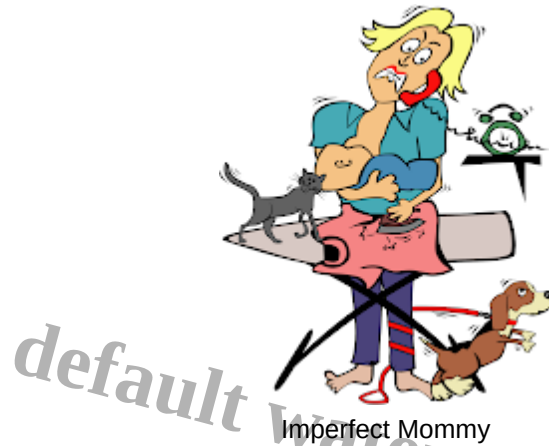


Guest Blogger Jenny: Imperfect Mommy. She's At Private Schools, She's Everywhere!

Description



After writing that [“Perfect Mommy”](#) piece that got the Holistic Mommy Network in an uproar, Christina and I noticed something: an uptick in the past year or so of the “Bad Mommy” blog genre. You know, the opposite of Perfect Mommy, in which Bad Mommy secretly (or not so secretly) wants martinis, cigarettes, pot and sex (usually not with her partner). Billed as being “honest,” these blogs end up almost as competitive and crazy making as their “Perfect” counterparts. If you’re like us, you’ve probably spent time clicking on sites like: [Her Bad Mother](#), [Mommy Wants Vodka Perfectly Disheveled](#), [Vodka Mom](#) and many more. And still, the mommies in the middle learn nothing and continue to shriek and finger point. We may digress slightly with this topic, we find it amusing. But, rest assured, private elementary schools in LA have plenty of Imperfect Mommies (and mommies in the middle too!).

At first, I thought I’d write a parody of one these Bad Mommy blogs, a sort of Bad Mommy to end all Bad Mommies. But here’s the problem: it doesn’t work. The real blog entries are usually pretty out there already, so to write a parody, the mommy has to be really bad. Like, call Protective Child Services bad. In my unpublishable attempt at parody, my “bad mommy” caricature got drunk three times, forgot her kids’ names, lost her kids on her own block, exposed them to second hand smoke, locked them in their rooms, and slept with the handyman. Yes, that’s some bad behavior. It’s also not funny. I was ready to call the authorities on her by the end.

I think it’s very easy to make fun of the perfect mommy idea, simply because it’s unattainable. Most of us lack the funds, the patience, or the time to devote to the demands of perfect motherhood. Most of it is so ridiculous, in fact, that it’s easy to attack. Who doesn’t want to go off on some self righteous celebrity using her perfect motherhood to get publicity? It’s just a lightning rod for criticism.

But the Bad Mommy phenomena hits far closer to home. Many of us came to motherhood relatively late, and had time to live freely, have careers, went to dinner whenever we wanted. We were independent and sassy and a little bit selfish. All of these things are, I think, an improvement in the lives of women. But all of these things make the myopia of motherhood harder to take. Thus, the Bad Mommy blog is born.

“Quit your whining,” I hear critics say. “You chose to have children, and this is now your life.” It’s true that men in particular loathe the Bad Mommy genre, possibly because it makes them wonder if their mothers might have secretly felt the same way; it makes them squirm in some fundamentally Oedipal way. And there are plenty of us out there who secretly read Bad Mommy blogs because it’s a comfort to know that someone out there is way, way worse than us. But none of this is particularly productive; it just pits women against one another and makes us seem whiny and silly to the other 49% of the population.

These blogs all tend to focus on actions, whether it’s making your own granola or sneaking a smoke in the backyard. The thing is, the actions involved in parenting, if you really boil them down, are not complicated. The kid needs to be fed, and feeding her just involves food (breast milk or formula, homemade baby food or store bought, is fairly irrelevant; to the baby, food is food). The kid needs to sleep, whether it’s with you in bed or solo in a crib. The baby needs to be held, by someone. We make it complicated, but it’s not.

What are immensely complex are our feelings about parenting. All our expectations, all our dreams, all our frustrations and disappointments get tied up in the act of parenting. This isn’t really about the kids, it’s about us, and how we were raised, and how, even after years of working and competence, being parents brings up immense feelings of inadequacy. And inadequacy tends to lead to overcompensation, either through becoming a bossy, show off, Perfect Mommy, or a rebellious, sulky Bad Mommy.

Add an entire industry of self-help books and tv shows and contradictory advice, and you have a perfect mechanism to feed this inadequacy. After all, if mothers feel inadequate all the time, they’re far more likely to buy into the latest food trends, or invest thousands of dollars in unnecessary baby-proofing, or attend parenting classes touting dubious techniques. There appears to be very little in the way of trusting your instincts, looking at what you personally can tolerate as a parent, and then carrying out those plans without guilt or self-consciousness.

We are a very fearful, insecure, needy generation. We say we want the best for our children, but are unable to articulate what “best” even means. We think that by raising our children differently from how we were raised, our children will be happier, but really we’re only trying to please ourselves. And, in the end, we drown in our own self-absorption and needs, which masquerades as parenting. Perhaps it’s time to take a solid look at our own unfulfilled childhood needs, the complexity of what it feels like to be a parent when we still feel like children inside, and set the actual parenting scenario aside. In the end, we need to have some compassion for one another, rather than one-upping each other in terms of parenting actions.

Jenny Heitz has worked as a staff writer for Coast Weekly in Carmel, freelanced in the South Bay, and then switched to advertising copywriting. Her daughter started 4th grade at Mirman School this year. She previously attended 3rd St. Elementary School. Jenny has been published recently in the Daily News. She now writes about gift ideas and products on her blog, [Find A Toad](#).

Category

1. Beyond The Brochure

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1. Guest Blogger Jenny Heitz

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