

## The EMTs and my sheep PJs

By [Lee Hull Moses](#)

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My husband and I called 911 recently, in the middle of the night, because we were afraid our one-year-old son was having trouble breathing. I'd woken up with that unspecific but certain feeling that something was wrong. My husband got to the crib first and picked him up; my son was burning up with fever, limp and clammy and not quite awake, taking grunting little breaths.

He is fine, was mostly fine all along. In retrospect, we could have waited a few minutes to see if he perked up—but when you think your baby isn't breathing, you are not inclined to wait a few minutes to see what happens.

By the time the ambulance arrived, he had woken up enough to be crying. This reassured everyone that he was probably okay, and it freed up a little space in my worried mind to suddenly be aware of the fact that these strangers were seeing me in my pajamas. Pink and gray flannel pajama pants with sheep on them, to be exact, and a t-shirt that says, "My sister has the best sister in the world." And my hair...well, let me just remind you that it was two in the morning.

I also had the ridiculous thought, as the EMTs carried their equipment into my cluttered living room, that I would have straightened up a bit if I'd known we were going to have guests.

But then I thought—it is remarkable the kind of inner dialogue you can have while watching your sick-but-clearly-not-dying baby get checked out—of all the hospital rooms I've entered to visit church members. Inevitably, they'll apologize for how their hair looks, or for the lack of a chair nearby for me to sit down. They tug at the corners of those awful hospital gowns, clearly embarrassed about how little is covered. Or I visit in their homes when they're recovering from surgery, and they glance self-consciously at the kitchen that hasn't been cleaned.

I assure them that I've seen it all before, that it doesn't matter to me one bit. And I mean it. When you get right down to it, life is messy—and we rarely arrive at those crisis moments with our hair perfectly coifed.

Which is what I tried to tell myself as the kind EMT packed up her equipment and told me to give my baby some ibuprofen and lots of fluids and call the pediatrician in the morning. She works nights on an ambulance, it finally occurred to me; my sheep pajamas and messy living room were hardly the worst things she'd see on that shift.

We stayed up with our son for another hour, until the medicine kicked in and he was sleeping peacefully on my shoulder. Then we climbed back into bed, the baby tucked in between us—we were not quite ready for him to be out of reach again—and tried to salvage a few more hours of sleep. In the morning, he was as chipper as ever, ready to embrace the day.

Thanks be to God for the helpers who watch in the night, who couldn't care less what kind of pajamas we are wearing.