

Children are born teachers

We have all been to school and I am pretty sure you will agree that the most memorable lessons are hands on lessons. Children (especially our own) are undeniably the best teachers out there. I will not be able to share every single lesson I have learned with each of my children but I can share some. Once you become a parent, you become a different human being from the minute you know that you are bringing another little you into this world. My husband and I have been blessed with this feeling three times and each time it has been a different experience. We both come from large families and we both had a lot of siblings and we both had a lot of practice taking care of children before we had our own. When we were dating we agreed on having a family because we knew we would be great parents. After marriage we thought we would be ahead of the game by waiting three years to have the first child then have three years in-between each child to give us time to adjust. All of that was great but let me tell you that NOTHING could have possibly even come close to preparing us for the CHAOS that comes with raising multiple children.

Do not misinterpret what I'm saying here. Being a parent is a huge blessing and does bring joy and it is a beautiful thing but it is HARD. There is a saying that if you can make it here in NYC, you can make it anywhere. What I am saying is, if you can make it out alive out of your first 3 years of being a parent (ok maybe 18, or 30), you are the heavyweight champion of the world! I'm gonna break down the lessons I learned with each child in the order that they came.

Let me introduce you to my best teachers. My first teacher is the firstborn, the master, the leader of them all: Kaykay. I learned everything with Kaykay, how to push (only 9 pounds), all the horrors that come after the birth, breastfeeding pains, bodily fluids I didn't even know existed, but her specialty was teaching me how to be a zombie.

Lesson number one was how to live on 4 hours of sleep, *every single day*. The first few days I was fine because we were in heaven, admiring our beautiful healthy baby girl and feeling blessed because God had entrusted us with this awesome little human. However, after about two months of my newborn high, I fell right out of heaven and landed right back on earth, on top of a rocky mountain. Kaykay was so cute but cuteness would not make up for the fact that she would not sleep. She would be up exactly every hour and a half and she would only take two short naps during the day. I had to return to work when she was three months old and only by the grace of God I was able to drop her off to daycare in the mornings and not get hit by a car and not get fired for being a zombie. A lot of my first few months with Kaykay were a blur, I felt like such a failure as a new mom and it wasn't until later on that I learned I was going through postpartum depression. I didn't have time to stop and think if anything was wrong with me. The world kept on turning and turning until I went to sleep then woke up the next day and I would do it all over again. By the time she turned six months old, I was so tired, I wanted to return her back to the

sender but she had no return address. If you are currently experiencing a child like this, the only thing I can tell you is, do not throw the child out the window, be strong, just get through it, eventually, it will be a thing of the past.

When Kaykay turned four years old, I had her little sister and she was still waking up every single night. That brings me to lesson number two via my middle child. With Gabs the first thing I learned is that even though they all come in the same manner, from the same blood, not all our children are created equal. Every child is completely different and unique. I made all the mistakes with Kaykay, so with Gabs my pregnancy and birth was a lot smoother. I learned that God loved me and that He is a merciful God because this baby slept through the night after six weeks. Another thing Gabs taught me well is how harmful it is to compare one child to the other. Her first two years I tried to teach her letters and numbers like I did my first born but she did not catch on as fast as her sister did. Now that she is six years old I can clearly see that she is different. Different is good and I should never put pressure on her to "fit in" and be like anyone else. Gabs gift is a special one. Everyone that has gotten to know her well may have experienced the "Gabs touch". At the most random and unexpected time she will hug you, blow kisses and often say "I love you" to absolutely anyone she chooses. I have seen the effect that this causes on people and its an amazing thing to witness. Her sweetness will have you melting into a puddle in no time, its like an embrace coming straight from God.

My most recent lesson is the hardest one of all. Melo came at the wrong time for me but on God's watch, everything is perfect. For those of you who like to say that by your third child you are a pro at parenting, let me tell you: Not true! There is something about having a third child that does the opposite of making you feel like a pro. The third ones are the game changers, the curveballs, the ones that will bring you to admitting "I know nothing!". Melo is an independent, headstrong and active little girl. She was the one that forced me back into an active lifestyle. She has taught me how to be flexible, how to be patient and most of all, how to trust in God's plan and scratch my own. My husband and I decided to have the first and the second. Melo was not planned but if we had a third, we wanted it to be a boy, like almost everyone who has two girls first. When we found out we were having a third girl, my poor husband was in denial throughout the rest of my pregnancy and even during the birth. Melo taught us that having a child should never come with the expectation of having the gender that we want. This third child taught us that God knows us better than we do and He gives us what we need, not what we want. Melo has been my special company during a hard time in our lives where we lost our apartment and have seen ourselves sharing an apartment with family for a few years. Melo has been joy and comfort during a season where nothing has gone the way we planned. A season where all else has failed and there is no choice but to surrender to what God wants, even if its not what we want. Genuine trust in God grows from painful tears, struggle and long periods of discomfort. The thing that breaks you, will also build you up but with a

better foundation. I have learned more about myself and about who God is during Melo's three years of life than I ever did before in my life. Before Melo came I had heard of God and talked of God for many years, but now I can say that I have met Him all over again and I have talked to Him like I never have before.

My girls are still young and we still have a lot to learn about raising them, not in a perfect way but the best way we can. I have so many flaws as a human being that at first it scared me to even think of having a child. Now that I have three, that hasn't changed, being a mommy still scares me. If I didn't have God present in my life, I would most definitely be able to get through my days but would I be the best that I could be? We are not called to just "get through" we are called to excel. We are called to build up our future; the next generation that honors God, the next great preacher, the next great worshiper, the next great intercessor. Our life lessons are never going to end as long as we live but to raise a child these days, we need to be brave and bold. This is certainly not for faltering hearts.