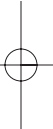




On Binkies



Where do binkies go to hide? No matter how large my stockpile, the day inevitably arrives when only one lone pacifier remains, and it's playing hide-and-seek. It's naptime. Life as we know it is suspended as every member of the household is commissioned in the search-and-rescue operation, signaled by the frantic call, "Where's the binky?!"

Who in the world thought of sticking a nipple on a handle to try to soothe a crying baby? I have a theory. Years ago, some exhausted nursing mom willing to do anything for a moment's peace mused, "I'll bet if I removed my nipple and let the baby suck on it for a while, I could catch a couple winks." To which her terrified husband, fearing she just may

attempt to test her assumption, instantly responded, “Oh, honey, please don’t do that! I’ve got just the thing.”

Off he raced to his workbench where he snipped and twisted and hammered and glued. Back in a flash he flew and presented his grateful wife with the world’s first “nipple on a ring,” as he called it. Though the name and appearance have been refined, the end result is the same.

I realize it’s not always politically (or perhaps I should say parentally) correct to admit to using a binky. I don’t care. I’ve used them for four kids, and not one of those kids has gone off to kindergarten sporting a plug. They do not look like Mr. Ed and don’t seem to be suffering any psychological damage, though undoubtedly some well-meaning professional will presently announce an insidious new malady plaguing our upcoming generations: pacifier dependence residual disorder.

The other evening, I took the kids out to a local family-owned restaurant for dinner since Dad was out of town. Fun was had by all, a mess made by most, but I didn’t have to clean it up. So it was a good night. Upon arriving home, I carried Charli upstairs, ready to tuck her in beddie-bye and have a little quiet time to curl up with a book and a beverage, only to

discover much to my horror that the last precious binky was missing!

The signal was given. The search was on. We searched the stroller, but no binky. We hunted throughout the house, no binky. We inspected all the usual depositories where previous runaway pacifiers had been located. Still no binky. For those of you who are politically correct and *cannot* relate to my panic-stricken state, replace the word *binky* with *blanky* or *lovey* or whatever item your child has adopted as a comfort mechanism. Yep, you get it now. It's missing, it's bedtime, and as we say in the South, "This dog ain't gonna hunt."

Having turned up empty-handed at home, I hopped in the car and drove back to the restaurant. Barefoot, out of breath, and wearing a look of sheer desperation, I accosted the owner-manager of San Giovanni's Restaurant: "Sir, I was here earlier tonight and I think I left *the* binky." This was obviously a man who had kids. Like Dan Rather with a breaking-news bulletin, he announced, "We have a mom here who's lost a pacifier, and it's bedtime." People shot knowing glances my way and immediately began checking beneath and on tops of tables with such fervency you'd have thought the Hope

Diamond was lurking behind the next ketchup bottle. No luck.

That dear, dear man marched to the back of the restaurant where his large Italian family was enjoying their nightly dinner gathering and made the appeal: “Does anyone have a binky we can give this young lady?” Lo and behold, his daughter-in-law reached into her diaper bag and produced a brand new binky, never before used, and presented it to me—a gift wrapped in empathy only a fellow mom can truly impart. God bless you, Mr. San Giovanni.

Binkies are a gift from heaven in my estimation. My kids all loved their binkies. Those priceless nipples on rings represented comfort and security for my little ones.

Do you have a binky? Is there something you keep just for yourself because you love it? Something that you enjoy, that brings comfort and security to you? It’s so easy to get lost in the all-encompassing role of motherhood. But consider this. Before you were a mom, you were a woman. What does that woman love to do?

I love reading. If I have a book, I’m happy. The only time I had to curb my love for reading was

when I had newborns, but even then I soon learned that during feedings I could prop up a book on the nursing pillow and enjoy sometimes a whole chapter per meal!

Do you love to paint? My neighbor hired a sitter for a day so she could spend some time with her brushes and canvas. Maybe coffee with friends is what keeps you afloat. Tuck the little ones in bed, put dad in charge for the rest of the evening, and make a run for the coffee shop. I have a friend who, whenever her husband is out of town for a few days, hires a sitter one evening so she can go out with friends or shopping or whatever suits her fancy at the time. Are you a scrapbooking addict like me? Put a date on the calendar once a month to spend an evening cropping with your fellow photo junkies.

What energizes you? It's worth a little planning and effort to make sure whatever that is maintains a place in your life. When you take care of yourself, you have more to give to your spouse, and you set a good example for your children. Psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend, in their book *Boundaries with Kids*, agree. They say, "Kids with parents who have a life learn both that they aren't the center of the universe and that they can be free to pursue

their own dreams.” Turns out that nurturing yourself as a person yields benefits all around.

Is it hiding under the crib? Maybe peeking from behind the toy box? Unlike the pacifiers that eventually lose their beloved places in our kids’ hearts (and mouths), there are some things we never outgrow. Taking time for the endeavors that nourish us as women is one of those things. So come on now. Where’s *your* binky?