

Waiting eight years to be a mother

By [Elizabeth Hagan](#)

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I spent eight years wondering what it would feel like to be a mother of a particular child.

I thought of it every time I picked up drugs at the pharmacy for one of our in vitro fertilization procedures.

I thought of every time I signed my name to a background check for our adoption paperwork.

I thought it every time I couldn't manage to avoid the kid clothes aisle at Target.

First of all, would it ever happen? And if it did, then . . . What would it be like?

What would I name him or her?

Would I look him or her in the eyes for the first time and magically fall in love? Or would bonding take much longer?

After the birth, would I work part time or full time or not at all?

Would motherhood morph me into Betty Crocker with spreadsheets for what we ate for dinner every night? Or would I be the mom who ordered groceries online and dragged my kid to restaurants too?

Would I function on little sleep, little free time, and little alone time with grace? Or would I become grump in chief?

Eight years is a long time to wonder about questions like these. Eight years can go by so slowly.

In all of my waiting, I know I made up lots of stories in my head. I began to believe that moms are somehow a different breed of people, people who are suddenly look nothing like the women they were before they welcomed children (and so this of course would happen to me and I wasn't sure how I felt about that). I began to look

past my friends with kids, only seeing them as people who had something that I didn't. I began to bulk all moms into a solitary category thinking there was only one path forward when "Mom" gets added to my names (if it did at all).

But now that I am here this place where I go to the pediatrician and the nurse says to me, "*Mom*, will you place your baby on the scale?" I'm both in shock that this is me but also in awe that in some ways it's nothing like I ever could have imagined.

For as much work as we can do in our heads about how something will feel like when it happens, none of us ever really knows.

You could read and study the details and look at pictures about what Grand Canyon is like for years and years. But in the end it's all a misguided, isn't it, until you see it and experience it for yourself? The Grand Canyon is an majestic experience, not a thing of textbooks.

Such is true, I believe, of this [waiting I've been doing for parenting.](#)

It's nothing like I ever really imagined. It's both harder and more beautiful than there are really words for. (But you know I'll try to find some in the future!) And there was no way to prepare for it than to just be present when the moment came and let my intuition and wise voices around me help me find the next steps. Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint. I've got much learning to do by living it.

Such is true, I think of anything we anticipate or look forward to in life.

Oh, what good energy you and I can waste on putting our mind so much in the future to the point that we can't be all there with the life we actually have now.

If I were to go back and tell myself anything—that self that had to wait eight years for this moment to come—it would be to live to the fullest in what was (not what would be).

I would say, "Elizabeth: Live the pain. Find the joy. Cherish the gifts of this time. Trust God to see your desires to be as only God can. Because when you get to that moment you've been expecting for eight years, you'll look back and truly say in the words of the spiritual, "Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now."

All of this, of course, is easier said than done. Some of the hardest soul work any of us can tackle is being present in the moment, but when we do, I believe, joy is on

the other side. For life becomes a gift. All of it—even the long waits.

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