Mothers' Wit

HUMOROUS QUOTES ON MUMS AND MOTHERHOOD

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Extract

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Introduction

The dictionary definition of the word 'mother' is 'A female who has given birth to offspring.' A truism, yet woefully incomplete. To be a mother is a woman's greatest vocation in life, for mothers make the world go round – literally.

The word mother is linked intrinsically to images of babbling babes in arms, wind-fresh laundry, steamy kitchens, the smell of Dettol, the taste of toffee, the feel of a warm, soft bosom and the touch of deft hands which create, nurture and protect.

How many women spent many a tortured hour in adolescent years, longing for the glory of curing cancer, the fame of the movie star, the adulation of the music industry or the giddy heights of academic brilliance? How many set out to achieve the luminosity of stardom in the first unsteady steps into adulthood? By their thirties, how many more have discovered instead the intensity of their child's first steps across the living room and into their arms?

You set out wanting the world to worship the ground you walk on and pretty soon you realize that motherhood brings with it your own little world that

will do exactly that ... At least until that little world grows into spotty, hairy and misunderstood adolescence; all pop stars and pop tarts and black hair dye. (At this point you may find yourself wondering what was so bad about the curing cancer idea after all ... and so nature turns full circle.)

It's tempting to see motherhood as an art – and one that we have only just begun to grasp in recent times. Medieval motherhood was simply a question of mating, gestating and liberating, followed by an extended period of breastfeeding. Wasn't it?

Teachers asked in the 1940s to comment on the most serious disciplinary issues they faced on a regular basis listed litter and untucked shirts as top gripes. Imagine that. Today's teachers, asked the same question, list violent crime, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse as theirs. So what – or whom – is to blame?

Today's mother faces an overwhelming barrage of advice. Education, Western wealth and technological advances mean that a woman is faced with gargantuan choices to make about every issue from conception on. The path she chooses to take on her child's dad, diet, diapers and dance class is analysed and, inevitably, criticized. However carefully she makes these decisions, if she listens long enough, someone, somewhere, will be bitching.

The truth, for those wanting to discover it, is that motherhood has never been easy: toddlers have always been trouble; teenagers have always been foul; mothers-in-law have always been judgemental and dreaded.

Mothers' Wit

This collection of mothers' wit delves into the heart of motherhood, the joys of which include catching a child's vomit in your hands and cleavage in an attempt to save the carpet, to the more serene moments of guiltily lapping up daytime telly while breastfeeding a newborn.

A mother lies at the heart of every person and we track her development from single woman searching for a potential mate to the white-haired matriarch doling out nuggets of wisdom. We don't attempt to glorify the mother – after all, no mum is perfect and some are far from it. Instead, we capture a mother's foibles, from hatred of housework and ineptitude in the kitchen, to dealing with discipline and the guilt of going out to work. Of course there are sprinklings of the soppy and sentimental too, as we cannot help but love our mums!

Here, the combined wit and wisdom of great characters in history, from Pliny to Presley, Nietzsche to Nigella, the Marquis de Sade to Dame Edna, testify to the emotional minefield that is motherhood. A mother's influence has moulded the most powerful people on earth and even prompted presidents to form lifelong opinions on broccoli.

Motherhood is ...

... [feeling] like an acrobat high above a crowd out of which my own parents, my in-laws, potential employers, phantoms of 'other women who do it' and a thousand faceless eyes stare up.

... a ticker tape parade for two

... knowing when to be the wind in your child's sails and when to calm the waters.

... never refusing their home-made cakes.

... an all-terrain vehicle.

... never robbing your child of the opportunity to make a bad choice all on his own.

... only ever walking away from them to check that their coast is clear.

... always being there when they've popped all their bubble wrap.

... laughing at their jokes though they are not very funny and listening to their problems though they are not very serious.

... spending half your time worrying how they will turn out and the other half wondering when they will turn in.

... like living with a bowling alley in the brain.

... only having time to shave one leg.

... spending longer on the toilet because its feels good to be alone.

... catching your kid's sick.

... enjoying your meal even though someone else's kid is throwing up.

... refusing to let him have toy weapons, while he nibbles on a sandwich till it looks like a gun.

... counting ketchup as one of their daily five portions of fruit and veg.

... cutting your husband's garlic bread up into manageable portions at the restaurant.

... realizing at least halfway home from nursery that you are still singing along to their 'Wheels on the Bus' song tape.

... going back to work for the rest.

... a glorious career!

... the best all round job. No other career would allow you to be plumber, drill sergeant, nurse, chef, umpire, banker, telephonist and international diplomat – all before 9.30 a.m.

All Anon.

... having someone else to blame when there is a rude smell in the air.

Jane Horrocks

... never being number one in your list of priorities and not minding at all.

Jasmine Guinness

... mind-blowing.

Britney Spears

... the biggest on-the-job training scheme in the world.

Erma Bombeck

... the first word that occurs to politicians and columnists and popes when they raise the question, 'Why isn't life turning out the way we want it?'

Mary Kay Blakely

... perhaps the only unpaid position where failure to show up can result in arrest.

Mary Kay Blakely

... the great divide between one's own childhood and adulthood. All at once someone is totally dependent upon you. You are no longer the child of your mother but the mother of your child.

Elaine Heffner

... a wonderful thing. What a pity to waste it on the children.

Judith Pugh

... the keystone of the arch of matrimonial happiness.

Thomas Jefferson

The story of a mother's life: Trapped between a scream and a hug.

Cathy Guisewite

... like Albania – you can't trust the brochures, you have to go there.

Marni Jackson

... not for the faint-hearted. Frogs, skinned knees and the insults of teenage girls are not meant for the wimpy.

Danielle Steel

... nothing more than feeding the hand that bites you.

Ann Diehl