

## On Fingerprints

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It's no wonder I'm tired. After the kids and husband have gone to bed, I can get so much more done around the house. Last night, as everyone lay peacefully sleeping, I was scrubbing fingerprints from switch plates and mirrors for what seemed like the 800th time that week. At one point during my midnight cleaning spree, I wondered how much of my life will be spent washing fingerprints from door facings or scrubbing grass stains out of baseball pants or using placemats to cover finger paint that stained the dining room table.



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When I finished at 11 p.m., I settled in on the sofa to catch a few minutes of "The Tonight Show." Before getting comfortable, I noticed a Wii controller on the floor just waiting for

someone to step on it. I let out an aggravated “I have to do everything” sigh while scooping up the controller. I opened up the drawer to put it back in its proper place and something caught my eye.

It was baby books. Turning each page was like Christmas. All those things I thought I’d never forget were on the page staring back at me. Every first was there. First steps, first smiles, laughs and my personal favorite, the first time they slept all night. They were all recorded. You could tell with each baby book when I either lost interest or just got too busy to record. It was around year 3 for my oldest and year 2 for my youngest. I started to feel like a lousy mother because somehow I had let my boys down. One day, they will look at their baby books and wonder what happened in their lives after their mother so selfishly decided to stop documenting little milestones.

I turned another page and there they were. Two little hands, two little feet and a notation that said, “We made these the day you came home from the hospital.” For a minute I got a little emotional. I pulled out my oldest son’s baby book and looked at his newborn handprints, too. I traced over each little print and thought about how much they’ve changed. Those little hands I was so careful not to let anyone touch for fear of germs now pick up frogs, digs in the dirt then puts that little Petri dish in the cookie jar careful to touch every cookie before finding the perfect one to eat.

Ten minutes earlier I was bitter about cleaning fingerprints that cover every inch of our home and now I’m sitting in the floor with two baby books feeling incredibly melancholy. Years ago I wanted to record their fingerprints and now I’m complaining. So this made me think long and hard. Yes, I hate cleaning my house only to find fingerprints covering every wall hours later. But, I’m glad those fingerprints that these messy, loud and sometimes smelly boys have left on my heart and memory can never be wiped away.

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