

Moments when you know you're a mother

When we first brought Leo home, one of my experienced mom friends said to me, "Nothing will make you feel more like a mom than watching him throw a tantrum." When I'm having a difficult time with our sons, I think of that and realize how true that is—that the challenging moments can be the times when you most feel like a mother. You realize that no one else is going to step in handle the situation, that you are on your own, completely responsible for helping shape your child's behavior. There are other times too, the exquisitely poignant moments when you look at your child and marvel that God entrusted you with the care of this unique individual, so loved by Him.

I imagine for a mother who gives birth, she may feel like a mother from those first minutes—or maybe from the time she feels the baby move within her womb. My experience has been a little different since our family was created through adoption. So, when do I feel most like a mother?

Our first nights together: The moments when we first held our sons are magnificent, emotional memories I will always cherish. But I didn't really feel like a mother until the government officials were gone, the other newly formed families had disappeared, and I was holding my son in a stark hotel room thousands of miles from home. We played together, ate together, watched Chinese music videos together, cried together, saw our first smiles from our boys, and started the journey of a lifetime.

In sickness and in health: Do you ever feel more like a parent than when your child is sick? For me, some instinct kicks in as if I've been handed a script. It works both ways, too. When we had been home just a few months with Daniel, he was still not sleeping well at night—not surprising at all for a child whose world had been turned upside-down. After a grueling week of an ear infection and a terrible cough, however, he relaxed and started sleeping much better at night. That sickness turned out to be the answer to a prayer—though I never imagined it during those sleepless nights.

Lullaby and good night: I've sung lullabies to many children, but there is nothing like singing to your own child. That moment at the end of the day, even when my sons are trying their best to postpone bedtime, is one of the moments when I feel closest to them. What do we sing? Leo gets everything from "Down on the Corner" to "Silent Night," but the first lullaby both boys learned—and my favorite—is "Toora Loora Loora."

Leaving for the first time: Going out for that first time without Leo, and then without Daniel, made me realize how intertwined our lives had become. But it's almost worth leaving because then you get to experience... "MAMA!"

When my sons greet me at the end of the workday, sometimes they run to me with their arms open wide and smiles they've been saving just for me. How did I get so lucky?

What are the moments when you most feel like a mother?