

# When I was a mommy

When I was a mommy, I taught my kids to drive. Starting with a walker, where my little one's feet barely touched the floor; to a yellow and red car that reminded me of the Flintstones; to a red tricycle which I could push if needed; to a bicycle with incredibly wobbly training wheels; to a two-wheeler which I ran behind, watching my child crash into mailboxes; to a car, where I sat bumping along as the clutch and the gears didn't sync.

When I was a mommy, I changed a lot of diapers, wondering if what I saw was normal, too loose, not loose enough, often messy, and watching for the spray of an unexpected release. Later, I led my child to the bathroom where all good deeds were rewarded with candy. Then to preschool, which was the ultimate reward for having left behind security under one's shorts. And to kindergarten, where accidents might happen on the bus ride home. And more than my share of late night bed changes. And finally, to a time when those are just stories I tell to embarrass my kids.

When I was a mommy, I tried making baby food myself, realizing that was too "natural" even for me. Eventually, I tasted many jars of baby food and found them delicious. My favorite time was when I discovered the calming power of Cheerios; what other cereal could distract and amuse for 15 minutes or more? Later I cooked a lot of hotdogs, asking the doctor if there was a danger to my child if they



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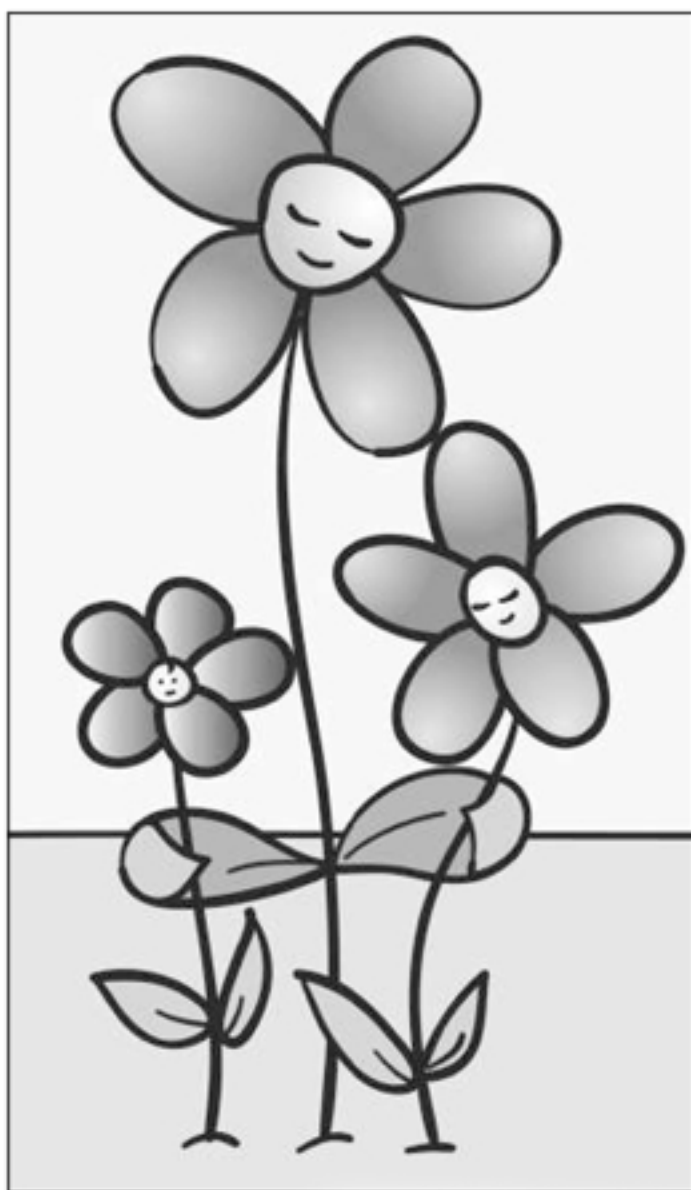


IMAGE BY JODY RUSSELL

blindness become obvious.

When I was a mommy, I worried about the daily concerns of clean teeth, wiped butts, brushed hair, washing the bottoms of feet before bed after a summer day of barefootedness, waxy ears, healthy meals, chicken without hormones, reading stories aloud at night and nap time.

Time passes — as it has now. And their childhood rooms are devoid of bed, dressers, lamps, candles, tissue boxes, computers and speakers. I walk around the tidiness of it all, wondering what should be placed in these rooms. Would a sewing room be nice? I wonder what is next.

I wonder: What kind of mommy am I now?

The next stage of mommyness is one I am exploring. It's the stage that comes between the active parenting mommy and the grandparenting mommy. It's a no-woman's land of love and care where the apron and its strings have long fluttered in the wind across the (eden) prairie. It's the stage where it's nice to pay for a pair of heels or a pair of running shoes for the child on a tight budget. It's a stage where advice is freely given when asked but no other time. It's a stage where one always tries to answer the cell phone if it rings. A stage where even a text message can be a delight.

It's a stage of holding one's breath that things will work out, that the mommy job done all those years was a job done well.

When I was a mommy seems a moment ago and at the same time years ago. Yet, it is part of how I define myself: Mommy. The memories of those eyedroppers of amoxicillin and the stinky diaper pails fade back. The empty rooms are a possibility of what's next, not of what's lost. And I realize that I am still a mommy.

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were eaten for three meals a day, interspersed only with Fruit by the Foot. And finally, to my amazement, watching my children eat almost anything that was cooked for them, save excessively slimy things and rhubarb.

When I was a mommy, I taught my children shapes and colors. One learned colors easily and wore pinks, purples, and other bright colors. The other seemed not to care about color, wore black clothes for the entire year of kindergarten, and only later did the truth about his color