



The Rainbow Connection

A New Mother's Commentary

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Photos / Linnea Lenkus / Fine Art Portrait Studios / LinneaLenkus.com

It's 7:15 P.M. and I have just spent the last hour and a half trying to soothe my six-week old son so that he can go to bed. Really, it's me who wants to go to bed and therefore he needs to go to bed. So begins the newly implemented nightly ritual that will hopefully send my little boy into dreamland. Unfortunately, what I never accounted for in all my planned parenting (past and present) is that parenting is, in fact, no perfect science and apparently neither is bedtime. And, in my ordered and neat mind I tend to forget that he is only six weeks old. Six weeks...has it really been six weeks?

It's really a very difficult thing to try and wrap your head around the concept of being a parent until you are one. I've always had so many ideals and expectations about the kind of parent I would be. My only frames of reference were friends, sisters and (gasp!) celebrities. I couldn't resist! Gwen Stefani and Katie Holmes looked so natural as mothers and they also looked amazing in

Armani and Galliano. I'm lucky to get a shower and my confidence as a mom comes from a glass of wine at the end of the night. Plus, Kingston and Suri never seemed to cry or spit up and it looked like both Mommy and baby were well rested, well fed and well traveled. I've managed to make it to Target and back, but no overseas trips are planned as of yet.

But my ideals and expectations (let's face it, they were fantasies) were quickly shattered the moment the most beautiful boy entered my life and turned my heart inside out.

Becoming My Self

For the bulk of my late twenties and early thirties, I fought really hard to release my parents from the responsibility of my shortcomings and my personality quirks and to take ownership of them (good and bad). Two years later and a couple thousand dollars spent in therapy revealed that in spite of my most heroic

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attempts, my parents were going to be a part of my life and part of who I am regardless of the number of tearful sessions I endured with my therapist, a dingy sofa, some really ugly wall art and a box of scratchy tissues. I guess it's kind of like one big emotional circle; I ended up right back where I started but this time a bit more insightful and a lot more resourceful.

I would soon find out that becoming a parent offers a peek into the lives of my own parents and an opportunity to see myself in the third person for the first time. Something I was not prepared for.

The Rainbow Connection

Months before I gave birth, I created a playlist that I planned to use in the delivery room (there I go planning again). I loaded it full of soothing melodies that calmed me every time I played it pre-partum. Ben Harper, Jack Johnson, Nora Jones and Sarah McLoughlin. They all seemed to beckon me to a place of peace, a place of freedom. They helped me pass the time as days crawled and I waddled about in anxious anticipation of my first-born. The first song of my playlist, "The Rainbow Connection," represented hope, possibility and sweet, gentle moments I would have with my baby boy. Phil Collins' "You'll be in My Heart" reminded me how this moment and this journey will always be a part of who I am and who I'll become.

But as with most situations in life, things didn't turn out as planned. During the course of my delivery, my iPod went into shuffle mode and instead of my baby boy entering the world to one of my pre-picked songs; he made his entrance to Aerosmith's "Crazy." I guess it was a sign of things to come. Over the past six weeks, I've sort of come to know that my personal "rainbow connection" is just trying to survive the "crazy" right now and to let go a bit of my control or more accurately the idea that I actually have control. To surrender.

Surrender to the Pose

As wound up as I can be at times, yoga has become an important part of creating a balance in my life. During my pregnancy, I took several months of prenatal yoga. Loved it. Aside from learning stretches designed especially for pregnant women, our instructor taught us lessons in life. One particular lesson was surrendering to the pose. "Surrendering to the pose" meant that instead of trying to get a deeper stretch or trying to

hold a pose longer, you had to actually release yourself from that very pose. To stop trying so hard. Surrender has always been in utter opposition to my character. Years of playing sports taught me only to push harder, to never give up or never give in. To surrender would mean to fail or to give up...or would it?

When you surrender, the pose actually begins to work with you, not against you. So it is with my new role as a mother. The more I surrender to motherhood instead of trying to resist it, the more gratifying and rewarding it becomes; and I have the chance to become a better person and mother for it.

I said I didn't want to lose myself, but I find that I have done just that. I have, in fact, lost myself to someone more capable, more resourceful, more humble, more willing to push beyond the threshold of sanity that I thought I could never live through. I find a woman who is more willing to ask for and accept help, more likely to cry for no reason; a woman who tries to get through three-hour blocks at a time instead of worrying about next week or next year. A woman who hopes to get a shower, brush her teeth before noon and eat something with more nutritional value than a slice of pizza and a handful of chocolate chip cookies. I find a woman who has surrendered to the pose and is working on getting a deeper stretch.

Final Thoughts

My son finally went to sleep, not in his crib where all the books say he should, but on my chest. And although it may cause sleeping problems at six months, eight months, two years...I guess it doesn't really matter right now, tonight. I guess in the grand scheme of things, "the big picture of life," spending sleepless nights while my son snoozes peacefully in his mommy's arms is better than not spending them with him at all.

