



The Secret Society of Moms

Why we don't tell you everything

My friend, Leigh Ann, has just gone back to work after having her first baby. She's juggling sleep deprivation and searching for that elusive balance, and recently she wrote on her blog: "I feel that women are a bit duped by each other, by not being really upfront about how hard the first couple of weeks are on the mom, baby and even dad." When I read that, I empathized and then chuckled to myself, because at one time, I felt the same way.

After my first son was born, I suddenly entered the Secret Society of Moms. My friends – the women who hosted my baby showers and oohed and aahed as they put their hands on my belly – were now looking at me in a different way. They saw the dark circles under my eyes and helpless expression on my face, and nodded, knowingly. And then they whispered, "Welcome to the club," and began a Ya-Ya-Sisterhood-type initiation ceremony. (Okay, so that part didn't really happen, but that's how it felt.)

I felt honored to be inside the circle of worn-out moms, but I couldn't help but wonder: Why didn't anyone tell me it was going to be this hard – that becoming a mom is not all clouds of baby powder and lullabies?

Now, I was on a mission to inform! I sought out soon-to-be moms with the purpose of setting the record straight. "Girl, let me tell you how it REALLY feels when the epidural wears off." And then, in mid-sentence, I set down my bullhorn. I stopped myself from telling the whole story, because



Angie Mizzell with son Dillon in 2009.

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who wants to be a killjoy? Not me.

So, I've come to some conclusions about why moms don't tell pregnant women everything there is to know about having a baby:

Decorating the nursery, registering for the loot, picking out names and feeling the baby kick is nothing short of heaven.

Moms who have crossed into the secret society don't want to spoil the fun. We want you to enjoy the bliss as long as it lasts. The magnitude of what new parents face is too much to process all at once. It's best to take it one day at a time.

We don't remember. We have survived the hazing, and now the details are a blur. I struggle to remember how I survived those newborn months. (Although, I do recall that watching reruns of "Sex and City" on TBS got me through many overnight feedings.)

We did try to warn you, a little, but you didn't listen. You had read all those parenting magazines and books, and you thought you had it all figured out. We didn't want to step on your toes, because we had read those books, too, and we felt the exact same way.

No matter what we say, we want you to take our advice with a grain of salt, anyway. I think it's important for moms to keep talking, writing and blogging about the ups and downs of being a mom. But in the midst of all the information at our disposal, there's an element of loneliness that comes with being a parent. No list of tips and tricks will ever tell you what you really need to know. Parenting is a classic "learn by doing" experience.

Just when you think you have it figured out, your child moves on to the next stage of his or her development.

We know you're going to be okay. Motherhood has brought me to my knees, making me feel like the weakest, most unstable person in the world. And it has an amazing way of showing me what I'm made of. Nothing beats the satisfaction of finding your own way and getting into your own groove. Parenting requires you to look within and trust your instincts. And even though you may feel lonely or even "duped" that no one let you in the little secret, you really aren't alone. In fact, we're all standing in line, waiting to hold your baby because our toddlers, preschoolers, tweens and teens are driving us crazy! But that's another thing we don't tell you about. You'll find out soon enough. ✨

Angie Mizzell does most of her writing with her two small children swinging from her limbs.

Her personal essays have been published in several print and online publications. Contact her at angiemizzell.com.