

Primal State of Mind

By Karel Murray

Babies. It has been so long since I was around a newborn; I think I've lost all my maternal instincts. Our son, Ben, has been out of the house for nine years. My husband and I have enjoyed the freedom of fully occupying each corner of our house. We don't have to sneak certain type of kisses and we can eat when and what we want without regard to the nutrient value of the meal. Such freedom, however, doesn't come without its costs.

We don't have the unrestrained laughter of a small child erupting at the oddest times during the day. We open our Christmas presents in relative silence, rather than with the no holds barred "dive in" attitude of children. The enjoyment of a movie from a kid's perspective has somehow lessened the experience of a true adventure story. The extremes of emotions are also missed because it confirms a life is being lived to the fullest.

I think that's the reason why, as we age, adults start feeling that the role of grandparents isn't such a bad thing.

Over the last four months, I have seen my sister, sister-in law and two dear friends gladly assume the role of a grandmother. These normally reserved, private individuals are so entranced by the newborns that they are almost compelled to stand at the top of a tall building, thump their chests, and let the world know that a baby has chosen them. I grin the entire time they relate the activities the one week old baby has engaged in... such as growing. I didn't even know you could actually see that unless there was a time lapse camera involved.

What I enjoy the most is the pure delight and pride these women have in their extended families. A softness of character and a fierce protective instinct transforms their every move. Now I know why a human should never, ever mess with a grandmother, let alone a mom. Grandmothers are second generation protective lionesses who have been around the block once, know all the tricks, and are acutely aware of life's dangers. If I ever need a body guard, I think I'd choose a grandmother.

Recently, my husband and I visited our nephew's house to be introduced to their new daughter, Kiera. Only one week old, she looked so small. The perfection of her tiny hands and fingernails kept me enthralled. I had forgotten the baby powder scent and the soft down that covers the crown of perfectly formed heads.

Then I had a panicked filled moment. Offered the baby to hold, I literally started sweating, and it wasn't due to a hot flash! Extremely nervous, I realized that I hadn't held a baby since our son was an infant. The nearer the sleeping tot came to me, the more I had the urge to hyperventilate. My husband, sensing my distress, said "Go ahead. It's something you don't forget."

Reaching out, I carefully cradled the small head in my hand and nestled the wrinkled pink clothed body against my chest.

And I was lost.

This fragile being brought out the fiercest, most primal state of mind comprised of motherly emotions. I flashed back to our son, and my connection to him seemed to expand in recognition of what we lived through together. In that moment, I recalled my favorite photo; a snapshot of two year old Ben and I walking away from the camera in winter gear heading towards a park. His toddler hand trustingly placed in mine and I guided him to a treasured world.

All you grandmothers out there - go right ahead and rejoice in the wonder of your newly expanded family. Gush over them during a phone call; whip those photos out, whatever the grandchild's age. Perhaps you will help others, like me, wake up those long buried cherished memories.

And, when my time comes, I promise to return the favor.

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