

Parent - to - Parent

Getting through the day

Editor's note: HHTW is pleased to present a new - and no doubt slightly controversial - columnist, Sharon McKay. Sharon is both a vivacious person and a no-holds-barred vivacious writer. Her topic will be parenting and the many joys and frustrations that go with this most important element in our social development.

By Sharon E. McKay
Special to HHTW

"Excuse me, why are you writing a parenting column? Aren't you the one who went ballistic when your four-year-old demanded a ride on that loonie-eating elephant at Loblaws?"

"Er, yep. 'twas me all right. (I have a particular aversion towards gumball machines and mechanical beings that pose, bandit like, at the exit and entrances of stores. This is but one pet peeve that you'll hear about, ad nauseam, in this column.)

Right - back to, "what gives you the right."

I am a librarian by training and a writer by trade. I would cheerfully turn my hand to in-depth reporting on the roll ball bearings play in our lives the same day I proclaim that yes, "breast is best".

I come to this column with credentials. Ten years of writing in the trenches.

My first book was Street proofing Gently and Creatively (Royce). Then came The New Child Safety Handbook, (Macmillan) my favorite. A New Parent's



Sharon McKay

Survival Handbook (Macmillan) is a tippy book written when I was pregnant and couldn't write an entire paragraph without throwing up. Then came The Picky Eater (Harper Collins).

(Is this boring? It certainly is from this end.) Anyway, along with my husband, David MacLeod (the portly fellow who doubles for Gentle Ben) we write children's non-fiction. Our first collaboration Chalk Around the Block (Somerville House) just nabbed the Parent's Choice (gold) award in the U.S. Four new books are, as we speak on the press.

Toot, toot. So much for horn blowing.

Bottomline - all the books, degrees and research will not turn any of us into "parenting experts" - this includes me. Even those whose children have safely catapulted into adulthood cannot claim "expert" status: Luck plays a

role in all our lives.

Those of us who choose to write on this topic do so with our fingers crossed and hearts on our sleeves. I write about safety and yet stood helpless as my four-year-old challenged a dump-truck at the corner of Bayview and Eglington. My other son is skirting the teenage years. I will soon watch as he pulls the car out of the driveway on Friday night. (Not!)

Parenting - the verb - is about doing one's best, stumbling about, laughter and trying to deal with fear. Fear that our children may be hurt, abused, abducted. Fear they will hook up with the 'wrong' crowd, get hurt or hurt. And in the recession we have our own demons to battle. Fear of losing our jobs, businesses, homes, cars.

Gee, this is cheery.

Well, the only effective tools I know of staving off 'The Fear' are knowledge and laughter.

I'll do my best to provide both.

This is a syndicated column - which means I get told off by parents right across the country. Feel free to add your voice.

And when you see me dismembering an elephant, or other mechanical ride at the shopping centre, or standing in the fruit roll-up aisle at the A&P, hands in the air, exasperated (\$3.49 - are you kidding!) know that I too am just trying to get through the #%^#&# day.

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