

# The best advice I've ever received as a parent: 'It gets better'

While I was waiting to pay for Frank's haircut, a boy three times his size played peekaboo with Frank from behind a tower of shampoos and conditioners. Frank shrieked with delight, looking especially dapper with his newsman hair. The bigger boy's father sat across from me in a Miami Dolphins hat and jersey. His eyes were the color of the Caribbean. He'd passed them-along with thick black hair and eyebrows-onto his son.

"It's been so long since my boy was that size," he said.

I braced myself for another lecture on how "time flies," "enjoy it: they grow so fast," "you'll miss this," and, of course, "these are the best years of your life."

I know that people mean well when they say things like that, but it always brings me down. It's a reminder that all the joy I'm experiencing is fleeting. I'll soon be alone, without a sense of purpose, and before I know it I'll be dead.

Of course, that's not the intention. People are taking a moment to live vicariously through my life as the mother of three very young boys. They're wistfully recalling their own experiences and regretting the times they so desperately wanted their children to grow up. They don't want me to make their mistakes. No "Cats in the Cradle" to be had here. These kind strangers want me to appreciate the humor, the warmth, and the light which permeates my every day by the very presence of my beautiful sons. And so, they remind -no warn-me of the changes to come.

But this Dan Marino look-alike was different.

"It was fun, but I don't miss it," he says. "It's so much better now."

He explained that his wife works an intense job, so he is the primary parent to their 10-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter. He enjoyed taking care of them as babies, but hasn't forgotten the frustrations of diapers, sleepless nights, and carrying around more luggage than most airlines would allow.

I dashed toward Frank to keep him from running out the front door and into the busy parking lot, but his big friend got there first and picked him up. I asked his father, "So, how is it better?"

"You get to know them for the people they are. They have more developed personalities. You can have real conversations with them. They make you laugh. You get to work on projects together. You can take them anywhere, even on roller coasters."

I was intrigued. I'd never had this conversation before. All I hear about is how the life I'm living at this very moment is the best that it will ever be. That's no way for

anyone to live. My boys are sweet, and funny, and loving right now, but that doesn't mean they won't be in the future. Why can't I keep loving them more and more every day? I know that they will separate from me eventually, and that there will be times I will want to send them back to Franklin Square where I found them, but that will be the right time for me to pursue that PhD and write that book I've been dreaming about. And there will be time for baseball games and science fair projects and stroller-free family vacations in between.

So, thank you, Super Dad, from Super Cuts. It would be nice if more people shared your perspective on life. I hope I can maintain it, even when the going gets rough. Watching your son play with mine was a nice peek at the good things headed my way.