

A NEW WORLD

Midnight ponderings of a sleep-deprived mama at 12 weeks after-baby

The world I inhabit now is one where 7:30am is wildly sleeping-in. Where staying up till 9:30pm is dangerously late. Where 4 hours in-a-row sleep is a win-fall to celebrate. It's a merry-go-round world where every two hours is a cycle of greeting baby when she awakes, diaper changes, breastmilk, burping, spit-ups, playing, dressing, undressing, cuddling, carrying, soothing, fussing, crying, sometime screaming, and finally guiding baby back to sleep. This goes on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are no breaks.

In this world, I sleep so lightly that I can hear from a room away when her breathing changes. Whenever she calls me, every molecule I am made of JUMPS, LEAPS and is pulled like a powerful magnet to her. At night, every night, when she calls me I am at her side, picking her up even before I am fully awake.

I know when she needs me even on the rare occasion that we are not within hearing distance of one another. Most nights, I wake up the moment before she does.

Getting outside anywhere is a major feat. Eating proper meals is....well, I haven't finished a meal in 12 weeks. I gulp down whatever I can, whenever I can. Suddenly, things that used to matter, just don't anymore. And other, new things matter a whole lot.

Her cry isn't just loud, isn't just sad, it's soul-ripping. It feels like part of me is being torn apart when she is inconsolable. She subsists solely on the sweet, warm milk my body makes just for her. No water or other nourishment has ever passed her lips. She thrives because every 3 or so hours, she latches on to my breasts and sucks like her little life depends upon it, which it does.

And then there's the mother-fear. Mother-fear comes from the awful realization that your heart no longer resides safely in your own body. Now my heart is her and she's completely and totally helpless. I will never, ever feel fully safe again, knowing that she's in the world and so many things could, might happen to her. I watch the news with mother-eyes now and see that EVERYBODY was somebody's precious babe once. I would easily, thoughtlessly rip apart and obliterate anything or anyone that threatened her harm. I would do it unconsciously, even, more automatically than I would save myself. I would sacrifice ANYTHING for her well-being, including the entire planet, if the choice was ever mine. I would sooner suffer anything than have her suffer. And that's not altruism or selflessness at all. Truthfully, it's selfish, because if anything ever happened to her, I would be destroyed. Something bad happening to her is far, far, universes worse than something bad happening to me.

The weird thing about my new world is that I don't mind any of it one bit. In fact, I adore every leaking, snotty, sweaty, desperate and absurd minute. Each time I get up in the night at her calls, is one more wonderful chance to see her, to hold her. Being apart from her, even for an hour is not a break at all; it's an endurance test until I can be with her again. Her smile, her coos, her hands caressing my face are the best things in the universe. Her feet, her bottom, her ears are miraculous. I never knew I could be this happy, this in love. The exhaustion simply cannot compete with the joy and wonder of being a mama to my babe.

Recently, I was trying to describe my great big love for my daughter to my own mother; I was choking back emotion as I was explaining it to her. She listened, smiled, and told me, "Honey, what you feel for your daughter is exactly what I feel for you." It blew my mind. That I am so loved and cherished. However mixed-up it is, however flawed, this love is a treasure. My love for my daughter is not perfect or free of human foible. It is flawed and wondrous all at once.

Heaven help me, I am a MAMA!