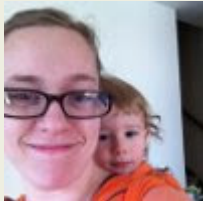


Doing it While I Can



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“Balancing on My Toes” is an original column appearing every other Friday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Angel M. Ethell. Angel lives in the Chicagoland area with her family: sons Teen (13) and Lil G (2) along with their little sister Cassie Pie (dog), her partner Daddy G and father-in-law Grandpa G. She loves learning new things along with learning that she might not always be right... 100% of the time. Archived columns can be found here. BMT-only RSS feed available here.

I have been a peaceful parent for about 3 years, but a parent for 14 and some change. These days I talk a lot about peaceful parenting and all the good I believe it does my children and myself. Self-ownership and the NAP are the two parts that I have discovered and discussed, and all the implications of those two mindsets and why I practice those principles in my home. But what led me down this path? Was it my distaste for my own upbringing? No. To be honest if I were older with my first son things may have been different, but when the cards were down I used the same parenting skills I had learned as a kid, but from a kids perspective. Because of this perspective I may not have “used spanking properly” as some people tell me every now and again, but I never felt comfortable doing it. It was just all I had in that tool box we call parenting skills. Was it my desire to be more natural? In some cases yes, but mostly not so much. What really opened my eyes to this way of thinking was the love I saw expressed by my dear friend and her first baby girl.

Remembering Those Days

This precious child was not a very social baby and some may even have labeled her difficult, but her Momma took her all the places she went with her, when finding a sitter may have been easier; she also breastfed her baby (which I had attempted with my first but failed miserably) into toddlerhood before I knew anyone that had, she co-slept and met her child’s every need. It was something I had never been really exposed to before in raising children. I remember those first few months when the hair on the back of my neck bristled when she would say her partner didn’t want the baby to cry so she was up all the time and exhausted because she wanted him to be able to rest since he worked for the family. I felt bad for her and I would say things like you should tell him that he needs to care for her too. Of course I would say this. I was totally unaware that in his way he was

helping. He would help bathe, feed and change, but the baby just needed her Momma all the time. So Momma met her needs all the time. I once watched the baby for about thirty minutes while her parents presented at a convention and the poor dear cried the *whole* time. I was as loving as I could be but she was just attached to her Momma and was not going to be satisfied with me.

Her Gentle Parenting

My friend would tell me about her life with her baby and then toddler and I would delight in hearing co-sleeping stories and seeing them all together. They were so loving and attached. During one of my visits the Dad explained to me that when he had been married before and had two children he took the first five years of their lives off because he found it so important to be connected because, as he told me, he believed it would make them better in all areas of life if he nurtured them early.

He Was Right

This baby girl that so needed her Momma developed into a social, loving toddler that just felt safe everywhere her parents were. She was confident and intelligent. She had social skills and problem solving skills down. She was amazing. This friend of mine then got pregnant again and not too many months after I got pregnant with my first in many years and I was delighted for both of us. I loved her first daughter like a niece and I was going to love her second just as much. We had our babies and during that time I learned a lot about gentle parenting. I did the research and came to the same conclusions that my two friends did. It's simply what's best for baby. Guide babies into toddlerhood and they will reflect that guidance. That's what I learned and as I use the same practices on my second son I see with my own eyes that world of difference it makes.

Now My Heart is Breaking

This same dear friend is now pregnant with her fourth dear daughter and the baby most likely will not make it. She has some serious illnesses and her Momma is beginning to develop symptoms as well. She is 24 weeks pregnant and although she has three other girls this baby is still theirs and is loved by them and by her family. My friend may never get to bring that baby home. May never get to breastfeed her, or co-sleep with her. May never get to meet her alive. So I would never be able to justify raising a hand to my son, or keeping him out of my bed at night when he needs me or not meeting any of the hundreds of needs that toddlers have knowing that there is a parent out there right now that would give the world to just have their baby to love, or any baby at all in some cases, in their arms at night.

Doing it While I Can, and Will Continue

There is so much uncertainty in life. Even more so in the life of a child who does not understand all of life's little concepts. Children are not little adults, but they are deserving of respect. Respect for their personhood, respect for their comfort, respect for their desires, respect for their evolution that said we were meant to be attached, and respect for their unconditional love that they give. They trust us so much. If we do not do what we feel is best for them and nurture them lovingly they may not have very much certainty in their future, and every child deserves that right.

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