

Healthy MOM™

Packing Your Child's Bags for Life

Kay Yanit, RN, BSH, CLNC

Spring brings sunshine and showers along with Tax Day in April and Mother's Day in May. This year these two days had a special significance for me.

Eleven years ago on April 15th (tax day), a baby boy named Alex was born at the McKenzie-Willamette Birth Center where I work. On every birthday since, Alex and his mom Anna have visited the staff and families on our unit. They visit the rooms where he was born (started in a Labor Suite, but ended in the C-Section Suite). And Anna and Alex talk about where his life began, the importance of that day and the importance of giving back to others. Each year Alex brings handmade treasures for the new families. His auntie back east sent several beautiful handmade blankets for our families this year. Each blanket was made of scraps from her children's favorite blankets. The idea is to pass along the love they feel so fortunate to share.

Mother's Day was particularly fun for me as well. It started with cards, calls, texts and flowers from my girls and many of their friends. While working that afternoon caring for new families on the Birth Center, I thought about the adventure and challenges involved in parenting. I always tell my families that becoming a parent is the best

and the hardest thing we ever tackle. When my husband and I were becoming parents we made the decision without talking about a plan or our hopes for our children. We really didn't think about this life-altering decision in any terms other than some sort of romantic ideal. My thoughts went back to the way that Alex's parents have made choices and are taking steps to instill certain values and life skills in their child.

As you think about your child, how would you like to raise him/her so that they have qualities and values that you feel are important? In Lane County we are very fortunate to have Birth to Three; a 30+ year old organization that has pioneered the area of parenting education, networking and support. They provide playgroups, parenting groups and classes, and their program model has been replicated in many communities across the US. Birth to Three also staffs a "Parent HelpLine" for those times when families need some support or advice.

I often use one of the exercises developed by Birth to Three as a great way for some of my families to start thinking about how they would like to parent their children.

Draw a large outline of a suitcase on a piece of paper. Choose the four most important qualities or values you would like to pack in your child's "suitcase" by the time they leave home. Each parent needs to pack a bag.

Respectful
Adventurous
Disciplined
Open minded
Appreciative
Curious
Courteous
Well educated

Kind
Athletic
Good student
Independent
Self confidence
Musical
Honesty
Perseverance
Happy

When you do this exercise with other parents, it is fascinating to see what each of you comes up with. You will probably find that you share many values but might place a different level of importance on each one. It is really hard to choose only four but it forces you to prioritize. It is a great way to stimulate thought and conversation about how you would like to pack your child's suitcase. What can you do now with your child to help him/her develop these qualities? What would you like your parenting style to be like? What qualities do you already possess that you would like to build on?

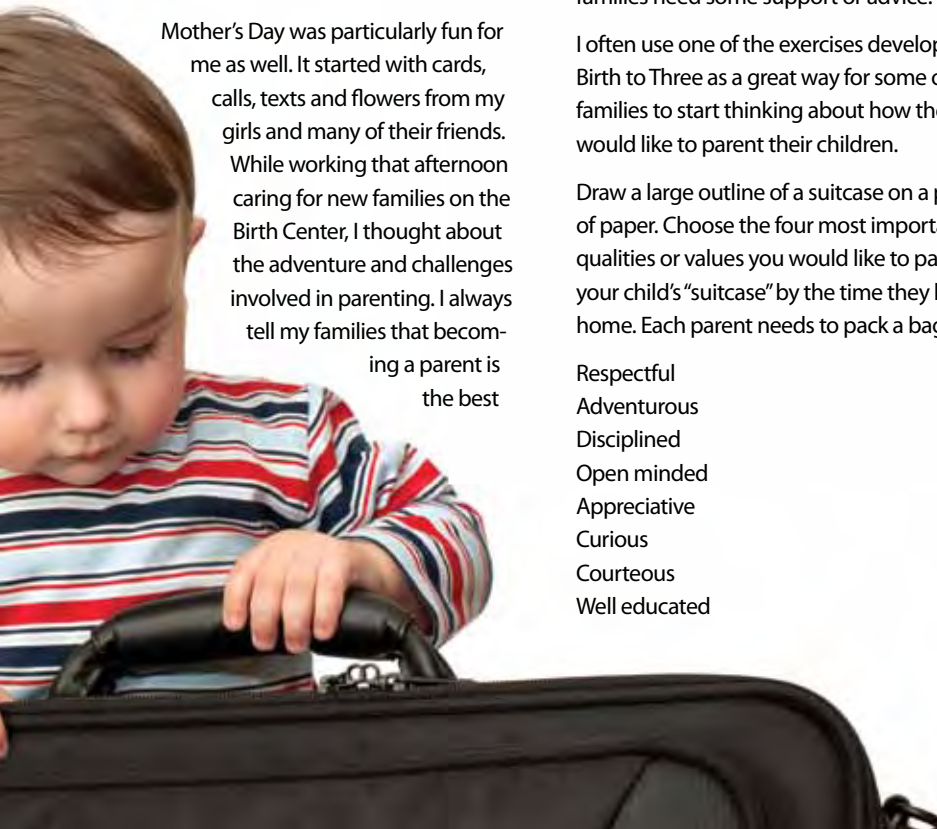
This is one trip you will have a long time to prepare for. Like any other important adventure, it will have highs and lows and the itinerary may change. Flexibility and planning can help make it a good trip for all.

For more information about Birth to Three visit www.birthto3.org, call The Parent HelpLine at 541-485-5211 or the Birth to Three office at 541-484-5316.



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Meet Healthy MOM™

Kay Yanit, RN,BSN,CLNC is a mother of two beautiful and smart daughters Keenan and Lindley; and of an equally beautiful and smart 'almost' son-in-law Eric. She has worked as a Pediatric ICU, Neonatal ICU and Labor and Delivery nurse for 30 years. She currently works with moms and babies at the Women's Health & Birth Center at McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center in Springfield, Oregon. You can reach Kay at 541-741-4649. See what moms are talking about with Kay on the MOM Blog at www.mommag.com.

where in Lane County?



Look closely at the photo on the right. Can you guess where it is? Here are your clues:

- » This picture is of an animal. Sort of!
- » It was taken at a park in Eugene.
- » Kids love to explore in, around and on it.

Go to facebook.com/jessicolemanphotography to guess where in Lane County the photo is taken for a chance to win a complete photo shoot!

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