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# THE YOGA PANTS YEARS

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From the mundane to the insane,  
finding the hidden magic in motherhood

DANA WISNIEWSKI

**[danawisniewski.com](http://danawisniewski.com)**

Available on Amazon.com and other online stores

To the best teachers a mom could ever ask for, Caleb and Ashton.

I love you.

And to my own Mom and Dad. Because you don't fully appreciate your parents till you become one. Thank you.

And to my husband Adrian, who once told me (through email before we were dating), "Marry me, let's move to Colorado and have rock climbing babies." The best fortune-teller I know. Love you.

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## INTRODUCTION

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### LAW OF PARENTING CONTRADICTIONS

**Momma Meditation:** Thich Nhat Hanh taught that a lotus flower doesn't grow on beautiful shiny marble; it grows from the mess of mud. "No mud, no lotus," he would simply state. What if our crazy, messy parenting is the most fertile place to bloom, offering beautiful lessons, beautiful stories and beautiful lives for our children as well as ourselves?

Congratulations! You've just had your first child. Or, maybe you're a mom of three kids under the age of five. Either way, when you have a moment to catch your breath from your life that may now resemble some sort of natural disaster instead of a perpetual picnic, you're left asking yourself, **"What is up with all of these contradicting feelings and thoughts I have about being a mom?"** And if you haven't yet experienced this, just wait.

Here's what I mean: You may find that you love your new life with kids, and long for aspects of your old life. Your life is exhausting yet exhilarating, confining yet connecting. You will wish that you worked full-time in an office far, far away, but also wish that you could be home around the clock with the kids. It's lonely even though there's someone next to you or on you every minute of the day. It's totally chaotic yet completely mundane. It's the most stressful thing, but the most gratifying thing. You will want to fast forward through parts of it, but then find yourself crying each time you pack up a clothing size that your child has

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outgrown, wishing you could freeze time. It's breathtakingly beautiful, and it's a complete and total mess.

Parenting is all of these things. During parenthood you learn to ride the wave of perpetual change.

And if you make the mistake of telling your husband about one of these thoughts or feelings as soon as it pops into your head, he will stare at you for what seems like days with a puzzled look then remind you that you had, in fact, just stated the exact *opposite* thought the day before.

"Let me get this straight," he will say once he collects his thoughts. "So now you want me to call the doctor and get a vasectomy before Tuesday? Yesterday you were ogling the newborn onesies at Target and exclaimed you wanted just one more."

Kindly remind him it's not your fault nor the fault of your roller-coaster hormones, it's just the universal Law of Parenting Contradiction. You see, there are a few universal laws that govern everything in the parenting world. Similar to the Law of Gravity or Law of Motion, **there is this universal "Law of Parenting Contradictions."**

The Law of Parenting Contradictions states that you will feel a mixed bag of emotions and thoughts that are generally in complete opposition to each other, often occurring simultaneously or minutes apart. It's downright confusing, especially when we are accustomed to classifying things as black or white, good or bad, like or dislike. Parenting means that life as you know it becomes

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one giant, yoga-pants-wearing paradox. Just like in the yoga class, when the teacher asks things of us like, “soften while staying strong,” I’ve realized that as a parent I’ve become a walking-talking-feeling-thinking-milk-making contradiction.

On top of that, it just so happens that all of our thoughts and feelings have been doing illegal steroids from the moment we give birth. They are now bigger and stronger. Huge. Inflated. As if they were going to be showcased in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, floated down a city street, and televised for the world to see. We feel enormous frustration, massive monotony, gigantic fear, colossal loneliness but also enormous love, gratitude, and joy.

As I noticed more of these contradictory, confusing and gigantic feelings and thoughts arising the first few years after becoming a mom, I grew curious. **I began to ask myself if I could in fact get comfortable with these contradictions.** “Where’s the workability?” I wonder.

I wanted to get to know these new sensations, even make friends with these raw emotion I was noticing in my new life. Intuitively, I knew the answer was not to ignore it, push it down, “fix it,” or sugarcoat it with pretend positivity (all quick fixes I had tried in the past), but to **allow it, open to it, and explore it.** Get comfortable with it and see what it had to teach me, especially within the context of parenting.

I had stumbled upon some of the teachings of Pema Chödrön, a Buddhist teacher, author, nun, and mother, during an eleven-month period when I drove my boys around aimlessly for two

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hours each day so they would nap. As mothers, we do many crazy things for our children, and two hour, daily nap-time drives was one of mine. I listened to audio books during this time. It was my eleven-month-intensive nap-time training, in which I gobbled up books by Brené Brown, Elizabeth Gilbert, Shawn Achor, Martin Seligman, Richard Rohr, Elizabeth Lesser, Anne Lamott, Glennon Doyle Melton, Rob Bell, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Tony Robbins, Tina Fey, and many others.

But it was Pema Chödrön's teachings that most challenged the way I looked at life, especially those things I first perceived as negative and wanted to run away from as a mom. In fact, out of all of the parenting books that I had started and then tossed aside because they didn't help me wrestle with the bigger yet more subtle questions of parenthood, I found Pema's books to be the most fitting for what life was presenting me with—this overflowing laundry heap of emotions so central to motherhood. She taught me about the power of equanimity. And this view of life has been one of the most useful during parenthood.

“Training in equanimity is learning to open the door to all, welcoming all beings, inviting life to come visit... Cultivating equanimity is a work in progress. We aspire to spend our lives training in the loving-kindness and courage that it takes to receive whatever appears—sickness, health, poverty, wealth, sorrow, and joy. We welcome and get to know them all.” Pema Chödrön

**I was slowly realizing that the challenging, chaotic times, along with the mundane moments, provide plenty**



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of learning opportunities, raw material to use, pull wisdom from, and lean into for their hidden lessons and beauty instead of wanting to hide out under my bed with only dust bunnies keeping me company. I had found that there is magic contained within all of these experiences. We just have to invite life to come visit.

And just in case you are wondering, this book isn't designed to add to your momma guilt. I am not here to tell you that I have this parenting thing figured out. On the contrary, I'm here to tell you that this is a hard gig, confusing, yet amazing, and I became curious about the times I wanted to fast-forward through instead of embracing my life with kids. I became curious about what I could learn from the times that I thought had nothing to offer—the vanilla, mundane moments to the stressful, chaotic times.

Every feeling is so much bigger after becoming a parent, and it was time to explore and maybe even make friends with all those big feelings.

### **The mud and the lotus**

I hope the message of this book also fuels your curiosity, provides clarity, and sets you free. **It's here to offer the simple yet overlooked message that your life in yoga pants may seem small, confined even, but there's big meaning and purpose within it.** From the humdrum and the monotony to the out of control chaos we experience with our kids, **we can use it all on our journey.**

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Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, teacher, author, poet and peace activist, stated that, “There is the mud, and there is the lotus that grows out of the mud. We need the mud in order to make the lotus.”<sup>1</sup> To me this means that the experiences we think of as undesirable or difficult can bloom into something beautiful, an awareness or awakening that wouldn’t otherwise be possible. We need the mud.

**What if we can use our crazy, messy parenting, all of the things that weigh us down and feelings we would rather push away, as the most fertile place to bloom beautiful lessons, stories, and lives, both for our children and ourselves?**

As mommas, we weigh ourselves down with too many insane expectations: thinking we should be perfect, worrying about what others think, comparing ourselves to other mommas, feeling “less than” as a mom or woman when we think we don’t measure up to some imaginary standard, and, of course, the big one ... feeling perpetually guilty. We replay the same scenarios in our minds and reinforce the message to ourselves.

And because we are not living in a cave (although the first few months with a baby certainly feels this way), we pick up unrealistic messages from society and the media that express something along the lines of “You should do it all and look like a supermodel while doing it. Oh, and don’t forget to enjoy every minute of it, momma! And P.S. are you back to your pre-baby weight yet? It’s been almost 30 minutes since giving birth, you should be!”

1. Reprinted from *No Mud No Lotus: The Art of Transforming Suffering* (2014) by Thich Nhat Hanh with permission of Parallax Press, Berkeley, California. [www.parallax.org](http://www.parallax.org)

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We weigh ourselves down with what we believe our role should be as a woman, a wife, and a mother. Whether you're a mom who works outside of the home or stays at home, both jobs come with pressure, expectations, and beliefs about what makes us "successful" at these roles. But carrying this weight in the form of worry, inadequacy, guilt, and stress, consumes our hearts and our heads, and deprives us of the energy needed to find the joy in life or learn how to grow the lotus lessons.

**We don't have the room to live authentically or find the magic when we are busy chasing after someone else's standard of successful motherhood, living within someone else's definition.** Now is the chance to write our own stories of who we are as moms and fully own it.

**So let's grow a lotus out of amazing, messy mommthood, out of our mud, right where we are, in the craziness of life.** Because *this* is your one precious life. These lotuses will show up from the strangest places. They grow them from the ordinary and transform into the extraordinary in so many ways, such as:

1. **Learning life lessons from our little ones.** Two of my best teachers are still in diapers.

2. **Transforming mundane moments into magic.** We can find beauty, gratitude, and growth in them. And maybe monotony can even help us realize the small things are really the big things, and if we settle into the moment, we find there's depth and meaning all around.

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**3. Using the chaos and craziness.** We can't escape the seemingly chaotic and stressful moments of parenthood, but we can lean into them, learn from them, and use them to create a joyful life.

**4. Finding the “OM” within your home.** Our home, mess and all, is where the action happens. Our homes are the most “sacred” unsacred place around. And the birthplace for creating simple habits that lead to a life overflowing with meaning and purpose even if at first glance it seems to be overflowing with only toys and tantrums.

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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### STRAWBERRY VODKA LEMONADE FOR THE MOTHER'S SOUL

**Y**ou should be warned that there are tons of great parenting books out on the market, and this is in fact not one of them.

What I mean is this book doesn't discuss parenting styles, philosophies, or theories. That's not my area of expertise AT ALL. Nor am I an expert on any religion or philosophy, but I have pulled many influences from past and present teachers speaking Truth and pointing the way that have helped me along the parenting journey.

This book is more like strawberry vodka lemonade for the mother's soul. Similar to motherhood, parts of it will be refreshing and sweet while other parts will pack an unexpected punch. This book does attempt to talk about life after kids, specifically, my personal experience of life after kids colored by all of my thoughts, emotions, and insights once I started to *really* show up and take notice, especially of the less than glamorous aspects of parenthood.

**And so this is my collection of lessons to share with you. An attempt at seeing the bigness contained within the smallness and seeing the beauty hidden within the messiness of it all. Finding the magic, which if we don't know what we're looking for, can easily go unnoticed.**

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This book is purposely broken into short chapters to allow you, an insanely busy momma, to finish a thought. It's my way of saying, "Oh hi sweet momma, your life is nuts? My life is bananas too. But we can get through this mommy thing together, mess and all, and maybe even find some hidden beauty along the way."

And if you have ever felt that you are just going through the motions as a mom, wondering if there is something more you are missing out on, this book is for you. Unwashed hair, stained T-shirts and yes, yoga pants, are welcome. In fact, I actually encourage it.

You might discover that the best teachers in life are where you least expect them, maybe even coloring on your walls right this very moment. Oh, and the lessons. The lessons are friggin' **NON STOP**, but so is the magic.

Even though I focus on ordinary life, what's ultimately revealed just beneath the surface is extraordinary.

I promise.

# 1.

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## PARENTING. IT'S GONNA BE A BUMPY RIDE

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**Momma Meditation:** “The only true currency in this bankrupt world is what you share with someone else when you’re uncool.” *Almost Famous*. The coolest thing about parenthood is that it allows us to be completely, almost painfully, uncool.

Someone once said “comedy is tragedy plus time.”

I’ve found that close to ninety percent of my experience with parenting falls somewhere within this continuum. Sort of like the time-space continuum, **there’s also the “time-tragedy-comedy” continuum**. While this certainly does not apply to ALL tragedy, it does in fact apply to the tragic feeling that results from embarrassment and frustration, as well as the overall chaotic feeling of life with little ones.

For example, you sense this tragic feeling when your three-year-old exclaims at his preschool Halloween party that the apple cider “tastes just like wine!” in front of his teacher and the other parent volunteers. That initial sinking feeling is the first clue that you are about to set out on the time-tragedy-comedy continuum.

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Next, is the warm rush that results from the imaginary (or is it real) stares from the other parents and teachers.

You're also quite confident that even the other three-year-olds are now judging you at this point from behind their Queen Elsa masks. The final act is the awkward recovery: nervous giggling and replying something along the lines of, "Well, they are part Italian." Followed by more nervous giggling, then finally quickly redirecting the conversation.

I've found that most of the initial parenting experience feels much like tragedy, but once you add time, perspective, wisdom, their sparkling blue eyes, and my poor memory, most experiences seem to be much closer to the comedy side. Thank goodness for that, otherwise I'm certain that the human race would have gone extinct long ago.

This comedy–tragedy quote actually went through my head as I was vomiting into a gallon-size Ziploc® bag that minutes before held my kids' "plane presents," which are basically a way to bribe your kids into behaving well on an airplane and also one of the best parenting tips I've ever received. (You can thank me later.) I was now able to see my vomit perfectly through the clear bag. Super.

I had set out over a month earlier, to lean into and embrace parenting my boys, Caleb and "Baby Ass," as my (almost) three-year-old calls the younger one since he has not been able to master the "sh" sound in Ashton and so Baby Ass it is (which is just perfect when it's being yelled across a park by Caleb and



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other parents turn to me with the look of, “Did I just hear what I thought I heard?” Yes, you totally did. Please stop judging me.)

Repeating the quote, “comedy is tragedy plus time,” over and over in my head was my attempt at that—a sort of self-soothing. It reminded me that no feeling was permanent and they all ebb and flow. It didn’t seem like it was working. I wasn’t even sure if I was going to survive this experience, much less *thrive* during it, but **I had decided that I would not let the circumstance at-hand write the ending any more. Both life and I would be doing the writing together with the help of perspective.** My Mother’s Day vow to myself in May 2014, just a few months prior.

Before I had kids, I thought labor and childbirth were along the lines of running a marathon. My sister-in-law, having given birth twice, quickly corrected me by saying, “No. No way. It’s more like running a marathon while getting kicked in the stomach every quarter mile.” Turns out she was far more accurate.

Flying with children might be the next most painful experience after giving birth. On top of the normal challenges of transporting multiple kids, carry-ons, breast pump, strollers, car seats, kid survival kit (consisting of pre-packaged snacks, juice boxes, iPad, toys, small carnival with a miniature pony) across the airport, standing in long lines at security then running after your kids in your socks while all of your valuables sit in a plastic bin, there’s also the fact that I’m a horrible flyer. Terrible. I’ve suffered with motion sickness my whole life.

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So there I am, on this teeny-weeny plane, just two seats on either side of the aisle preparing for our two-hour flight from Colorado to Wisconsin to visit grandparents and cousins. I give my husband the “you’ve got to be joking me” look as we take our seats.

We have three seats for our family of four. Our youngest is a lap baby which translates to me sitting next to one kid, while the other one sits on top of me. Dad gets his own seat across the aisle, which might as well have been across the country.

The takeoff is turbulent. The kind of turbulence where the plane shakes and feels like it’s about to fall out of the sky, and where you strike up last-minute deals and bargains with God. “God, if you let us live I will be sweeter to my husband, I will go to church more than just at Christmas, I will call my parents more regularly, I will watch less of *The Bachelor* and work to save the world. I swear.”

I gaze up from my white-knuckled prayer expecting to see oxygen masks deployed and total chaos, only to find others calmly listening to music and reading romance novels. This does not seem like a time to be reading *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Apparently no one else feels we are moments away from spiraling out of control. I later realize that what I’m sensing was less about the plane being out of control and just our family, seated in 17 A, B, and C, being totally out of control.

I rub my sweaty palms on my lap and gaze down at the black yoga pants fabric just before my mind floats off to when I traded in fancy pants for yoga pants.

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### Trading in fancy pants for yoga pants

Just for the record, I didn't always wear yoga pants. At one time I wore business pants, nice business pants. With fancy shoes that had those things called heels. All those pants now sit in my closet, coordinated by color and collecting dust. They haven't seen the light of day for years, symbolizing my life before kids. I traded in my business pants for yoga pants after I had kids. Lots of yoga pants. **Almost all black. As if I was in mourning.**

Maybe I was.

Mourning for parts of my old life before kids and craziness.

Mourning for a time when getting myself ready wasn't reduced to spot cleaning my shirt and wearing a hat to hide my unwashed hair, but more so to hide the fact that I didn't have it all together. To hide that I didn't find motherhood to be perpetually precious, glamorous, adorable, fun, exciting, rewarding, easy or any of the other beliefs I once held but no longer fit my reality. I still work full-time, but I now work from home, which doesn't help the yoga pants situation one bit.

Yoga pants have become my symbol, my mascot for life with kids. I think that's a true statement for a lot of mommas. They remind us that no parenting class (or even yoga class for that matter) fully prepares us for the level of flexibility that raising little ones demands.

“Bing-bong!” brings me back to my airplane reality.

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The seat belt sign is illuminated above my head and dings repeatedly warning us of the upcoming turbulence. I grow more nauseous with each ding. Another lap baby in front of us is repeating the sound, “Bing-bong!” I quickly realize this plane ride, like parenting, is going to be a bumpy ride.

Within ten minutes of ascending, I yell over to my cool as a cucumber husband, “We are NEVER flying again until our kids are in high school!”

He annoyingly tells me to, “Just relax.” Easy for him to say without a small child on him and another one next to him while being overcome with nausea. Mr. Cool is just sitting across from us looking at remote control floating pool coolers in *Sky Mall*. We don’t even have a pool.

I’m implementing all of my survival tactics, my acupressure bands are secured around each wrist and doing absolutely nothing for the motion sickness. Well, that was a waste of money.

“Bing-bong!”

Slow, deep breathing, yes, that’s what I need! But my nose is greeted with the warm stale air mixed with the smell of plane diesel.

“Bing-bong!”

Ginger ale. For the love of God, can someone get me a can of ginger ale? What? We’re not even at our cruising altitude yet?!

“Bing-bong!”

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Within the first fifteen minutes of flying, the flight attendant has yelled us twice for not having the baby on the right side of the plane in case the oxygen masks are deployed. Excuse me, oxygen mask deployment?!

“Wait, ma’am, why would we need oxygen masks? Is there an issue with the plane?” I ask nervously while my eyes dart back and forth from my husband to the flight attendant. She kindly informs me, “It’s just federal regulation, nothing to be worried about.”

Nothing to be worried about?! You obviously don’t know the anxiety levels I’m capable of, lady. I can always find something to worry about.

We’re in quite the predicament. Both kids want to be by me, but we need to keep lap baby on dad’s side for oxygen mask deployment rules which is code for “let’s make this shit extra hard for parents with kids” in Federal Aviation language.

Not one, not two, but all three trips to the bathroom I make (that you can’t stand straight up in because it’s so small), I hear both boys scream for me from their seats as I lock the door, switching the sign to “do not disturb” but with parenting, that sign doesn’t mean squat. In fact, it generally means “disturb me more.”

As I turn around to lift up the plastic lid and vomit into the abyss of that toilet’s black hole, not unlike my life at this point, the only solution seems to be begging the pilot to make an emergency landing. As I open the bathroom door after the third trip, I’m greeted by my husband’s look of terror due to our inconsolable

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children. And with his one look I'm fairly confident that none of us are going to survive this mess.

Thirty minutes into the flight we realize that we've lost Caleb's blanket—a blanket that I'm pretty sure he loves more than his mom, dad, and baby brother combined. Yes, somehow between our family of four sprinting for the final call for our departure to Milwaukee, huffing and puffing as we hand over our tickets to board, we lost “blanky blue.” A blanky he's had by his side since his birth with all of its silky parts rubbed away. A blanket that I'm nervous to wash each time because it might not be able to handle one more spin cycle. The unthinkable. He's crying for blanky while lap baby (Baby Ass) cries because he wants to be anywhere but on someone's lap.

If children came with an owner's manual, I'm pretty sure there would be an entire chapter dedicated to not misplacing a favorite blanky. Especially when you are about to be confined to a space that's twenty-four inches wide for multiple hours. Our little world as we know it was falling apart. The short chapter after that in the owner's manual would be titled “Flying with Kids” and would simply read, “Not advised.”

And here's where my low point occurs. Remember that Ziploc bag from a few pages ago? Well this is where we become intimate. I dump out the gallon-sized Ziploc bag of plane presents I purchased from the Target dollar bins after not being able to find the motion sickness bag in my seat pocket about ninety minutes into the trip. At first I hold it out for Caleb, who is dry heaving

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next to me during the descent. But I quickly realize that I need it more and end up using it right there in my seat, with both kids, my husband, and random passengers watching.

Nothing to see here folks, just a hot mess mom puking into a Ziploc bag and screaming children, back to your crossword puzzles and Sudoku or whatever it is people without children do on planes, because I have clearly forgotten.

I could have children that were twenty minutes old and I would still forget what it's like to fly without kids. It's completely erased, my mind no different than an Etch A Sketch® that has been shaken and cleared. Along with whatever it was I did with all my free time before children. NO. IDEA.

I nod my head in an exaggerated “yes,” with the plastic bag pressed against my face as my three-year-old asks over and over, “Mommy you OK? You puke Mommy? You OK?” It's the closest thing I can offer him in terms of comfort.

As I plead with the flight attendant to give me Dramamine® (which she doesn't have), I pray for a miracle. The miracle comes from one row up in the form of two small pills. The woman seated in front of me overheard my question and had some in her purse. She could have handed me horse tranquilizer for all I cared. Two blessed pills and one can of ginger ale later, I was just barely surviving. Barely. The kids, on the other hand, were growing louder and more restless by the minute.

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The only downside was that Dramamine makes you ridiculously tired. The kind of tired where it's painful to keep your eyes open. But two small children who have been deprived of naps and a favorite blanky don't respond well to "sit still and entertain yourself because mommy is nauseous, exhausted, and has nothing left to offer anyone."

And then, miraculously, we landed on the ground. Oh sweet, sweet ground. And luckily, blanky blue had made it onto the plane. Another passenger had turned it into the flight attendant.

### **Recombobulation**

We get off the plane and headed directly to General Mitchell International Airport's infamous "Recombobulation" area. It's an area of the airport that is actually called the Recombobulation area with a large sign that really says just that. Whoever had this brilliant idea definitely had toddlers, probably triplets. Or was just a hot mess of person who's always misplacing things like car keys and reading glasses.

**Either way, one thing's for certain, the world needs many more "Recombobulation" areas. In fact, I think to myself that this might be exactly what my life needs.** A good recombobulation is like *savasana* or relaxation pose, the final pose of most yoga classes, providing us a chance to integrate what we've experienced into our lives. I interpret this as a fancy way of saying that my mind can finally catch up, process, and make sense of what my body has just experienced.



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I'm popping breath mints to rid myself of that "just puked" feeling and hand sanitizing everyone from head to toe. I look up at my family in my perpetual state of frenzy that I adopted shortly after the birth of first child, and notice that everyone looks a little traumatized with glazed over expressions except for lap baby, he's just excited to be able to sprint as fast as his one-year-old legs will allow him with freedom at last.

Clutching coffee cups, carry-ons, and kids, our circus heads down for the last leg of the journey, an hour drive from Milwaukee to my parents' home. Given the past two hours, our family is as recombobulated as we can be. And once the boys lay eyes on their grandparents just outside of the airport, they squeal and squawk and dance about, then embrace my mom and dad with all the big love and big hugs that they can muster. The journey has been worth it. So there it is. My story of flying with kids, falling apart, and then somehow putting it all back together.

### **Chaos is good news?!**

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Buddhist meditation master, taught that chaos is good news. If someone would have relayed this sentiment to me during the flight, I'm certain I would have flipped that individual off in between puking into a Ziploc bag. But I think it's not until you look back on something that you see the bigger story, the bigger picture subtly emerge. We gain a new perspective.

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Initially, I would experience the craziness of life with little ones (that I will get into more in the chapters that follow) and just feel the stress, the mess and the difficulty of it. **But when I started to look in the rearview mirror and write about it, I realized that the challenging times couldn't simply be reduced to hard parts or messy parts. Something more, something bigger was also happening. There's always something bigger happening, isn't there?**

There's something magical about this time, when the kids are young and we are exhausted, vulnerable, and stretched beyond all of our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual perceived limits and comfort zones. Something emerges from the cracks that form in our lives. There is an underlying current of magic waiting for us to dive into its depths and tap into its power.

I realized that whenever I looked back and reflected on my day, my experience with my kids, I would see that there was magic hiding in the mess. Just waiting to be discovered. Waiting to be picked up, brushed off, and held up to be closely examined and treasured, like finding a hidden gem among the rubble and rocks.

There was a raw beauty about it that emerged from learning the lessons, using perspective, noticing, surrendering, and appreciating what was unfolding in my yoga pants life. There's a raw beauty that rises up from being completely uncool. And messy. And real. And honest. Then sharing those stories. Our stories allow us to connect when we share them. Magic is revealed. And what's even better news is that we now have ample opportunities to experience an abundance of chaos and uncoolness as mommas.

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It's not the beauty of a Super Model on a magazine cover. What I'm referring to can be easily missed. It's the subtle energy—the love, the depth, and light that you sense when you look at an elderly person with deep-set wrinkles, thinning white hair, and sparkling eyes. You know instantly when your eyes meet and you are greeted with the warmest smile that she knows something about Life that you haven't quite grasped. There's an inner beauty that emerges to light up her almost-transparent face as she no longer struggles against Life. Instead, she finds acceptance and a deep sense of peace with it.

**I'm reminded that Life seems to follow this pattern of falling apart and then we recombobulate and put it back together with humor, humility, grace, and each other, and that comedy is indeed tragedy plus time in this situation.**



## 2.

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### HUMOR, HUMILITY, GRACE & EACH OTHER

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**Momma Meditation:** “Some people believe holding on and hanging in there are signs of great strength. However, there are times when it takes much more strength to know when to let go and then do it.” Ann Landers. The confusing part about life is figuring out when to do what as a mom.

Maybe I appear to be a low-stress, go-with-the-flow parent, a classic Free-Range parent, if you will, to the outer world. But let me fill you in on a little secret: Inside, I’m really not. I have evolved into a cross between a Hover Craft and suction cup parent. But Life would present a powerful lesson to me upon the birth of my first son, a lesson to remind me that I am, in fact, NOT in total control. And it turns out Life has quite the sense of humor.

All of this uptightness and desire to be two steps ahead of Life weren’t really there before kids. It’s just one more thing I brought home from the hospital after giving birth. In fact, before I was pregnant, my husband and I casually talked about how the baby would be joining *our* life over burritos from Chipotle, as if

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we could conveniently fit him into our plans while just feeding him, showing him love, playing with him, and teaching him new tricks here and there. Which looking back was partially naïve and partially selfish, but most of all it was just completely inaccurate.

We acted as if we were getting a Golden Retriever puppy instead of a baby. Or maybe we totally underestimated the changes and challenges that come along with this new territory of parenthood.

Life, as it turns out, doesn't unfold just the way we want or expect. But for some reason, I still expect it to go according to plan. My plan. I try to order up my life like I do a gourmet cup of coffee customized to my every desire. "Yes, I'll take the extra-large life, bold flavor, extra sugar, extra cream." Sweet and smooth, please. Life must think this is just hilarious, just as my OBGYN probably did when I handed her my four-page, single-spaced birth plan. For the record, that was only for my first child. The second baby, I'll have you know, only required three pages.

My biggest foreshadow of what parenthood had to offer occurred about twenty-three minutes after I gave birth to my first son. Life wanted to inform me that it cannot be ordered up like my coffee, "Well, you're a parent now, and it's time for you to learn this truth ..." (When I imagine Life talking it's often in Morgan Freeman's voice.)

Exhausted and exhilarated, I lie on the hospital bed after seventeen hours of labor and two hours of pushing, holding my new baby boy swaddled in my arms. With knees bent and legs