



Three Secrets to Loving Late-in-Life Motherhood

By Beth K. Vogt

I experienced a rough entry into late-in-life motherhood. Once the hormones and emotions settled, I wanted to do more than just survive being an older mom. How did I thrive as a Mommy-Come-Lately®, instead of just muddling through? Here are 3 invaluable secrets that helped me love late-in-life motherhood.

1. It's okay to be old(er) and tired.

People tell me that my “caboose kiddo” Christa keeps me young.

The reality is, she keeps me tired.

I found out I was pregnant when I was 41—and already exhausted from trying to keep up with my three teens. Seven years into my Mommy-Come-Lately® adventure, the morning sickness is long over, but I’m still waiting for my energy level to rebound.

It ain’t gonna happen.

And I’m okay with that.

If you’re a tired late-in-life mom, don’t trade your life experience for 24 hours worth of the vitality you had in your 20s. The truth is: Older is wiser. Compensate for any lost vim and vigor with your invaluable mommy-wisdom.

I interviewed dozens of older parents for my book *Baby Changes Everything: Embracing and Preparing for Motherhood after 35*. All of them saw their age as a parental advantage.

What life lessons have you learned that can be applied to motherhood? Have you watched your friends’ parent their children? Do you think timeouts work well or did you decide on some other form of discipline? If you have older children, remember what battles were worth fighting—respect and honesty—and which ones you want to wave the white flag on. Ask yourself: Is “No” the best answer or just the easiest answer because I’m a tired Mommy-Come-Lately®?

Be honest with who you are—and how old you are. You can’t turn back the clock and be a young mommy again. Don’t waste time wishing for the good old days. Be content to be an older mommy. Sure,

you may not have a whole lot of get up and go—but you’ve got years worth of accumulated experience that will help you be a good mom!

2. It’s not all about you.

As a Mommy-Come-Lately®, you may wonder, “How will this baby change my life?”

It’s important to understand that having a child later-in-life is a whole family experience. Your caboose baby affects your relationships with your husband, your older children, your parents, your friends, your business partners, and your employees.

Ask your husband how he feels about being a late-in-life dad.

Early on, I didn’t care how my unexpected pregnancy affected my husband. Rob’s responsibility was to help me conquer all-day morning sickness. He sliced lemons, ignored the cracker crumbs in our bed, and scrounged the local pharmacy for nausea remedies.

Well into my fourth month, my nausea dissipated and my emotional fog lifted. I finally asked Rob, “How are you doing with all this?”

I discovered Rob, like most late-in-life dads, had a different perspective than mine. As I battled short-term changes, Rob was thinking long-term. He worried about staying culturally relevant to our daughter—and she wasn’t even born yet. Many of the late-in-life dads I interviewed thought about things like college funds and retirement before holding their baby for the first time.

If you’re a repeater Mommy-Come-Lately® like me, encourage your older kids to interact with their much younger sibling—but don’t expect them to be surrogate parents. To a certain extent, family is a mandatory formation. But you cannot demand relationships.

My oldest son was 17 years old—and heading to college—when my caboose kiddo was born.

“I don’t know what kind of relationship you’ll have with your sister,” I told him, “but it’s important you have some kind of relationship with her.”

He traded off diaper duty for settling Christa when she was fussy—playing a Celtic CD and walking her around his room until she fell asleep. Christa will now tell you she loves Josh more than anyone in the whole world—even me.

Allow your older kids to create special times. Maybe your daughter will be great at building forts with the couch cushions. Perhaps another brother or sister will be the one to snuggle with the baby and read aloud to her.

Grandparents may or may not play a part in your caboose baby’s life. You may grieve the loss of your parents or the reality that your parents will have fewer years with your late-in-life child. If grandparents

are still around, do what you can to encourage a connection. They may not be able to baby-sit or to take their grandchild to the zoo or the park, but don't underestimate the value of just visiting Grandma. Also consider adopted "grandparents" who can fill the need in your child's life. Realize that whatever life looks like for your child—with or without grandparents—it will be their normal.

3. It's all about embracing change.

Maybe you longed for, prayed for motherhood—all the while listening to the ominous ticking of your biological clock. Or you wondered where Mr. Right was or you grieved as infertility strangled your dreams of family.

Maybe like me, motherhood was a "You've got to be kidding me" surprise in the midst of your oh-so-carefully planned out life. I struggled to accept the reality that I was pregnant again at 41.

Whatever the scenario, becoming a Mommy-Come-Lately® changes your life. As you open your arms to embrace your baby, open your heart to embrace the changes. Pericles, an ancient Greek statesman said it so well: Change is the essence of life. Be willing to surrender what you are for what you could become.

You may have to scale back on your work hours—or even walk away from your dream job for a season. Don't equate being an older mom with being Wonder Woman. You may be able to do it all—but probably not all at the same time.

Becoming a Mommy-Come-Lately® is risky business, and you may deal with a pregnancy complicated by diabetes or high blood pressure. Be willing to follow your medical provider's advice and make the needed lifestyle changes before, during and after your pregnancy.

Learn to juggle the competing demands of motherhood. Be flexible and creative.

"There are seasons where the focus of life shifts. That's okay! This is mommy season. But you can keep in your life those things that are important to you," insists repeater Mommy-Come-Lately® and author Marlo S. "Focus on what is important; organize so you don't miss the good stuff (either with your kids or your activities). And remember these years are short. You've had more years to gather wisdom and maturity. You're at an advantage in raising kids. Rejoice in that!"

Apply some of your valuable, hard earned wisdom to this season of your life. Know who you are. Embrace being a Mommy-Come-Lately® and make the best choices you can so that you can love late-in-life motherhood!

The three secrets I've shared with you aren't a one time process. You'll need to:

- Remind yourself again and again that your age is a parental advantage, not a liability.
- Fight against a "me-centered" mindset.

- Choose to open your arms and embrace your child—and all the ways late-in-life motherhood changes you.

As you do, you will fall in love with your life as a late-in-life mom.

~Adapted from *Baby **Changes Everything: Embracing and Preparing for Motherhood after 35*** by Beth K. Vogt

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