

Hallmark Baby
May 2019

In honor of Mother's Day, our in-house hilarious mom and writer, Amy Trowbridge-Yates, shares her attempts to shed the MOM GUILT that plagues us all . . .

Dropped my youngest, a kindergartener, off at school this morning. It's field trip day and the kids were lined up in their matching blue t-shirts, excited and ready to board the big buses to the aquarium. And there, counting sack lunches and clutching clipboards, were the volunteer moms. Fanny packs and children hung on their sides as they took post-worthy pics on their phones and Sharpie'd my kid's name on a sticky nametag. Mia waved and I drove off, undecided if I felt anger or pity or jealousy at these moms.

Yet another sting of "mom guilt" to start my day.

The exact emotions morph and mutate--they dictate how we see other moms, other kids, sometimes even how we view friends, but it almost always boils down to a serious affliction of MOM GUILT.

I blame Facebook. And Instagram. And the anxiety inducing a-hole that is Pinterest. The bar has been set seriously high.

And then the bar was decorated with paper mache and organic icing.

It's creating shame and competition and stress.

And some serious eye rolls.

But, more than anything, beneath it all, is guilt.

So in honor of Mother's Day, I'm attempting to free myself of it.

I'm laying it all out there.

I'm listing all the things that have taken up space in my guilty conscience in the last year—no matter how embarrassing or weird or petty or valid.

And, in honor of both the day and my own sanity, I'm offering myself the small gift of a counterpoint.

Go ahead and polish my Mediocre Mom of the Year award now.

Let's begin . . .

I currently have no sticker on the back of my car announcing my child's academic successes nor extracurricular activities. There are no decals declaring my support of their hobbies on my rear windshield in any form.

No vinyl silhouettes of ballerinas or softball pitchers or karate kicks are to be found. Counterpoint! My girls do actually have extracurricular stuff!

There was a brief t-ball season that resulted in zero balls hit but seventeen thousand dandelions picked.

They love their weekly guitar lessons and gymnastics classes.

And (bonus!) sometimes we even show up on time.

My third grader wore a Justice shirt to school last week that was missing a solid 2/3 of its rhinestones and 77% of its glitter.

It looked like something from a Miami strip club lost and found.

BUT said rhinestones and glitter are currently clogging up the vent and sticking to my husband's dress socks in the dryer.

And that means I'm washing my family's clothes.

Me: 1. Miami strippers: 0.

I cannot, no matter how very hard I try, give my complete and full attention to every magic show/dance routine/cat walk/concert/talent program they perform in my living room.

In front of the TV.

During The Bachelor.

I ooh and ahh and applaud as necessary, but one can only witness so many dress-twirls and hair flips to Taylor Swift before one loses her damn mind.

Solution: in-laws who never had girls.

Me: "OMG, girls, show Grandma and Grandpa that amazing hour-long Cirque-level show you guys made up last week!"

Grandma and Grandpa: (grab popcorn, roll video and settle in)

Aaaaaannnnnd, let the Bachelor commence.

(I'd like to give a rose to my problem-solving skills.)

I was busy working from home last week (writing this, so thankyouverymuch, selfish reader, for forcing me to neglect my kids!), and asked the girls to get themselves dressed and find a quick breakfast 'til I could make something (scrambled eggs, don't get crazy here).

Looked out to the swing set ten minutes later and saw my youngest pouring Cheez-Its directly into her mouth, all while chilling on the slide in Hello Kitty panties and a full-size life jacket.

Part WTF-ness and part disgrace overtook me.

But looking back now, it's all pride for my trend-setting lil weirdo . . . that's some style AND self-sufficiency.

Girl is killin' it.

I don't cook.

Yes, I make spaghetti or Hamburger Helper or tacos on occasion.

And I can turn on a Crock-pot.

But my kids eat fast food a lot.

Like, they could have an academic discussion on nugget quality for any major chain restaurant.

Two words, though: apple slices.

Fruit, y'all!

Also, an extensive collection of Happy Meal toys.

Vitamin C AND imaginative play.

Hand me my award now.

Our family scrapbook is currently stuck at “first lost tooth,” circa March 2016. All the acid-free, stick-on glittery doo-dads in the world at my disposable, and I can’t seem to get caught up.

HOW WILL THEY REMEMBER THE FUN WE HAD AT THE PUMPKIN PATCH??

These are the things that keep me up at night.

And don’t even get me started on the second kid and the utter lack of memorabilia.

Score one for having both weird umbilical cord stump thingies in a baggie, though.

And all lost baby teeth (only one of which was appropriately documented, clearly).

And first locks of cut hair, hospital bracelets and teeny inked footprints, all kept close to my heart (AKA: in a shoebox under their beds).

I curse a lot.

Sometimes in front of them.

In fact, my girls come from a long lineage of trained female cursers, all highly skilled in the artistic usage of colorful language.

It’s in my genes; I can’t f’ing help it.

They, luckily, don’t repeat the cuss words that befall their precious pierced ears.

And if one day they tap into their genetic predisposition for swearing and find themselves calling a bad driver an a-hole, they’ll simply be “creative communicators.”

We do “screen time.”

We like TV screens and Ipad screens.

And, lest you give credit where it is def not due, we aren’t watching BBC documentaries.

We’re watching Liv and Maddie and Goldbergs.

And likely eating the aforementioned nuggets in the living room while doing so.

But, how else are they going to recognize all the characters on our Disney trip?

And Minecraft has to be pseudo-educational, right?

Isn’t it building stuff? So, basically just Lincoln logs.

Yep, we’re just improving our fine motor skills over here.

(Crossing my fingers for a college aptitude test on cartoon characters’ catch phrases.)

I can pinpoint the exact moment my “mom guilt” began. I was still in the first trimester, happily highlighting in my crisp new copy of Your Pregnancy Week By Week when I read something about avoiding fish because of the mercury.

I had just returned, literally that day, from a weeklong anniversary trip to Jamaica. As in, the Caribbean.

As in, we ate fish at every meal and

OMGMYFETUSWILLDIEAHORRIBLEMERCURYDEATH!

I cried. And worried. And counted fingers on the ultrasound.

I’d gone from beach trip to guilt trip.

But here we are, nine years since a pink plastic stick declared that I was going to be a mother. I've served Spaghettios for dinner and watched Bachelor contestants cry instead of my kids dance.

There's no chance you'll ever pin something I've beautifully braided or accuse me of going "over the top" with birthday parties.

And I'm okay with that (most days).

I'll never get it all done.

I'll never get it all right.

But we have such fun in our family.

Kevin still laughs at my jokes.

Lydia still tells me she loves me.

And Mia still hugs me, squeezes me tight . . .

against her bright orange, mildew-smelling life jacket.