

The Blessings of New Babies

A Pediatrician on Overcoming Parenting Worries



All expectant moms and dads have worries.

Seeking affirmation that everything is going to be okay is normal. As a pediatrician for more than thirty years, hearing young couples wondering aloud if they are going to be up to the task of parenting is something I expect. In fact, a modicum of angst indicates to me that they are taking their future responsibilities seriously. But the worries of today's to-be moms and dads are now ratcheted to new heights, reflecting the helter-skelter world we all live in.

There are no perfect parents

Life today seems to be filled with more uncertainty and insecurity for young parents. Life also seems to be coming at us faster and faster. We are barraged with more conflicting information than we can ever possibly sort through or digest. Financially, we're also challenged. More and more families need two incomes just to make ends meet, and on top of it all, the world looks like a more dangerous place to live in, much less bring up children in.

It's normal to use caution in these times, but many parents today seem to have an overabundance of caution, a quest for perfection, and a need for fail-safe plans to mitigate all variables. Newly pregnant couples are approaching parenthood like a college class with homework, final exams, and no wiggle room for error. They're doing everything within their power to get it right so they can ace the parenting test. More than anything, they hope to be "perfect" moms and dads, but as we all know, such people don't exist in our world.

Here is my first secret of sorts, drawn from many years as a parent and grandparent: no matter what the world looks like today, the delights and the infinite pleasures that children bring to parent's lives are still there to be enjoyed. None of the goodness has diminished, nor is the satisfaction gone. Modern culture is trying to back young people into a corner, but

they don't have to go there. Start by piercing through and dismantling the ever-demanding, materialist veil that looms large over our heads. Decide to keep things simple. Parenting is your birthright, so don't let money, keeping pace with others, or the challenges of everyday life fog the way.

The truth about parenting

Making the decision to have a child ...

It's momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.

-Elizabeth Stone, Teacher, Author, and Journalist

Some parenting lessons I've learned from doing things wrong. Pulling out flash cards for my less-than-one-year-old daughter didn't put her on the road to becoming an early reader. Demanding that all my children learn to play the violin, no matter how they felt about it, didn't work out quite so well either. I won't go on.

I've also learned much from the amazing and engaged parents whose children I've had the honor to care for. I've learned from dads who teach their children how to catch a ground ball and swim, from other (wild and crazy) parents who have taken their children on grand adventures like visiting all fifty states in one extended summer vacation, from moms who climb Kilimanjaro with their teenage daughters, and still others who vacation with their children in remote cabins without televisions or telephones. The number of excellent parents whom I know and have known is vast. They are loving people who have enriched my understanding of what healthy and loving parenting looks like.

The journey that awaits

My first responsibility is to let you know that those who are about to have a baby are on the verge of falling desperately in love with a total stranger . . . someone you have never met before. So, mommies and daddies, beware! This deep and rapturous love is going to sneak up on you and surprise you.

Parents are made to love

I have parents who daily come to my office and share with me, without any kind of prompting on my behalf, the intense and unexpected love they feel toward their new born babies. It's an emotion different from anything they have ever known. They speak of these

feelings as if they have been possessed by an alien, an outside force, but it comes from deep within them.

These feelings that new parents sense are indeed profound, but they are not based in nostalgia or random emotions, nor are they magic. They're a derivative of hidden physiological changes that occur within our human frame.

For moms, these feelings are a result of hormones that cause actual physical, structural changes in the brain and make the experience of being a mother wonderfully desirable and highly pleasurable.

Worries fade at the wonder of it all

No one can adequately describe the wonder of welcoming a baby into the world. It ranks as one of the true "Wow!" moments life grants to us mere mortals and leaves us all speechless.

Parents of these little people are further blessed because, while attending to their baby and being totally invested and immersed in the process, they are privy to the many other remarkable events that unfold each and every day before their eyes. From their front-row seats, parents see their fresh, newborn little muffins emerge and evolve through their primordial infancy into babbling, walking, blurs-of-activity toddlers. It's a glorious first year! And it's only the beginning of what is in store for moms and dads who have fallen desperately in love.

This is an excerpt taken from author Robert C. Hamilton, M.D.'s [7 Secrets of the Newborn: Secrets and \(Happy\) Surprises of the First Year](#). Dr. Hamilton is a Board Member of HelpGuide.org International. Last updated: January 2019.