

New Book Explores the *MOMumental* Task of Mothering

Author Jennifer Grant's girlhood dream of being the perfect mom, with perfect kids in a perfect home, withered quickly in the face of reality. Rather than give in to despair, however, she gained a fresh perspective. *MOMumental: Adventures in the Messy Art of Raising a Family* (Worthy Publishing, \$14.99 paper, May 8, 2012) is her account of the unpredictable, sometimes hilarious, and often taxing process of raising a family. It's full of humorous and poignant stories from her everyday life—one that mothers everywhere can identify with.

Grant, now the mother of four children ages 15, 13, 12, and 10, has embraced a more realistic view of parenting. She calls it "Velveteen parenting" after *The Velveteen Rabbit*. "After being broken in by time and exasperation and days when I want to run after my kids with a wooden spoon, I no longer look to others or to myself to be ideal mothers," Grant writes. "Like the Velveteen Rabbit, I've become more Real. My fur's been rubbed off. My heart has stretched and expanded. The shine is gone. Now I can say with confidence that we cannot create perfect homes and families. We must confess our mistakes and bad choices, accept forgiveness, and give ourselves the chance to start again. Over and over and over again."

Some of her "Velveteen" guidelines include:

- Choose your battles.
- Develop priorities in your family's life, such as treating each other with respect, eating together whenever possible, and attending church together.
- Ask questions such as, "What do I want our family to be like? What are our individual gifts and perspectives? What connects us as a family and brings us joy?"
- Remind yourself that children are not mini-adults, but are uniquely suited to grow, learn, and enjoy life in ways that many of us as adults don't remember.
- Look with a critical—and often delighted—eye at what the culture is dishing up to your children. Teach your children to do the same.
- Don't be so hard on yourself. Moms often judge themselves too harshly and then are quick to judge and label other mothers who are fumbling along just like they are.

Grant doesn't advocate becoming a Tiger Mom, a BFF Mom, a Helicopter Mom, or an Earth Mama. She doesn't know the best way to potty-train a toddler, to get kids to eat broccoli, or to ensure that teens don't engage in risky behavior. Rather, she offers uncommon insights about being an intentional parent. A mom who is "besotted" with her children, Grant has come to appreciate the mess of family life and her own happy, idiosyncratic, and imperfect family

Disabused of the myth of the perfect mother, Grant says, "I no longer think I can raise my children without ever letting them down, misunderstanding them or failing them, or losing my temper." She is realistic about the extreme highs and lows that can occur every single day as a

parent, including the worry and the mind-numbing number of details to manage. But she has faith that by raising her family with the essentials of love and spiritual grounding—and a third essential, books—all shall be well.

Along with anecdotes about her own family, Grant:

- shares funny “Bad Mommy” stories she solicited from friends;
- points out the countless opportunities that family life affords to give and dispense grace;
- offers thoughts on raising hopeful kids in an anxiety-filled post-9/11 world;
- tells the myriad things she wished she’d known when she was a young parent—especially all the things she needn’t have worried about.
- counsels moms on the importance of adult friendships, and detecting signs of burnout, and presents her version of the “Serenity Prayer” for mothers.

“I want a family that works to make the world a better place for us all,” Grant writes. “I want to raise children who can walk into adulthood as unencumbered as possible. I want ours to be happy and beloved children. At least most of the time. I think I’m managing to create something, with God’s help, that is good.”

Jennifer Grant is a journalist with interests in parenting, family life, and international health and development. She has been a columnist and currently freelances for the *Chicago Tribune*. Grant is a guest blogger for websites including *Fullfill* and *Sojourners’ God’s Politics* blog and a regular contributor to *Christianity Today’s* her.meneutics blog for women. Her work has been published in magazines including *Chicago Parent*, *Christianity Today*, *Draft*, and *Conscious Choice*. She is the author of the memoir [*Love You More: The Divine Surprise of Adopting My Daughter*](#). Jennifer and her husband, David, live with their four children in a suburb of Chicago, IL. Find her on Twitter @jennifergrant, @momumentalbook, and @loveyoumorebook and online at <http://www.jennifergrant.com>.

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MOMumental:
Adventures in the Messy Art of Raising a Family
by Jennifer Grant
Worthy Publishing
PUB DATE: May 8, 2012
ISBN: 9781617950742
\$14.99 paper