

# In Hil's Head



## The things they left out of the Mom Manual

It wasn't very well written – I'll tell you that much! I recently canvassed a bunch of mom friends and the list is almost endless!

It starts with pregnancy and birth. No matter which way you decide to bring your baby into the world, the experience is full of some special little surprises. As one mom said, you pretty much leave your dignity at the door when you walk in and pick it up again when you go for your 6 week check-up.

Baby arrives and you're ecstatic. And tired. So, so tired. As so you remain for the next four years. Or longer, depending on how many times you decide to procreate and the age gaps between your kids. Yes, many of us choose to do this more than once. And regarding age gaps? Which is the best one? Close together, you think? They'll be the best of friends... Lies, I tell you!

No one tells you what the appropriate response is when your baby pees in your face. They also didn't mention that bath water has an amazing ability to get the poop muscle going. Yep, without fail, my oldest would get into the bath and decide it was time to poop. Every single time.

They start to talk and it's ever so cute – most of the time. The loveliest old lady used to look after my kids when they were littlest. Granny Mary was her name. My kids were adamant that she was a man and would tell her so. In their defence, she did have a deep voice. But she wasn't a man.

Food – where do I even start? Well, I can assure you that mine have grown into healthy, strong adolescents despite a diet of fish fingers, noodles and Pronutro for the first 10 years of their lives. Eventually they do learn to eat veggies. They even like them a bit.

Did you know that there is a difference between sandwiches cut into squares and those cut into triangles? And that their preferences for shapes change from day to day? A toasted cheese and ham is not the same as a toasted ham and cheese and is nothing like a ham and cheese pizza. Also, they do get over it eventually. And the sooner you teach them to make their own sandwiches, the better.

The book says that when they're about five or six, they'll lose their first tooth. What they don't mention is what amount the Tooth Fairy/ Mouse/other imaginary creature is supposed to fork out for that first tooth. And what about the rest of the lost teeth? Yes, you may be super excited and rush out to the ATM to withdraw a crisp R200 note. Be over-generous at your own peril. They will lose lots of teeth and it gets expensive! Most of the time, the teeth will come out when your wallet is at its emptiest. I have literally written IOUs on behalf of the Tooth Mouse.

And what are you meant to do with the teeth? They're kind of grim to keep around, but they're part of my babies and I hate throwing them away – does that make me strange? I read recently that they can be used for stem cell extraction or something. My



only issue is that I have put all the teeth in a tiny jewellery box at the back of my cupboard and I have no idea which teeth belong to which kid. I think that might make the stem cell extraction thing a bit complicated, right?

Throwing away the kids' art work is another heart-wrenching thing. They bring home reams and reams of artwork in pre- and primary school. A couple of the pics made their way into my box of sentimental junk, but most were taking up valuable cupboard space in photocopy paper boxes. We recently did a spring clean and the kids themselves chose to throw the artwork out; very unceremoniously too. "Who would want to keep half coloured-in Humpty Dumpty pictures?" asked the Tween.

But the biggest thing they left out – and forgive me for how twee I'm about to get – is how incredible your love for those little people will be. Your heart will be bigger and more open than it ever was. There is no limit to the lengths you will go for them. Or maybe that was in the book... and I just didn't understand the intensity of it?



## Let Go Of Being Perfect

ZENA LE ROUX

## HEALTH & WELLNESS



If you're obsessed with eating healthy foods all the time, this can cause stress— and, as we know, stress is not good for our health. In addition, part of health is pleasure. If we deprive ourselves of our favourite foods or feel we cannot (or should not) share a celebration meal with our friends and family because of the food being served, it affects our health. Stressing about eating is counterproductive to our health.

There are times when we get on a roll of mindless or unhealthy eating. If this happens we can try the following to get back to our healthy eating regime:

- Wait before having seconds. As we know, it takes a while for the message (the fullness in your stomach) to reach your brain.
- Eat mindfully. Rather than eating in front of the TV, in your car, or at your desk, take

time to enjoy your meal. Take the time to properly chew your food, which will help slow down the meal process and aid your digestion. Think about what you are eating and the process it went through to get to your plate.

- Ask yourself why. If you find yourself regularly reaching for unhealthy food, ask yourself why you are doing it. Are you doing it for comfort? For many of us, eating is tied to emotion. Sometimes we eat because we are bored, anxious, depressed, or angry. Eating unhealthy food makes us feel better temporarily (or at least we think it will). Ask yourself, "Why am I reaching for this food and what will it really take to satisfy this need?" For example, if you are angry with someone, you may reach for ice cream instead of confronting the situation. Taking a moment before you eat may help to pinpoint exactly what is going

on with your emotions. Try journaling, writing a letter (that doesn't need to be sent), or talking to a friend about it. Perhaps taking a walk or breathing can keep the emotional eating at bay. If you take a moment to experience your emotions rather than numbing them with food, you can regain control. You will realise that you have a choice as to how you respond to the emotion. It can be either by reaching for food or by doing something that will better satisfy what you really need.

If you are eating more unhealthy foods than healthier ones, don't beat yourself up about it. There are good days (or weeks) and bad ones. Try again tomorrow. And remember, it's okay (even healthy) to eat unhealthy foods sometimes – as long as you are there for the right reasons and enjoying it fully (without guilt).