



The Mother in Me: Real-World Reflections on Growing Into Motherhood

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Motherhood is one of the most transforming experiences of a woman's life- an exhausting, exhilarating, extraordinary journey. This collection of writings speaks to every mother's heart as it celebrates the season of motherhood, illustrating its unique challenges and delights, and revealing its deep significance. Some of the selections are humorous, some thoughtful, some poignant- yet each proves that motherhood matters, "not just in the sentimental ways we talk about on Mother's Day," writes the editor Kathryn Soper, "but in the gritty, lovely, everyday realities of life." The volume speaks frankly about health crises, identity crises, and sanity crises, as well as the fruits of such struggles: insight gained, hearts expanded, and faith increased. These shared experiences will make you laugh and cry and want to reach out and hold tightly the little ones in your life.

The Mother in Me: Real-World Reflections on Growing Into Motherhood Details

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Jenny says

I normally hate books about motherhood and parenting because they come off as condescending or guilt-inducing when I read them. But this collection of essays from women was uplifting and encouraging. It even made me feel nostalgic about pregnancy, which I thought would never happen!

Michelle says

I have wished at times to drop my children in the arms of the next person who tells me to cherish this time when they are young and run away laughing maniacally. Haven't you?

I found in this book the voices of women who understand how I feel, and have no goal other than to express their experience--in as real a voice as possible. They didn't preach, and they were not negative, just real about the challenges of pregnancy and meeting the needs of babies and toddlers.

Not only were they expressing their voices, but each author was crafting: using words to create a picture, an emotion, a work of art. Many times I stopped at one phrase, thrilling at the knowledge that this author had found exactly the right way to say it.

Suddenly, I didn't feel so alone anymore. I know a few mothers like me who could use that feeling. Perhaps I should send them a copy.

Angie Taylor says

One of my favorite people gave this book to me for mother's day not knowing that we had just had our baby. I didn't think I would have time to read it at first, but nursing is a great time to read. It is a collection of different mother's writing about their experiences of growing into motherhood whether with accounts of being pregnant, miscarrying, adopting, or just the craziness of finding yourself among the business of taking care of children. I loved the stories and was moved by the honesty felt by failures, accomplishments, hopes and dreams that each mother has for herself as a woman and for her family. It was a wonderful read and I think anyone would love reading it.

Jen says

I loved some of these essays... there were ones that were 5 stars, but others I didn't connect with as much. I think that's the point with this book- there is something for everyone.

Shelah says

A collection of essays and poems about the process of becoming a mother, and the change of identity that goes along with it.

Ok, first of all a disclaimer: The essays and poems in *The Mother in Me* were written by women associated with the literary magazine *Segullah*, and as the Assistant Features Editor, I already had lots of respect for the authors.

But I have lots more now. In the beginning the women of *Segullah* made me want to be a better writer. Then they made me want to be a better Christian. Now they're making me want to be a better mother. I can't tell you how much I wish someone had put this book in my hands seven years ago, when I had a one-year-old who made me feel like a total failure and I was pregnant and wondering what the heck I was doing bringing another child into the world when I couldn't handle the one I already had. I felt so alone-- I chose to be a SAHM, left a good job and a satisfying academic career in order to do what was best for my kids, and I felt like just about anyone would do a better job of raising this kid than I was doing. I assumed that everyone else had it all together and I was the only one who felt like I couldn't hack it. Now I know I wasn't alone. Every new mom should read this book. Every mom in the trenches should read this book. Every mom who can already breathe a sigh of relief from the intensity of raising babies and preschoolers should read this book (if just to feel grateful that the stage has passed). So basically everyone should read this book. So follow this link (or this one) and buy it. Please. Because one of my essays is going to be included in the upcoming second volume, so I also have a personal stake in hoping this one does well.

Marcie says

This book was full of essays on motherhood. The style of all the essays (I didn't completely finish so this review is based on the first half) are all very flowery and poetic -- like something you would see entered into an essay contest where all the winners were english majors. Every essay focused on becoming a first-time mom so really this book wasn't that thrilling to me. Don't get me wrong, motherhood is a beautiful thing but I'm not the type of person that seeks out writing on the joys and wonders of expecting. I tend to enjoy books that are less flowery and more funny real-life reflections on motherhood as I currently know it (i.e. potty training and nose picking ... not the glories of my expanding stomach). Anyway, if you like essays and you are an expecting first-time mom then I would recommend it.

Anna says

I finished this about a month ago and wanted to write a whole long commentary about it. Here's the short version:

I found this book interesting because anyone finds interest in reading about other people in the exact same stage of life as them. I could relate to nearly all the tales. They pulled at all my vulnerable heartstrings. And that was its downfall as well. I realize this book was tailored for and written by a very narrow demographic (young Mormon writer mothers), but I really wish they could have had more diversity in the essay topics, tone, and style. Nearly all the stories read like this: perfectionist writer girl is dreaming of a prestigious career, becomes a mom instead and sends her husband to grad school, then becomes overwhelmed by

motherhood, and humbles herself to love her imperfections. Each essay is all tied together as well as any BYU devotional you could find with a lovely extended metaphor. You know the essays are too similar when two concurrent ones begin with the sentence "It was Monday morning"!!

Regardless, I appreciate anyone who tries to write and set their feelings down on paper, and there were a few essays and poems that I dog-eared because I did really like them.

Jeanna says

I liked the way this book helped me think of what my own essay on motherhood is. The definition of my mothering role and the storyline I thought my own life would take was turned about last year when our fertility doctor gave us .1% chance of having another child on our own. This book has stories from every different angle of motherhood and stories from the good and bad, fertile and infertile, adopted.. This book has inspired me to actually put my thoughts and my story on paper.

Becca says

So I can't decide if it was wise for me to read this so soon after giving birth myself. I thought the stories were just beautiful, though some were so sad they scared me. I made the mistake of bringing this to read in public once and ended up just crying in front of people! Guess I'm still a little emotional and hormonal.

The real treat was that the stories were so well-written, the voices strong and calm and easy to read and relate to. And I definitely picked up on some universal motherhood experiences that I can only hope I meet with humor and a positive attitude when it comes to be my turn to experience them. I'm worried that the moral of the story is that those kinds of hopes are inevitably let down, but I'm determined to have them anyway.

I don't think I would recommend this to brand-new moms and certainly not to pregnant women. There are too many scenarios to scare the expecting reader (that is, if you're paranoid about every little thing going wrong, like me). But for women who have a little more distance between themselves and their deliveries, this book is pure gold!

Kathy says

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It is a compilation of essays and poems on motherhood. I could so relate to almost all of the essays! I'm not really a poetry fan but there were a couple good poems thrown in along with some that were a little bizarre.

Here is an excerpt from an essay I really enjoyed by Heather Harris Bergevin:

I still have my own questions about being enough. I'm still disabled. I'm still woefully lacking in housekeeping skills. I'm not very good at crafty things, and I refuse to accumulate the hoard of scrapbooking bits necessary to produce professional results. I can barely knit and I'm glad there's no dusting-proficiency test.

Mostly, though, I have no idea how to ensure that my children walk in truth, especially in a changeable world with unchangeable Truth. I don't know how to teach them modesty in the midst of nakedness, etiquette

within rudeness, to be in the world but not of the worldly thoughts and gesticulations. I am daily unsure how to show them a road that is clearly marked, but sometimes dimly lit or hidden by glaring neon signs pointing toward great and spacious surroundings.

But I do know who holds the answers, and I know how to ask the Teacher my questions, not with a raised hand, but with a bowed head.

One idea I took from this book and implements was from an essay by Emily Halverson:

Although my mother had seven little ones to love, she made each of us feel like an indulged, only child.

Every night she'd come to my bedside with an hourglass in hand and a smile on her face that told me that for the next blessed while, she was all mine....

Life's sand is ever-flowing, but its supply is not unlimited, for the bottom of the hourglass is quickly full.

You cannot stop the flow, but you can learn to notice, to touch, and savor each grain that passes.

I don't own an hourglass but plan to purchase one. Tonight I took my kitchen timer and set it. One by one I pulled each of my children into a quiet corner and we talked about whatever they wanted to talk about. It took just over an hour but what a precious hour it was. They all want another turn tomorrow. I don't know that it is something I will do every night but I plan to do it at least once a week.

Christina says

I loved most of this book. The mothers all wrote from their own personal experiences and there was much that I could relate to. I did feel there was an almost-constant theme of "look at all the sacrifices I made" that almost overwhelmed the smaller, quieter message: "but it was worth it." Some of the essays were very "Me" centered on how hard it is to be a mom, how smart (or talented) they were and how much they had sacrificed for mothering. I would never give this book to a new, young mom because some of the essays are a little too honest about how hopeless and hard mothering is. As a mother of seven under ten, I do "get it." It's exhausting, frustrating, overwhelming work. But the growth that comes is well worth the sacrifice and the positives much outweigh the negatives. I wish that had been a stronger theme throughout the book.

However, there is much here to think about, ponder, and learn from. I was moved to tears many times by the loss some mothers experienced -- infertility, miscarriage, still-birth -- and by the message of other, very wise mothers about the joy in the journey.

Pam says

I finished the book, but I wish I was still reading. Sigh. I loved it! It was perfect! I read it slowly so that I could really *take in* each essay or poem. I found myself thinking about most of them even days later. I want to be a better Mom. I want to sneak into my little boy's room right now and snuggle with him in bed and just take everything in - his smell, the sound of his steady breathing, his perfect face, his soft skin. But I also want to do the same while he's awake - just take everything in. All of it! I LOVE being a Mom. It's the best and hardest gift - all at the same time. This book helped me to realize all the things I love about Motherhood, about my little boy, about my future children, and about my sweet, amazing husband.

I recommend this book to EVERYONE. Even those who aren't yet Mother's, and want to be. I know how you feel. There is a story in there for you too. It's a good one. Take it's advice. (In fact, take it's advice NOW! Do it! You won't regret it!)

Thanks, Heather, for giving me this book. I LOVED IT!!! Does anyone want to borrow it? I have a copy.

Lucy says

Written by a group of smart, articulate and thoughtful women who write for Segullah Magazine and Blog Segullah, The Mother In Me compiles essays and poems whose topics cover pregnancy, miscarriage, infertility, birth, the loss of a stillborn (I wept), parenting special needs children, and several on the challenges of being a mother to small children.

I think this book is best read in small doses - first, because each essay has its own feeling and message to experience and second, because after reading multiple essays at a time, the book starts to feel redundant. Smart woman....smart woman sacrifices (time, energy, body, mind)....smart woman resents challenge...smart woman feels grateful for challenge...smart woman better because of challenge.

As someone who considers herself a smart woman (I hope we all do), I can certainly identify with the whole cycle. Motherhood is hard. And yet, motherhood is the absolute best teacher I could have ever hoped for. Every essay chronicles the development of a God-like trait: patience, hope, faith, forgiveness, compassion, and pure pure love. After reading, I'd want to hug my children, read them a story, take them somewhere to teach them something, play hide and seek, cook together. It made every experience that every mother knows is difficult and frustrating to be viewed as a cherished opportunity. I really enjoyed it.

It's only flaw, in my opinion, was that sometimes the essays felt overly essay-ish. It's not like I want the authors to dumb their writing down, because their writing wasn't difficult to read or hard to understand, but sometimes...only sometimes...I felt the superfluous descriptions of leaves, food, weather, etc, etc was added because they were English majors going for the "A" instead of mothers writing for mothers. That's all.

This would be a GREAT book for any young mother, any mother who ever was a young mother, any woman who one day hopes to be a young mother. In other words, this would be a great book to read for any woman. I'm sure some men would even like it too.

Highly recommended.

Maya says

Short stories on motherhood...perfect for the busy mom or mom-to-be because each story is just a couple of pages (or less for the poems). Covers many aspects of motherhood, including adoption, infertility, and miscarriage. I just wish they included more from working mothers...I don't think any of the women worked after having children and working outside the home is an aspect of motherhood for many.

Tawny says

I enjoyed these stories, especially the ones I could relate to. But I can always do without the assumption that everyone has or will at some point experience pregnancy. Favorite lines:

"Motherhood, I now know, means continual rounds of beginning" (4).

"Did Eve pause in her purposefulness when she realized the known world of her peaceful garden was now nonexistent, that in choosing family, she chose to become part of the wildness of creation" (10)?

"Is this what it feels like to be a mother? To never have one moment to think about yourself, to be so wrapped up in another's needs that nothing else seems to matter" (51)?

"By embracing the inheritance of Eve's mothering birthright, [we] receive a sacred anonymity: a private, holy grace" (81).

"Service was not something to get to when my [homemaking] was done; my [house]work was a way to serve" (132).

"The prospect of using my time and energy to do something that wouldn't get undone fifteen minutes later enticed me" (135).

"My mothering 'experiments' have led me to discover a small miracle: although the frequency of difficult moments may appear to exceed pleasant ones, the depth of joy experienced can equal and exceed the depth of frustration" (162).

"Woman instinctively wants to give, yet resents giving herself in small pieces . . . giving herself purposelessly. What we fear is not so much that our energy may be leaking away through small outlets as that it may be going 'down the drain'" (217).
