

What Now!

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SNAP! Quickly followed by “Oh ohhhh...quick, hide!” Sound familiar? This could be the scenario of the darling cherub taking cover from her mum as she realises that the clothes line which didn't look broken before she started swinging on it now does, or it just could be the Dr's snapping fingers in front of your face to get you out of your trance as you wish you hadn't heard what they just said. Some of us are lucky to have our cherubs survive the initial onslaught of life, and some of these are lucky to then go through nothing more than colds and chicken pox, only needing to see the local GP for the very standard scratches and bumps. And then there are the group that seem to have formed an invisible umbilical attachment to the medical system.

Personally, we bounced in and out of hospital for 11mths, and at least once a week to a Dr of some sort. The thought of being a spontaneous mum was a distant memory as routine and Dr's orders took over the running of our household. Hospital antiseptic was starting to smell normal and you really had to stop and think when you can greet most of the staff (from canteen ladies, cleaners, radiologists, chemists to nurses and Dr's) by their first names! No time to stop and think about how the 'movies' didn't portray parenthood in this manner, just enough time to concentrate on the Dr's lips as they say 'we're going to try....', and barely enough time to think “What now!”

How do you get through the stress and strain of 'the next step'? Well, a holiday away from it all is out of the question, as the stresses and strains in the form of a cherub come with you (nothing like a bit of mobile stress and strain to get you relaxed and in the holiday swing!). A non-interrupted, 24 hour sleep? A lot of coffee/tea drinking (if only I could get to it before it went cold!). Or maybe a bit of hair pulling and shedding of a few tears? Didn't have time for any of that but what always sat me on my bum was going back into hospital.

That is the place where I got to look around at the other kids in the ward. That was the place that I had 'mothers group'. For all the friends around me, none of them had experienced anything more than a day or two of stress with their little one having nothing more than jaundice and needing to be under the lights. Keeping up with those friends was nigh on impossible as my world took off on a tangent and theirs continued on a straight line. How could they understand what it was like to function with alarms and medicines and the lack of sleep that I would never have thought possible? When they rang and asked me what I was doing, how I was going? I started sounding like a broken record. My day was the same for months, I had nothing to tell them other than the surface details, because they just wouldn't understand what it was like without walking in my shoes, living in my brain, seeing through my eyes.

Meeting other parents of sick kids, becoming friends with some, being able to talk about the procedures and problems on a personal level and not a technical one, that was a true sharing of the parenting I was doing. Knowing that they also know about the stress and strain of it all, that they empathised with me, it was a case of sympathy in the truest form. Looking around the ward would always remind me that there was always someone worse off, someone more in need than us. So my catch cry of “What now!” would turn into “What now?”, and we would soldier on to the next day, because we could.

So here I sit, years later, and hospital's no longer a threat (excluding the rush to hospital for the cherub that rode her skateboard down the road at top pace without a helmet, who stopped her high speed fall into the bitumen with her face, then couldn't remember the day that had preceded! "And why am I bleeding?" That was a huge "WHAT NOW!"). I know more, I feel more, I see more and I understand more, having gone through what we have gone through. I learnt about strength, will, my little tested endurance (doesn't need anymore testing, thanks) and what it's like to hold onto sanity when you don't really want to.

It's great to have healthy ever after cherubs out there, I hope it's the way of the future, it's good to I've just heard a thump on the ground, no more trampoline noise, the dog is barking and I think I hear a kid whimpering.....gotta go. "What now!".....