

Guest Blogger Jenny: Confessions of a Mommy Playgroup Reject

Description

It's been almost ten years since my daughter was born, and a lot has happened. But, one of the things that still stands out for me from the early days of motherhood is my first experience with a playgroup.

Motherhood did not come easily to me. I was 33 when Anna was born (the first of my friends to have a baby), and I ended up with some bad post partum depression. I didn't really emerge from my hopeless depressive fog until about six months had passed. At that point, Anna was a very cute, tiny, and crabby baby who seemed to need a lot of stimuli. So, I took her to one of those Mommy and Me type classes in West Hollywood.

The class itself was fine, simply an hour of free play while the mothers milled around. I met a very friendly, very pretty mommy there who seemed totally simpatico, and she invited me to join a playgroup she'd recently attended. It's kind of waspy, she said. I didn't know what to say to that, but figured that she must need company, so I went.

I will say that I didn't really fit into this playgroup from the very beginning. The women were very respectable and conservative. They were sort of friendly, but not in any sort of down and dirty way. They perfunctorily chatted with me (Breastfeeding? No, not anymore. RIE classes? No. Homemade baby food? WTF?) before I retreated. I spent a bunch of time huddled with the one friendly pretty woman I knew, and then eventually our duo in the corner grew into a group.

This group was definitely different from the main mommies in the playgroup. We all seemed grubbier, moodier, edgy and a bit neurotic. The majority of us had been in creative fields; unlike the main mommies, none of us had retired from the business world. We drank a lot more coffee and ate a lot more cookies. There was cursing coming from our corner. Many of our children were not blond. Some of our children seemed ever so slightly unwashed. None of us wore pearls or Chanel logo earrings.

After a couple of months of weekly groups, I began to realize something. If the group was held at an original member's abode, everyone showed up. But, if the locale was owned by one of us corner lurkers, we were on our own. This was just another indicator of the approaching wholesale rejection.

There were two things that led to the final death knell and the split. The first was when a stay at home dad started showing up. I will give the uptight ladies this much: he was kind of creepy. He wasn't, say, a funny gay dad, or a cute young stay at home dad, or a cool hipster dad. No, this guy was sort of doughy and soft, seemed unmotivated, had a wife from hell and seriously seemed to cramp the uptight ladies' style (even though, it must be admitted, they weren't discussing anything juicy anyway). The uptight ladies began boycotting. And then the word came down from above.

I can't remember who told me first, but one of the other corner mommies informed me that there had been some mention by the uptight ladies of the pretty young mom who'd gotten me into the group in the first place, some criticism along the lines of: "She's too cute." It was the sort of slam that can only be made by a conservative blond in a sweater set, and it was final.

Suddenly, the corner mommies were rejected altogether. There were too many "age differences between the kids," one uptight lady offered. "Our schedules don't mesh," another said. Interestingly enough, one of the rejects, whose husband was a famous artist, was invited to the "new" playgroup, same time, uptight lady's house. She graciously declined the offer, deciding to stick it out with the corner contingency. She didn't make homemade baby food, either.

Word, of course, got back to the pretty mommy who'd recruited all of us. "Those fuckers!" she hollered, before inviting us all over to her house for a consolation reject playgroup of our own. At that point, I was seriously beyond caring.

We kept that neurotic, twitchy, mostly brunette playgroup going for about two years, until pre school schedules tore us off in opposite directions. I'm still very close with one of the rejects, and our kids still play together.

The one thing this entire experience taught me is that, just because you happened to squeeze out a baby at roughly the same time, the other mommy just might not be your speed. This seems obvious, I know, but when you're lonely and sleep deprived and covered with spit up, you'll go to great lengths and operate on a stratospheric level of denial for a little company. So scrutinize your playgroup picks carefully, since the last thing you need in the first year of motherhood is rejection by your "peers."

On the other hand, if you do wear pearls, Chanel logo earrings, and a blond pageboy, do I have a playgroup for you.

ADD Bloggess mommy cards at the park

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1. Beyond The Brochure

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