we spent a decade caring for.

*The Reluctant Author.*

