

Mensa Mamma



I just can't control myself – helping my second grader with her homework makes me feel like a genius. Well, maybe not a genius, but at bit like Alex Trebek at a Spelling Bee. "I'm sorry [cue pity face], the correct answer is t-r-o-U-b-l-e." Then I like to show off a little by using it in a sentence, "You're really having TROUBLE with that word, aren't you?"

I realize this feeling will only last as long as her times tables are under "10" and her spelling words are two syllables or less. I'm already struggling with finding the Theme Sentence in a paragraph – suspect this is a moving target created by spiteful English teacher – and also the Jurassic period is turning into a buzzkill for me.

Sadly, there were even a couple of times in first grade when she's had to correct me, "Mommy, I don't think that is the right hat for the fireman. I think it's the red pointy one." Just testing her. I knew that. (*Yellow hat= constructions worker. Yellow hat= construction worker ...*)

So, when I feel I'm losing my intellectual edge, I breakout the "telling time" worksheets and I'm brilliant again: even I know when it's 5:45 p.m. So for right now, I'm taking advantage of the little I.Q. stroke I'm getting by helping my daughter with her homework ... so pathetic, I know.

Not a single Peep



I started to panic a little when I walked into Target this morning to get things for my kids' baskets and there weren't any Peeps in the \$1 section. "Must be back in the seasonal section," I tried to reassure myself.

But, no!

Target was completely out by 10 am, Saturday morning. They had legions of them two days ago—all lined up like an army in some weird, psychedelic PBS kids' show. But today, not one little solider was there.

I personally don't like Peeps. They fall into the same category as Candy Corn in my opinion. Blah! (I did a whole video about how I don't like Candy Corn.) But, I was desperate to get some them for my daughter, Emily. She loves those day-glo, gooey chicks. She expects them in her basket every year. When I got home from Target I immediately alerted everyone on my Facebook MomCrush Fan Page that there wasn't a Peep to be had in all of Orange County. One friend suggested maybe they've all been used for art in this Washington Posts' "Peep Show" contest. *So funny.*

Must. Find. Peeps.

I then spent over an hour-and-a-half going from store to store Peep hunting. I went to Ralphs, Pavillions, Big Lots. Nothing! I even ran into a friend as I was going into RiteAid and she was coming out. She had read my status on Facebook and when she saw me frantically approaching she immediately started shaking her head and shouted, "No Peeps in there, Suz."

Arrr! Why am I such a procrastinator!!

I ended up telling Emily that I heard on the news that the Easter Bunny ran out of Peeps while in Scotland and so he doesn't have any to give to the American kids. I then quickly reminded her that we have Disneyland and they don't. Which

seemed to help.

I can only hope that the friends she sees at church tomorrow don't have stories of Peeps in their baskets.

Happy Easter!

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Kind of related stories

Lessons in parenting: lying to your kids.

The awfully funny truth.

Nothing like a five-year-old boy



Ben: I was running at school so fast!

Me: Really.

Ben: Yeah, you know when you run so fast and smoke comes out the back of your shoes?

Me: Yes, that IS fast.

Ben: All my friends behind me were coughing and coughing because of all the smoke.

Me: Oh, my. You are a fast runner.

Ben: Yeah, really fast.

When things aren't just things



I think the hardest lessons to teach our kids are the ones we haven't quite learned ourselves.

This became plain to me when I pitched a fit over all the THINGS my kids had and announced that after Christmas we were going to give a painful amount of their things away. They cried at the thought and started to frantically list all the items they didn't want included on the give away list.

Their rooms, closets, drawers, and even pockets are filled with stuff.

Too much clutter makes me anxious and I started to feel guilty that my kids have so much, when so many kids in the world have so little. "They're just things," I assured them. "They don't matter that much."

My husband and I tell our kids all the time, "Some kids don't have anything." And try as they might, this concept is just too hard for our Irvine-raised kids to fully understand.

We sponsor children in Africa and read their letters to our kids. We donate to families in need living in Orange County. And yes, it makes them sad to think of a little girl who doesn't have even one doll, but do they really get it? Charity is a hard concept for a child, it doesn't seem to come to them naturally.

Fueled by the guilt and an urge to tidy up, I started to put my urge to purge into action. When my daughter, Em, was at her grandma's house, I tackle the insane amount of stuff that filled her room. I gleefully tossed broken fast food toys, dried up pens, and books half chewed-up by the dog without a thought. I happily stuffed bags with shoes, pjs, and Polly Pockets for the Goodwill with ease. But then I got to the harder things—the stuffed animals.

My seven-year-old daughter's stuffed animals are like her children. She's grown up with some of them. They have come on vacation with us, comforted her in the ER, and accompanied her on her first day of school. How can I give any of them away? With the exception of Webkinz— which hold zero sentimental value with me—I'm attached to nearly all of my daughter's stuffed animals.

How can I give away Sad Molly, named because of her sad smile? Or Bark Dog? Or Baby Bark Dog? Not Madonna! Certainly not Jewel, named after her favorite musician. Her Aunt Jana gave her Chili, and her Grandma, Bella Bunny. Poodlina just stared at me with those big, black plastic eyes as if pleading me not to pick her and shove her into the bag. How can I?

I remember Em wrapping her in my son's receiving blanket to "practice having a little brother." **sniff**sniff** Should I keep them all? With all the lecturing about kids who are less fortunate than us and about how stuff isn't the most important thing in life, I'm holding on tightly to these things—to stuff. The very thing I just ranted on about right before Christmas I'm clinging on to today.

guess I haven't learned my own lesson because I neatly lined-up her entire crew on her bed and they are now waiting patiently for her to get home. I suppose sometimes things aren't just things.

Other random things from me:

- Songs from the 70's rewritten after the artists had kids
 - 10 things mommy wishes she could stop doing
 - Breaking News: Irvine mom admits she can't afford something
-

It's beginning to look a lot like a kegger

Wide-eyed and excited, a little girl walks down the aisle at Toys "R" Us in Irvine. She stops at the Bratz section and picks up one of the heavily made up dolls who's sporting a mid-drift and thigh-high stockings.



"Stop right there!" I shout, startling her. "Put that down, NOW!" I scream as I lunge toward her and knock the trampy doll out of her little hand. Then I turn her quickly to the sweet My Littlest Pet Shop display. Whew! Future teen disaster averted!

Well, okay not really. But that's what I felt like doing last week. Walking down the girl's aisles at toy stores can sometimes feels a little like MTV's Spring Break. The level of inappropriate attire and activities gets jacked-up year after year. It makes a mom wonder what kind of little girls these toy producers are targeting.



I'm not one to blame the media or toy makers entirely for the trend—as parents, I think it's our responsibility to moderate what our kids consume and not make others responsible—but geesh, taken as a whole, I feel the sexualization of little girls is getting out of hand. It seems every year the boundaries get pushed a little further, dragging our daughters down the road to adulthood at a quicker rate than they are equipped to handle.

It's the growing floozy-fueled trend that bothers me, not the desire for a little girl to act girlie. I let my six-year-old

daughter play with Barbies. I let her do her nails sometimes. I let her have a little bit of a heel on her fancy black shoes. Bottom line: I let her be a little girl. I liked being a little girl. Being a little girl is a lot of fun. But I draw the line at Barbie's Hot Tub Party Bus. I think the concept behind it is too exceedingly tart-like to support.



Fun in the sun is one thing—which I enjoyed endlessly with my Malibu Barbie Country Camper—but throwing my daughter on a “Party Bus” with all of her half-dressed friends to soak in a hot tub with Ken and his buddies is another.

(See the original commercial for Barbie's Country Camper
here...Sigh...)

This subject of guarding our daughters from vile merchandise is near and dear to my heart. You might remember the subtle mandate (paradox intended) I wrote calling for the boycott of Juicy Couture because of their despicable products made for young girls—remember their “Trust Fund Generation University” line of purses? This holiday season Juicy has teamed up with Barbie to make supermodel Barbies for just \$125 a doll. Which would probably be these girls going rate on “the street.” ***wink***wink***



Juicy also offers “A Week in the Life of a Juicy Drama Queen” underwear for little girls. So, for only \$58, your young daughter can have clever “Juicy” puns splashed across her bottom for...um, I would hope no one to see. And isn’t Juicy considerate to promote the trait we ALL encourage in our daughters—DRAMA!



The sales gal at Nordstrom in the Spectrum assured me I would “be surprised” at how many they sell. She’s right. I’m always surprised when parents throw their money away on inane products for their kids. (You can read my Juicy Couture Rant

here. I go into detailed about why all their products should be tossed into an angry sea.)

I know I must sound like the ultimate mommy buzz kill, and maybe I am a bit. But I didn't sign up for this whole parenting thing just to make and impress friends and I certainly didn't do it for the pay or the hours. I want my daughter (and my son) to have a total blast as kids, but sometimes it takes a purposeful effort on the parents' part to help them define what a "total blast" should look like.

Now let's see...I pointed out the evil trend of trampy toys marketed to our daughters...I showed you pictures of disgraceful Bratz dolls...I reiterated my disdain for all things Juicy...I encouraged you to dump unseemly products into an angry sea...I think my work here is done.

Have a nice holiday...and don't forget to try buying handmade.

*This was written for my blog at The Orange County Register,
"Mommy's Mind is Not a Toy."*

Here are some other things I've written there that are bossy, snarky, and sometimes, usually by accident, downright true!

1. I'm afraid of wimps and you should be, too
2. Okay kids, time to break out the french maid costumes!
3. Social Etiquette 101 or Don't ever, ever under any circumstances ask a women if she is pregnant 101

Lessons in parenting: Lying

to your kids



I lie to my kids all the time. I know I'm not supposed to lie. I teach my kids not to lie. But it's completely impossible to navigate the murky, treacherous waters of parenting without inserting a doozie of a fib every once in a while.

I'm not talking about the standard "untruths" we tell to kindle our kids' imagination and make their little lives fun—like about a certain white-bearded man or gnomes living in our houses.

I'm not including the little white lies we tell to ease the pain of a lost pet or calm the anxiety of a worried little one on the way to the doctor. Every parent stretches the truth when it comes to how long five minutes is or what the consequences are if you cross your eyes for too long—these are all just "givens" in the big parenting book. (Which isn't issued, but written hastily by parents as they go...)

I'm talking about flat-out whoppers that are told in the hopes of getting our kids to do what we want them to do. Lies that take death defying-leaps away from reality but ultimately, we believe, will benefit our children. In the end, these types of lies will become family folklore that our kids will tell their kids one day. "I remember grandma told me our cat got married and moved away, but really they gave him away because he kept scratching the furniture." They will laugh with their children, while shooting us an amused look.

These are the lies that keep on giving. The ones you have to elaborate and modify to keep them going. The kind of lies you have to whisper ahead of time to friends or family—dragging them into your web of deception.

My biggest and longest running lie revolved around the

culinary delight we all know as the grilled cheese sandwich. My favorite food in the world! But my daughter didn't like them—refused to eat them! I wanted to make them for ~~myself~~ her because of their nutritional value (always on whole wheat), to add some variety to her meals, and because they are DOWNRIGHT yummy!

She wouldn't have anything to do with them.

One day, after refusing a grilled cheese, I asked her if she wanted me to make her a very special sandwich—A Camp Sandwich. Usually The Camp Sandwich can only be eaten while outdoors, next to an open fire. But I told her I could, just this once, make her a Camp Sandwich to try. Oh, she really wanted one, so I broke the rules “just this once” and made her the perfect Camp Sandwich.

As she ate it I told her tale after bogus tale about how I used to eat them all the time when I was a little girl. How I used to sit around campsites with my brothers eating Camp Sandwiches, petting the bears, and listening to the wood fairies sing as they worked. I really laid it on thick.

“This is the best sandwich I’ve ever had!” she announced as she devoured the sandwich. Mission accomplished...until...she ordered a Camp Sandwich at Ruby’s, and at Red Robin and at.... I think I have told every 20-year-old, uninterested server in Orange County the story of The Camp Sandwich.

The Camp Sandwich had a very long run as far as parental lies go. It lasted until my daughter was about six years old when her Aunt Jana finally (narked on me) told her the truth while spending the day at her house. She hopped in the car and proudly proclaimed, “I know a Camp Sandwich is really just a grilled cheese!”

Oh, well. At least she has a good story for her kids now and I have a daughter who enjoys a good grilled cheese as much as I do.

(Picture by Studio Schatz)

Roller Skating, it's the new laundry



This is how it happened: I was working on a story for the Register on The OC Roller Girls, and after attending a couple of practices and going to a few Roller Derby bouts, I started to get smitten with skating. Though not enough to be a roller derby girl, PLEASE ...me? I have weak ankles and a well-developed fear of girls pushing me to the ground. But roller skating...remember roller skating?

I grew up in Huntington Beach and in the early '80s I spent most of my time applying my roll-on lip gloss, feathering my hair, and skating to Earth, Wind & Fire at the Holiday Roller Rink in Fountain Valley. No girl was more dedicated to her roller skates than me. Every weekend I was there, the scent of Love's Baby Soft permeating from my satin jacket and rainbow shirt. I had my own white skates with big yellow wheels AND I had the '80s version of flair-pom-poms.

Yes, some of it was about the boys, but a lot of it was about the pom-poms.

Now, I'm a wife and mother of two kids—how can I work roller skating into my life? My friends will surely roll their eyes and toss the idea in to the growing heap of "things Suz got all excited about and quickly forgot." (That heap has cost me a bundle.) But, when I mentioned it to them they wanted to join in, and when I wrote about it on my personal blog, I got

a huge response from moms all around the country. THEY WANTED ROLLER SKATES! Geesh! Okay then.

I ordered my roller skates and my husband got me the pom-poms for our anniversary. Here they are...

My new roller skates.



Now, to find a place to skate. I ended up with a girlfriend of mine and our daughters at The Holiday Roller Rink in Orange one Saturday morning for a quick lesson and then open skate. After my first spin around the rink it felt like my skates and I had never parted—it was just like 1981 again. My girlfriend who hadn't been on her skates in (ahem) a long time, too, was having the same "Peggy Sue Got Married" moment. As we heartlessly lapped our struggling seven-year-olds we sunk deeper and deeper into a nostalgic trance.

The whole rink experience is largely unchanged and really geeky. They still do the hokey pokey, play Redlight/Greenlight, and blast Queen's "We will rock you" as everyone stomps their skates to the beat. Just to clarify, when I say "really geeky," I mean "totally awesome."

I admit, I did feel a little silly breaking out my skates in Newport this past weekend to skate while my son rode his bike down the bike path. I mean, I am "of a certain age" when cute can be translated, to some, as pathetic, or just plain dorky. I did contemplate walking instead. But then I thought more about it and as I laced-up, fastened my hot pink helmet and straightened my "Hello Kitty" t-shirt I said (to myself), "This really makes me happy. I'm really beside myself with flippin' happiness right now." And if being (fine, I'll say it) 40 years old has taught me anything, it's "Take any 'happy' you can get."

Great, now I really sound like a biddy, but it's true. I don't care if roller skating comes across as a clear grasp at my fleeting youth, I'm going to do it anyway—with flair!

Here's a video I made about my new passion: I Got a Brand New Pair of Roller Skates.

More embarrassing & immature behavior from me:

- *A little too happy about a happy meal toy.*
- *10 things mommy wishes she could stop doing.*
- *Honey, I'm going to have to write you up for tonight's dinner.*

Quick links:

- OC Moms home
 - Mom forums
-

Lynn is going orange for “HallowEden”

I'm not very accustom to writing about serious issues. Yes, okay, I rant about topics with serious subtext. I go to proper functions and tell you about them. But, I feel much more comfortable in the land of piffle and snarky observation than the world of prudence and purposeful conversation.

It's me. My writer's insecurity comes out and I feel less than qualified to talk about more important, weighty issues—like

losing a child to cancer. But, today I cooled my frivolous heels and wrote about a meaningful upcoming event.

On the Mom Blog at the Orange County Register I posted a special edition on my blog, "Mommy's Mind is not a Toy," about my friend, Lynn. You can click the link below to go over and see why she would let me post this picture of her. (Though I still think she looks pretty.)

"Going orange for HallowEden."



French Maids, clown shoes and Juicy Couture over at The Mom Blog today

I just posted "Hey kids, time to breakout the French Maid costume" at The Mom Blog over at The OC Register. If you haven't read it and been stumped by the behavior of one OC Dad, you can do so [HERE](#).

I also link to my "Juicy Couture Rant" which still holds just as true and still gets me just as fired-up as it did when I wrote it last year. If you JUST LOVE Juicy, don't read it, it will ruin the joy of buying anything from them ever again. (I hope.)



I'm afraid of wimps and you should be, too



The other day I was talking to my friend who has her kids in public school in Irvine and she mentioned her kids aren't allowed to run on the pavement at recess. Since my kids go to private school, this was a new concept to me.

So, I asked around. Seems this is standard practice in the public school. When I asked the parents why, they said it was because the school didn't want the kids to fall and get hurt on the pavement. Some suspected it was for legal reasons.

What? Has it come to this? No running on the playground?

"What about skipping?" I asked my friend.

"Um, frowned upon I think," she said with a laugh.

But, this is part of a wider trend that worries me. The other day we were out to dinner with some other families and a mom asked if I could move because I was sitting where her daughter wanted to sit. Me, the adult, move because of the whim of a kid. I said "No, she's just fine there."

I know a mom who has guarded her grade school son from every possible form of failure, handicapping him with the incapability of handling it. Smothering our kids with gentleness, covering them with failure padding, and interfering with normal kid-like behavior are all scary remedies to parental/adult fears and weaknesses.

What is the end result of this kind of sheltering? To me, it

seems the consequences of overprotecting our kids are going to be much worse than any scraped knee or hurt feeling.

The Orange County Register's very own Sam Miller wrote an article called "Are we raising a 'Nation of Wimps?'" that spotlights a book about this subject—"Nation of Wimpy." When I heard this recess story, I remembered Sam's article and ordered the book. (The comments on this article are very good, as well.)

I am afraid of the wimpy that we might be raising—you should be afraid of wimpy, too. Not just physical wimpiness—character wimpiness, emotional wimpiness.

I don't want this to be a complaining post about "kids these days" or "parents nowadays." What I want to know is what can be done? What have you done?

If you want to read more on "Nation of Wimpy" go to Crabmommy's interview with the author.

Picture taken from the Etsy store of "Fine Art Images."