

The Measuring Spoon, or Enjoy It While You Can



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"Living with Wild Abandon" is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Tuesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Breezy V. Stevens. Breezy is a long-time radical unschooler, an advocate for children's rights, a crazy dog lady, a crafter in various mediums, a lover of all things tropical and beachy, and the designer of "EVC in Color". Archived columns can be found [here](#). LWA-only RSS feed available [here](#).

It is mind-blowingly astonishing just how fast that time really does fly.

My house feels a little empty some days, now that my oldest has moved out. My youngest is a teenager now, and is mostly self-sufficient, and often I find myself remembering the joyously chaotic days when they were young. We spent our days adventuring, experimenting, discovering, and playing, and though I knew better, it really felt as though those days would last forever.

Last week, as I was washing dishes, I noticed that one of our sets of measuring spoons had come apart. It's a brightly colored set, held together with a red zip tie, and we have had it for so many years now, that I can no longer remember where we got it, or when. What I do remember, though, is that it was purchased as part of a children's cooking set; one of those primary colored things that are marketed for small children, along with a book of easy recipes that kids could cook with little parental assistance. I'm not even sure we cooked anything from the book; neither one of my kids turned out to be much interested in culinary endeavors, but we always had shelves and shelves of equipment, tools, and books available, so that they were free to dabble at will in whatever might strike their fancy at any given time. The measuring spoons in question, though, were something I had used practically every day, as I prepared meals for my growing family, for what seemed like as long as I could remember. Seeing them broken apart brought on a wave of emotion, as I remembered many of the projects we had done together; the supplies bought, the messes made, even the things that sat on the shelf, unused, when the kids lost interest before they got around to using them.

I thought back to the hard times, too; the times I felt like I'd never get a full night's sleep again, or ever have the time to pursue my own interests (or even to remember what my interests used to be!). The days of meltdowns and tantrums and children fighting. The days

of struggling to cook something, anything, with fussy kids pulling at my clothes, or hanging on my legs. The days the only thing I wanted in the whole world was to go to the bathroom alone, or take a shower or grocery shop without all hell breaking loose. Diapers that exploded, requiring a bath, no matter how inconvenient the timing. The years I spent, feeling like a human cow, confined most of the time to a rocking chair, nursing a babe for what seemed like most of my waking life.

And though some days I struggled to believe that I would indeed actually make it through, I never, ever actually believed people who told me that someday I'd miss it (in a period of desperation, I insisted that hubby get 'fixed'; I was convinced that I *never* wanted to go through it again). But the people who insisted that I would someday wish it hadn't gone by so fast were right; I miss it. I really, sorely do. All of it, and not just the easy, fun parts, either.

Today I was out grocery shopping again. I was alone, and I could take the time to leisurely examine items. I could scan the shelves, or the racks, just to see what might be new and interesting. It was peaceful, and I was unrushed. And then, as I turned a corner, I entered a freezer section, and was confronted with a bin of frozen pizzas. And I almost cried. My oldest never would eat much home-cooked food. She lived on frozen and boxed foods, at one point declaring that 'real food' actually came from a box. Just a few months ago, she would have been with me, and she would have, no doubt, gleefully filled the cart with those frozen pizzas. It sounds ridiculous, doesn't it, crying over frozen pizza? But I'd give all the peace and quiet back, just to have some more time to play with them, to admire their tiny faces, to kiss the boo-boos, and experience the world anew through their eyes again. Now I have all the time in the world, most days, to see to my own needs, to pursue the things that I need to or love to do, and sadly, to regret all the things I meant to do or wished to do and just wasn't able to manage, and the moments I wasn't able to muster the kindness and compassion I now desperately wish I'd been able to.

I'm extremely thankful, though, that we made some of the parenting decisions that we made. I feel blessed to have a husband who was willing to be the sole provider for all these years, so that I was able to stay home with the children full-time as they grew. I'm extremely glad that we decided relatively early to peacefully parent and unschool them, as well. Being able to be with them every single day, to guide them and to witness their achievements, to console them when they were disappointed, and to do my very best to answer their questions and facilitate their explorations is, I believe, the single best possible investment of my time, and the best gift I could give them; the gift of their childhoods, free from the controlling, authoritarian, over-scheduled and generally mean-spirited environments that children are usually relegated to. Connecting with love instead of disconnecting with control has proven miraculous as well. I believe it has made a huge difference in our lives thus far together, and I hope it has a positive impact on the whole

course of their lives.

I cherished our time together, and though my parenting/unschooling years are not quite over yet, things are different now. As I have worked on this article, the other two members of the household are involved in their own projects; hubby is in the kitchen filming his YouTube show, and my son is firmly ensconced in front of his computer, where he spends much of his time, bug-testing a game. And while it's exciting to be able to use my time as I wish again, it's quite an adjustment, and I'm still adapting. I think I probably will be for some time.

I know that some days, every moment feels like an ordeal, and sometimes you just want them to *grow up* already, even if just a little bit. I know you probably won't believe me any more than I believed all the people that told me, but *you will miss this*. So hard though it may sometimes be, take that deep breath, count to ten, put yourself in time-out, rather than your kiddos, until you can respond with love, do whatever you have to do to keep on keepin' on. And *enjoy it while you can*. Take advantage of every opportunity that you are able to, and appreciate every precious moment, because it will never happen again, and you don't want to miss it.

The measuring spoons sat around for a few days, and I contemplated just throwing them out. We have another set, and since we'll be moving in a few months, we'll need to get rid of most of our possessions anyway. What's the use?, I thought. There aren't any children around these days to play with the brightly colored things anyway. But my hubby insisted we fix them. After all, we still use them every day. We found a new zip tie to hold them together. It's yellow this time, instead of red, but it still does the job. I imagine that we'll be using them through at least a few more adventures. Times, they are a-changin', but they're not over just yet.