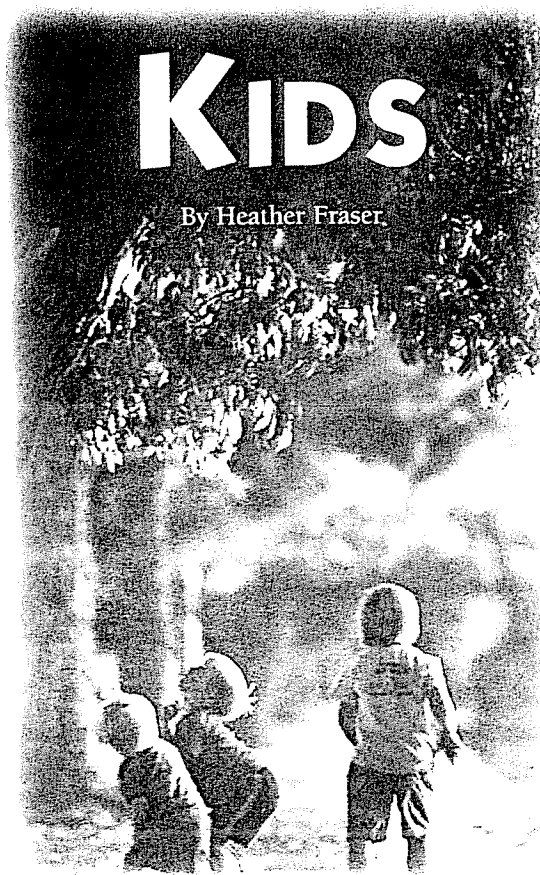


Cherish your kids. Love them. Show it. Make sure they feel it. Prove it over and over again. Make them feel like the only kid on earth. Build them up. Shower them with joy. Play with them. Set firm boundaries. Laugh with them. Keep your word. Honor them. Respect them. Not just as little ones. Keep it up through all the stages, especially the teen years.

There are no greater teachers of love than our children, but we have to be able to slow down and listen to them, BE with them, to find this out. We have to be able to get out of our own tight, inflexible, rigid way. There's not an inflexible cell in a child's body, and if there is, it's because we (the adults) put it there. They are free flowing balls of pure joy. Everything is amazing to them. They cherish every single second of it without even realizing it. Yes, they are our blessed teachers.

It's taken me almost four years to get this. When my daughter, Sage, was born, my life as I knew it disappeared. This was a shock to my system. I was 35 years old and had been married for 6 years having a great time feeling free and fiercely independent. I had a house in the country, a greenhouse, a beautiful garden, the freedom to learn new things, take courses, entertain friends, go away for weekends, sleep in, write at leisure, explore my personal growth and spirituality. I thought life was pretty damn good.

When Sage was born I became the wicked witch of the west. My utter disbelief and non acceptance that the life I had cherished before motherhood was literally gone for good rocked my world until I cracked, split open, and let all the poison ooze out. I don't know how I made it through the first two years of her life. To write about it now reminds me of the dark hell of those days. I was diagnosed with postpartum stress, post traumatic stress disorder, extreme hormone deficiency, depression, and anorexia. I went from 145lbs at full term pregnancy to 112lbs by the time Sage was 6 months old. And while it is true that I probably had all or a combination of



**Learn from your kids.
They are teaching you love.**

*"Child of mine, your skin like velvet
against my weathered hands.
Child of mine, your voice like church bells
- sweetness in the shadows of my silence.
Child of mine, your eyes reflecting God
- shattering the dullness of my vision.
Child of mine, your Love,
showing me and the world,
what we could be."*

-journal entry, 1998

the above disorders. I am convinced to this day that it was my own refusal to accept my life as it was which caused all the problems in the first place. Whatever we resist persists. Every hurdle in life, every set back and challenge is always trying to teach us about love.

As I sit here today writing these words, I am in awe of how much my life has changed since I gave birth. I not only gave birth to Sage, but to myself as well. It's hard to tell which was more painful. In retrospect, I can see I had much growing up to do. I felt so inadequate being a mom because I had never been shown how. My own mother was single and bringing up my 2 brothers and I as best she could, but she was in survival mode most of the time and away at work all day. I had learned to be excellent at taking care of myself and not needing anyone. When it came time for me to be responsible for this new little life that needed me in order to live and whom I loved beyond words, I flipped out. My love for her and her need for me didn't equate in my mind. I had never

felt this kind of love before and no one had ever needed me before. I honestly didn't know what to do and to me that meant FAILURE! FAILURE! FAILURE! And the downward spiral began.

With Sage almost 4 now, my marriage over, and my new life emerging, my favorite word is forgiveness. I forgive myself about a thousand times a day. Mostly for the pain and abandonment Sage must have felt in having a mother so far gone in those early years.

One of my favorite definitions for forgiveness by Dr. Gerald Jampolsky states, "Forgiveness is giving up all hope for a better past." Amen. For me, cherishing life is as much about learning from my past mistakes and becoming the kind of woman and mother my daughter can respect. She's taught me about balance and honoring my needs as a woman and a mother. When I was running on empty, she was not happy! She's taught me nothing but love. That's all she knows. Now that I know it too, I can relax into our journey together and go with the flow. Learn from your kids. They are teaching you love.