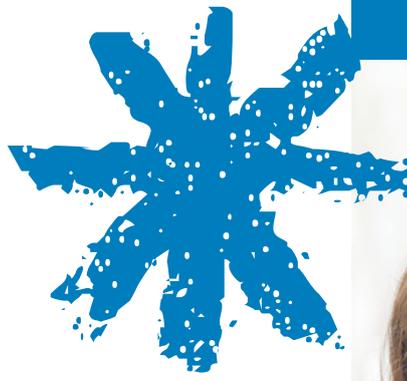


parenting *ideas
insights



Celebrate the marvel of motherhood, not parenthood!

By Michael Grose

As Mother's Day approaches it's worth remembering that it's mothers and fathers, real women and men, who raise kids. Parenting is a managerial, twentieth century construct.

It's an interesting time for me to write about motherhood. In the last eighteen months both my daughters have become first time mums.

Watching them has refreshed my perspective on motherhood. It's not the techniques and strategies they use that are important rather their desire to connect to their children and fully embrace being a mum that is paramount. All their subsequent parenting springs from the willingness to fully give themselves over to motherhood.

My close encounters with my daughters as mothers has reminded me how emotion-charged being a mum can be. Besotted-ness, fatigue, joy, fulfilment and doubt are just some of the feelings I have witnessed in my daughters. No doubt any mothers reading this can easily add a few more.

Over the last few months I've conducted a series of parenting seminars on the topic of raising independent children. The main message of raising children to be self-sufficient, rather than to overprotect

and spoil them, has been in some ways at odds with what is seen as good mothering. That's because the notion of protectiveness aligns more with mothering than fathering.

However you can be a protective mum and raise really self-sufficient independent kids - you just need to know when kids need protecting and when they need to work things out for themselves. Mothers attuned to their kids and who are confident in their own abilities and instincts generally get the balance right. In a way, they know when to be a mum and when to be a parent.

Mothering is emotional and instinctive

Being a mother is not always rational, as parenting is often made out to be. The emotion attached to motherhood drives you to fight hard to protect your children, work assiduously to right any wrongs on their behalf, and exhaust yourself looking after their physical and psychological well-being.

As I've been reminded watching my daughters raise their own children - mothering is relational rather than rational. You may grow out of parenting by making yourself redundant, but mothering is something you never grow out of. You are a mum for life.

Kids want their mothers, not their parents

Kids of all ages say, "That's my mum!" They don't say, "That's my parent!" (They may say that when they are annoyed or embarrassed by you, but that's another story.)

Boys and girls of all ages generally love their mothers unconditionally, whereas they merely put up with their parents, particularly during adolescence. They can live without their parents, or so they think, but deep down they know they can't live without the one person who has a blind spot for them, overlooking all their faults. That person, of course, is their mother.

When kids of all ages get into emotional difficulty or their life becomes too hard, they generally go looking for their mums. They only look for their 'parent' when they want some money, or want someone to get them out of a jam!

As Mother's Day approaches it's worth remembering that it's mothers and fathers, real women and men, who raise kids. Parenting is a managerial, twentieth century construct. That's why we have Mother's Day (and Father's Day) rather than Parent's Day.

I hope you have a good one!

