

Mothering in 10 easy steps (Yea, right!)

1. Mothering is not easy! Give yourself a break. Be forgiving. Try, try, try. Never say die! Get back on the horse. "Just keep swimming!" When all is said and done, you just have to get back in there every day and be the Mom. It's OK. We all feel this way.
2. You can't do it all in one day, but you can do SOMETHING in one day. So...do something! Read to your kids, hug them, talk to them, play with them, love them, love them, love them, read some more, play some more, take a break, eat some good food, clean a little, read a lot.
3. No one wants to feel like a failure, but mothering takes forever to get the final results. (wait...do we ever get the 'final' results?) So one day at a time, try to build something. Build understanding, build relationships, build castles in the sand, build towers of blocks, stacks of books, but most of all, build trust. In other words, BE HONEST! Children can spot hypocrisy a mile away. And they HATE it. So, stop kidding yourself. If you are really NOT a committed mother, admit that and change. If you really HATE taking care of messy diapers, messy clothes, messy houses and messy lives, admit that, and then work on that. You don't have to pretend to be a perfect mother, because you think people expect it of you. You just have to decide what kind of Mother YOU want to be, and be it to the best of YOUR ability. NO ONE likes a fake.
4. BE THERE! When you are with your children, be there with them. In the room is not good enough. They need your eyes, most of all. Then your mouth, and then your ears. If you are only half there, they know it and will eventually resent it.
5. Live as though today is the last day you will have with your children. That really means that you will treat them with respect, (because they are really adults in tiny bodies), you will honor their honest wishes and consistently deny them those things that are not good. You will be willing to let them cry when you have to say no, but you will love them all the more because of it. You will try your hardest to keep them with you every moment of every day, knowing that rejection is the hardest thing to live with. You will show them by your actions that you love them. You will teach them also by your actions that NOTHING is more important in your life than they are. Not MONEY, not TIME, not FURNITURE, not FOOD, not FRIENDS, not SPACE, not CONVENIENCE, not COMFORT, not SLEEP. In other words, you will never trade your CHILDREN for any of those things. Children can do Math really well. They eventually add up everything and come up with what they are worth. If they consistently see that they are traded for MONEY, they will realize that they are not worth very much, because MONEY has no REAL value.
6. If you don't LOVE your job, your job will HATE you. Motherhood is not just a job, it's a way of life. Whether you like it or not, these children will forever be connected with you and your choices. THEIR children's lives are in YOUR hands as well. Motherhood is a lifetime challenge, of learning, and of commitment. Undertaken on a part-time or half-time or no-time basis, it will be very disappointing. The only way that mothering can be successful is if you have given it your FULL commitment. When your children know that YOU know that the most important thing for them to grow up with is a Mother, then you have succeeded as a Mother. In other words, NO one can do your job for you, no matter how much you pay them, or how well fed or clothed your children are, or what kind of schools they went to. When it all boils down,

they will be happy and successful as people, if they feel loved and wanted. Only committed parents can give that. Without it, you might just as well cut off their legs and arms, because life will be an uphill battle that they will never feel like they can win.

7. Motherhood without fatherhood is like chicken soup without the chicken! Wow. Do children need fathers? They not only need fathers, but they need them to be involved, caring, teaching, loving, guiding lights in their lives. If you think you can raise well-adjusted children without a father, you have never been to a prison. THEY will teach you the value of a father. If you don't believe me, believe them. If you don't believe them, then you will eventually be taught by your own children, most likely from prison, the importance of a father. How do you get a father if there just isn't one around? PRAY! God listens. God answers.
8. Say NO! But do it nicely. Do it with a positive twist. Always say no to everything that you KNOW is bad for your children, or that you don't wish them to have. You are entitled to decide what you want or do not want them to have. But be honest and fair. Then be consistent. If you say no to something today, don't turn around and say yes tomorrow. Bargain with them. Try to get something good from them in trade for something good that they wish to have from you. Keep everything positive. Examples: "Yes, you can have that, after we have had prayers." "Here let me have that for now. Now let's read this book" (changing the subject is a good way to take their mind off of something you have confiscated). "Yes, we can do that, but we will do it tomorrow!" (then follow through, be honest and DO IT tomorrow. This teaches trust.) Always smile when you have to say NO. It makes them think that you are not angry about the whole thing and it will help them to get over it sooner.
9. Give them things to do. REAL things. Kid's hate fake things. Toys are often an insult to their intelligence. Get creative and find ways to give them things that are REAL that they can to REAL things with. Let them get in the dish pan with you and HELP with dishes. Let them push the vacuum. Let them pick things up, WITH you. Always do these things WITH them. Then they don't feel abandoned. Abandonment, like rejection, is the hardest thing for a child, or an adult, to cope with. It is a poison that MUST be avoided, at ALL COSTS!!! BE THERE! With your children. ALWAYS. TAKE THEM EVERYWHERE. And they will love you for it.
10. Every moment of every day, ask God: "What should I do NOW?" When you do that, you open yourself for the greatest journey you could ever imagine. Life is waiting for you and your children. The modern world is trying to get us to put it down and look for money, power, position, comfort, education, etc. etc. God has our best interests in mind and will guide us, and feed us, and provide for us, if we but trust his tender mercy. God can be a Father when you have none in the home. Ask and you SHALL receive.