

# One Year In:

## *Things My Daughter Has Taught Me*

This has been a special month. A few days ago, my little L turned 1. It feels like just yesterday I was struggling to hold my newborn, scared that she would slip right out of my shaky hands.



But today she's reaching her arms up at me to pick her up, excitedly cruising the sofa and yelling "Hi!" at anyone within a 200-meter radius.

This year has been extremely unique in the grand timeline of my life. I quit work, became a full-time mom, reached out to tons of moms to create a network, redecorated my home and joined baby activities I had never even heard of before. If anything, I was a totally different person this year. My patience levels went up but my sleep quantity drastically decreased.

The capacity of my heart expanded by leaps and bounds yet my brain is a bag of mush. But I learned a lot along the way. And I share this, because just like me, I'm sure there's a lot of Type A moms struggling with their new identities and tiny bundles.

### **1. You'll have regrets, but then you won't.**

I was terrified of quitting my job. To me, it meant letting go of my individuality, my creativity and my identity. It was who I was. A working creative. Always late in office. Never a minute to rest. Stressed, driven and cranky. And then suddenly I was free. No office hours. No boss. Who was I? Was I just a mom now? I was lost. Adrift.

But then as L started to acknowledge me, as she grew more demanding of my attention, I realised this is where I was needed most.

This was my new mission. I wish I had the verve and the nerves to do it all, be a working mom, but somehow life didn't give me that choice. And now,

I think it's best it didn't. Because she needed me, and well, I needed her. To slow down. To share giggles. To have afternoons reading my favourite books and sharing them with her. I lost my old identity, but I've gained a whole new perspective.

### **2. Creativity doesn't just exist in offices.**

I used to be a creative in an ad agency. But what I didn't realise is, how much creativity I would need to be a mom. You need to be creative to entertain a feisty toddler. You need to be creative with the way you manage your time (shower with her sitting in a high chair, for example) or read while she naps in your arms.

You need to be creative in finding ways to keep her quiet when you get lost in thoughts and she's strapped to a car seat and the GPS says you're 45 minutes from home. You even need to be creative in making her stop screaming "Hi!" in a quiet doctor's office. She will throw problems at you, and you better have solutions fast, or out comes that impatient screech.

At the end of the day, you need to be creative because you don't want her to be a dull, TV-watching kid. You need to be able to resort to the songs, the loud reading, the corny dancing, the strange mouth sounds and the impromptu games if you want there to be peace at home, in the car and especially in public.

### **3. Sleep will remain elusive.**

Someone told me that once babies are 8 months old, they sleep through the night. Well, I crossed that mark a good four months ago and I'm still rudely woken up every two hours a night.

. I've tried the heavy meals before bedtime, the rocking to sleep, the co-sleeping, the crib sleeping, the late bedtime, the early one, the exhaustion routine, the peaceful dim light routine, everything. It seems she's just a light sleeper.

Which makes me a deprived one. But as the months pass you realise, yeah you miss sleep, but it's okay. These are the years you 'll miss when she's too independent to want your cuddles. So, bring on the challenge. I can stay sleepless for another few months. I've lost sleep for far less worthier causes.

**4. She has been my greatest teacher.** I've never been a stop-to-smell-the-roses kind of girl. I'd rather blaze through the day, achieving all that I can in the shortest amount of time. But with a baby you have no choice but to slow down.

She works on her own schedule. She does what she pleases. And if you look closely, you see that you have so much to learn. The curiosity she possesses is admirable. She observes things, tries to look them over completely. She can play with that tissue paper for what seems like ages. It 's forced me to slow down and focus on what matters.

**5. She's made me a better person.**

Overnight, becoming someone's example is daunting. I have so many flaws that I can spend nights fretting over how I can hide them from her. But the point remains, the flaws remain. But I can try to improve. To change. So the person she sees is someone she can respect. Someone she can admire and maybe eventually learn from.

**6. Relationships become exemplary instead of run-of-the-mill.** I've started paying attention to the relationships I have with people. I need her to see that a husband is meant to respect the wife.

That marriage is a partnership which involves an equal amount of give and take. That friendships are to be respected and held on to. That family is one of life's greatest gifts. No longer can you take them for granted. Because the importance you give to them is how she will perceive them.

As the year passed, I realised I had a long way to go. A lot to learn. I failed in various ways.

I couldn't make her yummy organic Annabel Karmel meals every day. I didn't make the bed every day like I promised myself I would. I sometimes forget to read to her even though I

promised I would. But I think I'm getting there. She's a friendly, curious and very sociable little girl. I'd like to think a bit of it had to do with me.

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