



Chiropractic Newsletter Well-Being

Believing You're Mom Enough

Every now and then, there comes a wave of intense media scrutiny on parenting. Back in 2012, Elisabeth Badinter released her book *The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women*. Shortly thereafter, *Time* magazine ran a cover story, "Are You Mom Enough?"—the confrontational headline flanking an attention-grabbing image of a mother breastfeeding her standing, 3-year-old son.

In both cases, the media energy turned frenetic, with other major news outlets—including *Pathways*—clamoring to chime in with their fresh take on the story, newspapers churning out editorials, mom bloggers in uproar, and comedians having a heyday. The year before, a similar media frenzy ensued when Amy Chua released *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*.

As a mom to two daughters, I can't help ponder why parenting, particularly motherhood, presses such hot societal buttons.

I've come to think that part of the problem is our human nature—the tendency to divide into good and bad, right and wrong. It also seems partly due to the viral nature of the news media in this digital age.

The other significant piece, I believe, is that when it comes to parenting, we've lost our confidence.

There's a lot of judgment heaped on parents overall. Everyone seems compelled to dole out uninvited opinions whenever children are involved—from friends to family members to total strangers.

Every time I fly with my children, I find myself in a state of alarm. On one five-hour flight years ago, my 2-year-old spent four-and-a-half hours joyfully looking at

books, playing with toys, and happily chatting.. followed by nine (highly uncomfortable) minutes of loud crying, kicking, and screaming when forced to be buckled into her seat at the start of our descent.

After the plane had parked at the gate and we all stood in that awkward stillness and quiet while everyone waited for the de-boarding process to begin, one woman several rows ahead of us pointed at me and loudly announced, "You've got a real screamer there." Nobody breathed a word while the woman waited for my response. Her index finger remained pointed, ready for battle. The awkward silence as all the other passengers stared at me, too, made me feel as if they concurred.

If it hadn't been for one woman who later whispered, "I thought she did great!" I'm not sure how long it would have taken me to pull my mind out of the shameful place it was headed, asking myself, several months before *Time* ran its cover story, whether I was mom enough. In that moment I felt an almost desperate need for outside validation.

I could go on, with dozens of similar examples in my career as a parent. The point is that our parenting confidence is already tender thanks to pervasive societal judgment. So these occasional media frenzies only chip away at that already fragile place, leaving us searching outside ourselves for the answers, never fully trusting ourselves in knowing what's in our children's best interests. We've bought into the fact that our approach to parenting must fit in, or that our children should act in socially appropriate ways right out of the Baby Bjorn carrier. Our lack of confidence is creating a market for this kind of media hype.

Since I sought out child development material from the

Neufeld Institute, my parenting confidence has been building. Mind you, I was initially drawn to the material looking for specific answers to very specific struggles. What I found, though, was so much richer than that. I learned the vocabulary to bring various developmental dynamics to consciousness, and I've been provided with a map for how to help children reach their full developmental potential.

It sounds lofty, yes, but thanks to my understanding, now, of the conditions children need to truly grow up and mature, for the most part I'm able to turn off those nasty, nagging worries about what I'm doing wrong that's turning my 2-year-old into a "real screamer," and instead focus on the big picture: how I can provide a safe, deep attachment to help grow my children into resilient, soft-hearted, independent people.

For me, it comes down to parenting with confidence—believing that I'm big enough, mom enough, and my children's answer. This confidence comes from within. It's intuition-based—not expert-based, not technique-based, not learning-based, and definitely not media-based.

During his keynote address at a Neufeld Institute Parent Conference, Dr. Gordon Neufeld said, "What children need is for us to resume our rightful role in

their lives, to believe that we are their best bet. If we believe it, then we'll become that. But it must start from a place of presentation, from believing in ourselves as the child's best bet."

I love this reminder, which came for me at exactly the right time—just days before another blast on parenting in the media. And it's so very true. Parents aren't in need of the right answer. Parents are the answer.

—Sara Easterly

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