

## Ask Nurse Rona: Give Thanks to Mother... Every Day!

Rona Renner, RN for the Bay Area Discovery Museum

*During May we celebrate Mother's Day, but moms deserve to be thanked more often than once a year!*

**Q:** *I often feel unappreciated by my kids, and resentful when they constantly ask for things and never notice how hard I work. I wonder if I'm any good at this 24/7 job. Is there something I can do to shake these feelings and enjoy being a mom more?*

**A:** You are not alone! Most mothers will admit similar feelings when they think they won't be judged. It's always good to be aware of how you're feeling so you can reflect on what you need.

Mothers frequently say that they weren't prepared for motherhood, regardless of their age, culture, or the amount of money they earn. Raising children is such an important job, but one with little training. Just when you think you understand your children, they change! Guidelines and recommendations also change frequently, leaving moms confused as to the best ways to ensure a child's safety, health, and happiness.

Most women admit that being a mother is harder than they thought it would be, and they feel pressured to pretend they're always happy, even when they're over tired and stressed-out by the many demands they face each day. Here are some ways for you to move from resentment to pleasure:

### Take care of yourself:

- Schedule a "me" day and ask your husband, partner, relative, or babysitter to spend the day with your children. Having an R&R (rest and relaxation) day is essential, so no laundry or bill paying on this day. Try scheduling time for yourself once a week for a few hours, or longer once a month.
- Learn to say "no" to chores more often, and "yes" to play and fun activities. When you play and let your worries go, you and your kids will feel connected and happy. Spend time outdoors.
- When you're feeling resentful keep a journal so you can track what triggers you. Over time this will help you see what needs to change. On another page write down three things you're grateful for each day. You can also encourage your children to keep a gratitude journal.
- Get enough sleep and eat healthy foods. If your cup is empty it's hard to give of yourself to others without resentment.

### Get others to help more:

- Think about ways to delegate some of the things you do for the family. For example you can teach children to sort their laundry and then when they're ready they can learn to do the wash on their own. Make sure you don't do everything just because you do it better.
- Ask for what you need in a calm manner. You can say, "I get frustrated when you leave your dishes on the table so before you go out to play please put your plates in the dishwasher." Call them back from an activity if they haven't done what you've asked, other wise they'll figure out that mommy will do it.
- If you have a parenting partner spend time on Sundays looking at the coming week's schedule and divide some of the parenting tasks. Moms tend to do more than their share.
- Set limits on your child's demands. If you don't give in to tantrums and aggressive behavior you'll have more energy for fun and connection.

### Get Support:

- Consider talking to a professional if your mood doesn't improve with self-care.
- Find a formal or informal support group for mothers.
- Take a parenting class. Check out your local First Five Children and Families Commission for resources.

Motherhood is an art with unlimited opportunities to learn about yourself and your children. Self-doubt will diminish as your experience grows.