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## A few things I never knew about being a mother

I've been at this "mother" thing for almost three years now and I am surprised every day by what happens. Touched every day by my son. Maddened every day by my son. Until I walked in these shoes, there were so many things I didn't know about being a mother.

I certainly never imagined how tired I would be — that the fatigue of caring for an active toddler would only be matched by the emotional drain of interacting with and disciplining an active toddler.

I never knew the child I carried around all those months, nursed all those months, and have experienced the greatest love there is with, would drive me so crazy — sometimes nearly to the point of losing control.

And yet, my heart grows every day — not just as Mother's Day approaches — with love for my son. Recently, Charlie brought tears to my eyes as he greeted me one morning with, "Mom, I love you so very much!" Another time as I told my husband in the car how bad I felt forgetting to pick him up

at the Metro station (memory loss is one of the side effects of motherhood), Charlie said, "Mom, don't worry about it — it's no big deal." We all laughed and laughed.

I knew worrying would be part of the package, but I never thought I would worry about the whole world! I feel a kinship with all the other mothers of the world. And continue to be completely impressed that my own mother did this!

Until motherhood, I had never experienced true fear, the kind that stops your heart and turns your blood to ice, until I lost my son in a toy store one day. I called and called, and he did not answer me.

Finally, standing in the middle of the store, I screamed his name at the top of my lungs. It brought the manager out of the back office, and drew the attention of everyone in the place. Another woman presented someone else's child to me. I was frantic.

When I finally found him playing with a toy on the floor, the feeling of complete relief

I never knew that being a stay-at-home mom and going on a family vacation meant bringing my "job" along with me. That has required some adjusting on my part. I sometimes long for the days when vacation meant relaxing, but then smile at the memories of a trip to Florida and Charlie laughing and playing in the pool with his dad.

I'm impressed now that, as the mother of a little boy, I know the difference between a backhoe and an excavator. I no longer tell time in the mornings by the clock on the wall, but by what is on PBS — "Shining Time Station" at 9, "The Big Comfy Couch" at 9:30. And, boy, do I hear it from Charlie if we try to leave the house before his shows are over!

I didn't know how I would struggle after the doctor told me I may not be able to have another baby. It wasn't until I went through my son's baby clothes and cried as I held each one, kissing them and putting them in a box, that the loss hit me and his words fi-

nally sunk in. I cried for the baby I may not have, and I cried for my son growing away from his baby-ness so very fast.

I take each kiss he gives me and lock the memory away in my heart. I know the time will come when he'll be too busy to give me kisses — when he'll think that girls are gross (and moms are girls).

As he stretched out his arms to me on a particularly tough day we were having, my anger started to dissipate. He was in his time-out chair for running his toy rescue truck into my legs (three times!). And I was angry. After a few minutes apart, I told him I was sorry for yelling at him and my eyes actually welled up.

He got off his chair, came to me and put his arms around my neck. "Hugs," he said. "Hug you — will make it all better." Once again I realized I have a lot more to learn about motherhood and that my son, throughout his life, will be my teacher.

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### In my opinion

Cheryl Somers Aubin

that he was all right was mixed with anger that he had not answered me. He knew when he saw the tears in my eyes that something bad had happened. It took me the rest of the afternoon just to get over "almost losing" my son.

Thinking back to simpler times, I am completely horrified at all the times I unhesitatingly proffered advice on child rearing to my friends who had children before I did. I did so, all the while saying to myself, "My child will never act like that!" How little did I know!