

The Real Skinny on Baby Showers



As I was driving to my friend Jen's baby shower, my daughter Emily asked, "Why do they call it a baby shower, anyway?"

"I think it's because when you become a new mom, you don't get to take very many showers," I said. "So we throw mommies-to-be one big shower before the baby comes."

Cue the rimshot: "ba-da-bum, ching." No giggle. Nothing. She just blinked at me. "OK, Sweetie," I told her, coming clean. "It's really because we shower the mom-to-be with gifts for the new baby."

This was Emily's first baby shower, and she was pumped, dolled

up and brimming with questions. Then she asked what we were going to do at the shower. I told her we'd open gifts, eat fancy snacks and play games. She perked right up at the games idea. "What kind of games?"

I could've told her about the Baby Food Game or The Safety Pin Game, but I didn't. Maybe it was my unrelenting need to mess with my kids, or maybe it was the Frappuccino talking, but I launched into a list of games that I thought would much better reflect the true parenting experience.

The Eating Shameful Things Game: Shower guests are given a plate of pizza crusts, dried out mac' and cheese, sticky Goldfish crackers and cold french fries. Whoever eats it the quickest wins a prize.

The Feign Sleeping Game: While all the guests are seated in a circle, one at a time they lie in the middle while everyone makes the loudest noises possible to try to "wake" them. Whoever can pretend they're sleeping the longest wins! Not recommended for co-ed showers; the men smoke us every time.

The Find Something to Wear Game: Place each player in front of a closet packed with clothes, but only a few things that actually fit. Give them 30 seconds to find something to wear. All the moms will gasp in sympathy as the mom-to-be reaches for the pre-pregnancy jeans.

As a mom who is 12 years into her parenting gig, I guess I feel a little, I don't know, jaded. No, not jaded – more like a wise old mommy sage, like Maggie Seaver or Clair Huxtable. (It really is sad that all of my parenting role models come from '80s TV shows.)

Whenever I go to a baby shower, I feel the urge to paint a more realistic picture of parenting for the mom-to-be. I want to bring the Pottery Barn Catalog and go through it page by page. "See this?" I'd say, pointing to the perfectly groomed children seated quietly around an uncovered pine table doing a

craft. "This isn't real, you know. You don't dress kids in satin and give them glue."

But once we got to the shower, like always, my heart started to melt. I was swept up in the music, the melon balls, the memories of my first shower.

The reality of parenting isn't the same as we thought it was when we held up booties and footie jammies to "oohs" and "aahs" at our own showers. But that doesn't mean it's any less wondrous. Being a parent is better than you could ever imagine and impossible to explain, and it brings you immeasurable happiness and joy. So why not celebrate with cupcakes and a mountain of gifts?

Welcome to the Mom's Club, Jen. It will be fantastic. Just don't think about reaching for those pre-pregnancy jeans quite yet.