

All the little changes

Having a baby changes things. Is that an understatement, or what? In the first six months, my life was in complete upheaval.

A lot of things didn't happen the way they used to. I didn't get a shower every day. I sometimes forgot to brush my teeth. And the house . . . let's not talk about the house.

My point is that I had a whole new set of priorities—the biggest priority being the baby.

It's all the little changes that hit me hardest. For example, instead of saving dinner from burning on the stove, I had to stop my daughter from eating the dead bug on the floor. So dinners weren't the quality they used to be. That's just one of the thousands of things that changed just slightly—just enough that maybe you wouldn't notice if it was one thing, but it's everything. And slowly, all those little changes, they start to wear on a person.

One day, when my daughter Melise was about 6 months old, I sat us down to eat lunch. I was silently brooding over the fact that meals with an infant go on for an eternity! My brain was trying to reconcile how our 15-minute lunches had turned into an hour's affair (just one of those little changes). And during those meals I usually didn't get much to eat because I was too busy trying to get food into her mouth instead of all over her face, hair, chair, floor, etc.

This one day, I felt ready to give up. I sat the bowl of baby mush and the spoon in front of Melise for her to do with as she pleased. I didn't care where it went that day. I took my sandwich up and ate it slowly while I zoned out with weariness.

After a few bites, I was brought round by the little chatter noises coming from Melise. Turning to look at her, she acted as if she was making conversation. She just babbled on and on like she was telling me a story. She would pause as if waiting for an answer and when I said nothing she'd start babbling again. Then, amidst babbles, she picked up her spoon as if she had always

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done this, dipped it in the bowl of mush, and stuck it in her mouth!

I was astounded! Melise had stuck a spoon in her mouth before, but never had she shown any understanding of how the whole feeding process worked. I admit she didn't scoop up much food in that first pass (it was more of a dip than a scoop) but it impressed me nonetheless! I spent the rest of lunch happily helping my daughter feed herself and holding up my end of the conversation.

That funny little lunch with my daughter left me thinking hard. I had this intense feeling that I had focused too much on the daily tasks and had overlooked my top priority, Melise.

Sure, I was keeping her clean, fed, clothed . . . but was I really paying attention to her as a person? How long had she watched me feeding her and wanted to try it herself? I was just too caught up in brooding over the little things to even notice.

And the moral of the story? Of all the many changes that were driving me crazy, they were all canceled out by the joy over the ways my baby grows and learns.

Although I wouldn't mind having that daily shower again!