

Faith



Life Actually By Kari Kampakis

An encouraging word for new moms

Congratulations, momma. You did it. You've ushered a miracle into this world. That newborn baby in your arms is a game changer, a tiny slice of heaven and the purest thing you'll ever know on this side of eternity.

My guess is that you spent your pregnancy preparing for this moment. You've read the books. Sought the advice. Chosen your pediatrician and educated yourself on baby gear.

Yet even so, you're worried and overwhelmed. This world seems so unfit for a baby, and there's too much that can go wrong.

So what does the future hold? What can you expect? Clearly, your family's story will be unique, but what I can touch on are common experiences and feelings, things I wish someone had told me when I became a mom 15 years ago.

► **Having a baby is hard work.** And with your first baby, there's a steep learning curve as you learn to care for another human being while functioning on limited sleep. Give yourself room to grow, and show yourself grace. Lower your expectations of what you can accomplish in a day. Most

importantly, accept from family and friends and rest whenever you can. Even if you feel like Wonder Woman, sleep deprivation will catch up with you if you ignore your body's needs.

► **Children are blessings, not burdens.** While this is easy to remember on good days, the hard days are another story. When my four kids were small, there were mornings when the pitter-patter of little footsteps charging toward my bedroom put a major pit in my stomach.

Kids challenge you at every age, but the early years can be particularly taxing. What helped me most was keeping my mind in a positive place. I exercised, invited friends over for playdates and wrote fiction as a mental escape. I also hung around moms with a good sense of humor and read Christian books before bed to help me grow a healthy perspective.

► **Online community is great, but real-life community is priceless.** I love social media, but I'm glad it didn't exist when I became a mom. I'm glad that when I felt lonely, sad, or confused, I had to reach out to

friends and relatives rather than click online.

The world is different now, and while online communities can offer tremendous support and timely advice, they'll never meet your needs like real-life interactions. Enjoy your online community, but remember your best interactions will always happen in person.

► **You don't need a fancy house and loads of money to raise a happy, healthy child.** Among young families there is often upward mobility and a fear of getting left behind. There is silent competition as everyone trades up in search of "the good life."

But as you age, you see "the good life" blow up as people face problems that money can't solve. You realize what matters and begin to see that what kids need most isn't private bathrooms and luxuries, but attention and love. Since both of those are free, they can exist in the humblest homes.

► **The best mom friends are compassionate, not competitive.** Let's face it – we all have a competitive monster that gets stirred whenever we feel inadequate. And when you see a child hit milestones

before your own or meet a mom who's more together than you, it can make you feel the need to prove yourself.

But remember this: The purpose of friendship is to bless, not to impress. And what you need, above all, are mom friends with that attitude. Moms who cheer you on and moms who cheer you up. So be an encourager, and surround yourself with ladies who do the same.

The struggle of motherhood is real, but the rewards make it worth it. You have so much to look forward to – first words, tender kisses, bedtime stories and Christmas morning – but for now enjoy that angel in your arms, whose innocent eyes and dependence on you will turn your world upside down.

God made you for this moment, and if you open your heart to Him, He'll guide you in the road ahead. You're going to be a fantastic mother. In fact, you already are.

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