

Motherhood: The Ideal vs Reality

When I was pregnant, my husband gifted me with a book called “No more perfect moms”. While I am by no means a perfectionist, he knew that I would have high expectations of myself as a mother – basically that I was subconsciously assuming that I would be able to slot in the whole ‘having a kid’ thing without too much disruption to everything else. I expected that I would be just as on top of my household duties, writing and socialising as before, except now while being a perfect mother too.

Boy, does he know me well! Motherhood has taught me a lot of things, one being that ideal expectation is hardly ever reality. To be fair, I’ve been lucky with a lot of things – I wanted a natural birth without painkillers and I had one, and I wanted to breastfeed and that worked out too. But more recently, there have been things – some out of my control and some within it – that are less than ideal. However, as I’ve learnt, they’re still okay.

For one: no baby in our bed. At least, that was the plan, and it worked out great for the first five months or so. But then slowly, for the sake of my sleep and sanity, it was easier to let her feed and fall asleep next to me rather than take the time to settle her back in the cot in the middle of the night. And to be honest, there’s something so adorable about the way she snuggles with her daddy and I – we’ll miss that when she’s a grown-up independent woman! Instead of lamenting how I “failed” with this plan, I still put her in the cot when I can but otherwise I’m enjoying the perks of how it turned out.

And then there’s food. On the one hand, there’s the fact that my daughter just refuses the bottle, whatever is in it. This would be my fault, considering that my mum-guilt of wanting to

breastfeed exclusively for six months meant I attempted the bottle later than most. But in the last few weeks, multiple mothers have told me of their kids who also didn't take bottles, and went straight to a sippy-cup! Hardly the end of the world.

Also on food – my ideal mum self would have cooked and pureed every baby meal from scratch, without ever having to buy pre-packed baby food. But then I discovered that baby food isn't the preservative-filled mush it used to be: these days it's just fruit and veggies, with no added anything, easy to transport and easy to feed. It's just the biggest convenience in a busy day! And while I still do mash things for her now and then, I've decided there's nothing wrong in taking the help.

Speaking of taking the help, I expected to not need much help. Some days, I even think that my husband and I are doing this parent thing without any help. But then I remember all the times our families babysit for us; the times my siblings push the pram while I do the groceries; the times my friends hold the baby so I can finish my meal; the huge amount of love she gets from so many people apart from ourselves. We sure aren't doing this alone! And really, that's one expectation I'm glad I got wrong.

What am I trying to say in all of this? Life with kids may not always be ideal; but man is it good anyway!

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