



ALL CHANGE:

meet the surprising

new you!

Motherhood can bring many surprises, but what if the biggest one turns out to be you?

You'd think that life **BC (Before Children)** would give you a pretty good idea of the sort of mum you're likely to be when the little darling finally arrives. Well, that's what *Prima Baby's* Kelly Beswick thought...

Sociable, laid-back and more than willing to turn a blind eye to a mounting pile of dishes in the kitchen sink, I reckoned I'd be a bit of an earth mother. I envisioned myself nursing my twins while entertaining a non-stop stream of friends and family, sitting around my charmingly chaotic home with a serene smile on my face. How wrong was I!

Struggling to cope and tired beyond anything I'd experienced before, I found the only way I could manage was to become the exact opposite of what I thought I'd be. Suddenly my life revolved around routine, carefully scheduled visits (how I hated uninvited callers) and an obsession with tidiness. I hardly recognised myself, and nor did my poor husband. I now realise it was a coping mechanism. By holding the reins extremely tight and imposing a strict regime, I felt I had some control over what was essentially an uncontrollable situation – two screaming babies who wanted to feed non-stop. It took me a few months before I felt secure enough to loosen my grip and realise that in doing so, everything wasn't going to come crashing down around my ears. In other words, I learned to slow down and relax.

FANTASY V REALITY

'I think many of us fantasise about the sort of mum we'd like to be but then find the reality very different,' says life coach Sam Skull, whose own experience led to her setting up *Motivated Mums* (www.motivatedmums.co.uk), which specialises in helping new mums find their feet.

'Before I had my son, I thought I'd be a confident, energetic mum able to retain my independence and sense of identity. I also vowed I'd get my body back into shape soon after having my baby. Well, I think the best way to describe how I felt for the first eight months was overwhelmed, overweight and utterly exhausted! I was also feeling low and very upset within myself that I wasn't the sort of mum I'd

thought I'd be. I remember thinking, "What is wrong with me?" I had a son I adored and a husband I loved dearly, but I knew I had to get some sense of myself back.'

For Sam, that meant listening to her inner voice. 'Our generation of mums is so busy; we do so much. I think it's vital to learn to step back and enjoy the small, important things in life.'

SIMPLE PLEASURES

It's a sentiment shared by Gina Maddox, a 34-year-old mum of two boys, Marley, 1, and Zach, 3. 'I'd been a real career girl before I had



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Zach, working as a marketing manager, so I was used to running a team and getting results. I assumed I'd be similarly organised and super-efficient as a mum. Doh! What was I thinking? For ages I tried to run my baby like a business. Of course, I was fighting a losing battle, as Zach was having none of it. Just because I was determined to get somewhere at a certain time didn't mean

he was. Eventually, I learned to calm down and go with the flow a bit more, and since Marley arrived, I'm a changed woman. I guess I've gone back to basics and have learned to know what really counts. Does it honestly matter if I don't get to the supermarket on a given day? We're not going to starve. So what if the bed sheets don't get washed every week? And d'you know what? I actually like the new me a lot better!

'Everyone says you're going to change so much as a mum, but no one actually says you are going to change for the better,' says Sam Skull. 'You'll probably go through a transition period when you feel a bit lost and confused as you embrace the new you. But you'll get there in the end. One day you'll wake up and realise you're actually in a much nicer place than you used to be.'

I know that becoming a mum fundamentally changed me, and while at first it was a huge shock, I now quite like the much more organised and definitely far tidier woman I've become. Even better, my husband's grown to like her, too!

Mums' rules

LIFE COACH SAM SKULL GIVES HER TOP TIPS FOR LEARNING TO LIKE THE MUM YOU ARE

1 Be positive – try to focus on what you do well instead of what you don't.

2 Stop comparing yourself, be it with other mums, friends – or even celebs – it really won't make you feel any better.

3 Learn to accept and enjoy who you are.

4 Stop striving for perfection – motherhood isn't a competition.

5 Don't be afraid to express how you feel – nobody can guess what you're thinking.

6 Relax and enjoy yourself – the simple things in life are often the best.

7 Remember to ask for help when you need it.

8 Routine is only useful if it doesn't stress you out.

9 Try to stop feeling guilty – you deserve and are allowed to have time out.

10 Stagger the chores – don't try to do everything at once. And sometimes, don't do any at all. You rebel, you! **PB**

