

Is motherhood really that hard?

Jacinta Tynan, *Sunday Life*
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Motherhood is tiring and time-consuming, but is it hard?

Quit moaning about your lack of me-time and unread novels, says Jacinta Tynan. This motherhood thing is all a bit of a lark.

There is one thing nobody warned me about when I became a mother: what a breeze it would be. I was warned about everything else. All I had

been told since I became pregnant was to prepare myself for the toughest job of my life. For years of sleep deprivation, boredom (yes, boredom) and my life not being my own. I was bombarded with tales of cracked nipples, all-night vigils and vomit on the carpet. I was more than mildly worried, as a result, about how on earth I would cope. I am someone who needs my sleep and had a decades long habit of calling my own shots. Would the requirement to be at the beck and call of a little one – even my little one – do my head in?

So, I got the most pleasant surprise to find that being a mum is one of the most seamless, joyful, intuitive things I have ever done. Yes, there are sleepless nights (many of them, in a seemingly endless row), but there is nothing difficult about being up all night with the love of your life. I know our baby boy is only nine months old and isn't even crawling yet, let alone tearing through the house crashing pots on to the floor. I know I only have one child who is healthy and I, thankfully, escaped the cruel curse of postnatal depression, but still I can't see what all the fuss is about.

Ask me if I have another, but from where I stand motherhood is a cinch.

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Yes, it is tiring, and yes, it is time-consuming with showers and emails a sudden extravagance.

But it is not hard. Hard is being tied to a soulless job for 80 per cent of your waking hours. Hard is fighting cancer, or having a child who is. Or not being able to conceive a child when you ache for nothing more. But soothing a crying baby who won't sleep for love nor money is a privilege, not a hardship. Wiping spew off your jacket before bolting out the door to a meeting is funny, not a drama.

It is not fashionable to say so. For the past decade or two, many women in their 20s, 30s and even 40s have been trying to squeeze in a career and motherhood simultaneously, and we have heard the cry of mothers' martyrdom. It has become de rigueur to complain about how arduous the whole thing is, one-upping each other over whose baby sleeps the least, chucks the most and who has fewer hours in the day. We didn't

lobby this hard and hang out this long for work-life balance to admit the whole thing is a piece of cake. A pile of books and blogs reassure us that we are not alone in our hair-pulling struggle: *I Don't Know How She Does It*, *Mommies Who Drink* and the sarcasm-riddled *Motherhood Is Easy: A Survival Guide* having a chortle at our dishevelled demeanours, and misdemeanours. You are excused for your despair, they say. It's a tough gig.

And it can be. It just doesn't have to be.

More on motherhood: _____

Journalist Jenny Dillon might be pushing it with her claims that mothers today are “perpetuating a hoax”, pretending it's as hard as it used to be, household appliances apparently putting us on “Easy Street”. But I do think we could learn a thing or two from our mothers and grandmothers. You never heard a peep out of them about mucking in to double the kids and double the workload, with no online groceries or disposable nappies. Sure, they didn't work (most of them) but they also appreciated that being a mum was one of the better things in life.

My mum had six children, no help and, on occasion, a job. Yet she gave it her all with grace and joy. Our generation acts as if we deserve a medal.

It's not as if we didn't know what we were signing up for. Most mothers want to be mothers, longing for the day when we will hold our own baby in our arms.

How tragic to begrudge it because we can't find time to read a book.

“You will resent the night feeds,” one mother warned me. I never did. I relished them. I took my sister's advice: to cherish those moments when it was just my baby and me together, the only light on in the street. I didn't want to will away one second.

“Don't you hate the sound of their crying?” another mother queried, searching for camaraderie.

No. I didn't and I don't.

Babies don't cry to annoy us. They cry because they are hungry or tired and we are here to solve that.

“It's just because you have an easy baby,” say mums when I confess (it feels like a confession) how much I love it.

We do have an easy baby. So far. He laughs a lot, loves his food and sleeps, well, like a baby. And I am blessed to have a stimulating part-time job and good childcare. Like most mums I have to “juggle” – just as I was warned – often presenting six hours of live TV news in a fog of sleeplessness. Until recently our baby woke at 4am. I also feel an overwhelming responsibility for our baby's emotional well-being. But hard? No. Exhilarating and rewarding more like it.

I never knew I had such capacity to love. Nobody warned me about that.

Jacinta Tynan is an author and a presenter with Sky News.