

MENTAL

the MOTHER load



THE FACEBOOK COMMUNITY

329

The number of members in private Facebook group after three weeks

15

The number of creative tasks posted in first seven weeks

112

The number of members participating in creative tasks

524

The number of responses to creative provocations

What helpful advice has added to your Mental Load?

List your victories in the last 48 hours.

In picture or word form, what does your Mum guilt look like?

As a Mum, I have grown...

A SMALL SAMPLE OF THE MANY BRAVE, RAW AND FUNNY RESPONSES TO CREATIVE PROVOCATIONS...

My mother guilt is a broken mans hands around my neck while our son grew in my belly. My mother guilt is the research articles piling up all documenting how domestic violence in utero shapes the brain into adulthood. My mother guilt is all the choices I cannot change that have shaped the context my young man has to build himself within. My mother guilt looks like a folio full of school letterheads with the words 'defiant' in capitals and waiting six years to stand up for him because I was too afraid to rock the boat. My mother guilt tastes like MacDonalds and tears at midnight. My mother guilt sounds like Netflix on repeat. My mother guilt smells like burnt on oven grime and dust. My mother guilt feels like eternity times a dripping tap divided by the heartache I give myself.

Over the past few days in raw grief my 17 year old has been wise and warm and funny and loving and practical. I feel like I must've done something very right raising her. She called me out twice this evening in a way I don't think anyone ever has (brutally direct yet loving and kind) about some self-delusional bullshit. Last night we danced in the dark outside and cried and laughed and played each other tunes... And this morning she climbed up me like a fireman's pole and sat on one shoulder while I danced in the kitchen. I'm proud of her strength and of my own ☐☐

'Cherish every moment!' and every variation like 'they'll be in school before you know it!', 'They grow up so fast!'. Piss off, I refuse to cherish dealing with another person's poo, or scraping food off the floor, or having a handful of gravel shoved down my cleavage. I'm not going to look back fondly at having my nipples bitten, or the deep end of sleep deprivation. Telling me to Cherish Every Moment just adds to the my mental load, and to my guilt load. I love my kids but some aspects of parenting are boring, and exhausting, and shitty (literally and metaphorically), and the constant exhortations to CHERISH IT is just another way that society reinforces to mothers that parenting is the Most Wonderful Thing and therefore something they should be happy to do, and make endless sacrifices for, with no thought for thanks for recompense or even acknowledgement of the job they're doing. BAH HUMBUG.

Refer to your child as your roommate...

My roommate regularly asks me to check they have wiped their bottom properly.
My roommate likes to lay on the couch in just his undies.
My roommate keeps climbing into bed with me in the middle of the night.
My room mate tells me to 'put a cork up ya butt'.
My roommate shows me their bowl after every mouthful to ask if they've eaten enough yet.
My roommate would love to spend her entire days eating kitty litter and washing clothes pegs.
I'm so over my roommates leaving their skid marks in the loo!!!
My roommate gets me to drive her everywhere and pick her up at all hours and she never throws in for petrol.
My roommates are trying to sing Harry Potter Puppet Pals and the mysterious ticking noise.

My roommates like to get naked, throw all the couch cushions on the floor and wrestle each other.
My roommate screams abuse at me. And then gives me cuddles, saying I'm the best thing ever.
My roommate shoves objects in my face, shouting "Smell this!"
My roommate makes me sing the Chickenfeed song over and over again whilst he interpretive dances in his undies.
My roommate would cry if I didn't applaud loudly at their interpretive dances.
My roommate loves to watch me shower (pulls up his tiny chair and all) and also needs to watch me wipe when I go to the toilet.
My roommate needs to talk to me through the door every time I go to the toilet, and gets very cross when I can't hear what they are saying.

My roommate yells "I have to do everything round here" when asked to do a single task once a week.
My roommate tweaks my nipples.
My roommate keeps putting acorns in my car.
My roommate belches at the dinner table like nothing you have EVER heard and then says 'what? I covered my mouth!'
My roommate thinks that jamming his head into my buttocks is an appropriate way to get my attention. He has also started arguing the point with me about who owns my boobs.

FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS ABOUT THE FACEBOOK GROUP...

I have found myself 'waiting' for the next task...and really enjoying the network of mothers who comment and are open and like-minded in the challenges that we all face. It's so soothing to know we are not alone. Even if it really doesn't CHANGE my situation...it is reassuring. And that's awesome. The workshop was also great to get to. I never go out anymore and that was a fantastic reason to give myself that time with other mothers. It's all great!

I would like to say a big thank you to MENTAL.

I'm trying to differentiate between being a mother to that of being a single mum.

This has been an important platform/exercise/connection.

I know I have needed it...

I've loved reading and seeing the comments on each post. You have all made me laugh and contemplate, I miss story telling on a stage, but I've got time to revisit that in some form... Thanks all you mothers out there. You are amazing, I'm in awe of you, you inspire me, you are great role models, you are wonder women in your invisible jets (but maybe our hair is not as coiffed). I salute and I send you love.

It has impacted me positively! Particularly the sense of solidarity with like minded women. Some tasks I've found confronting and haven't been able to do, but I've thought a lot about them and been really interested in what others have written. I'm inspired by the everyday stories of women pursuing arts practice while raising children and it has made me think that I should try to create some more art at some point when I have some time to myself... whenever that may be. 💎💎

It's as if women, everywhere, have decided that the silence - and the competing - has to end. And creative women are doing creative things to lift the veil and demonstrate that most of us mere mortals are often tired, stretched, challenged, and unsure. Perhaps Mental's daily/weekly reminders that we're all in similar boats, facing similar challenges, lightens the load because we're not telling ourselves, quite so often, that we're the only ones collapsing in exhaustion at the end of every day, wondering if we're getting it right, or not ;)