

## The Party Circuit

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Oh the pressure...of a 10 year old birthday party.

Yes, school is back in session and the birthday parties are in full swing.

Maybe it was because my parents were new to this country and had not yet adjusted to the ways of America, but I don't recall my birthdays being the center of attention. In fact, I don't

recall one actual birthday party just for me.

Of course, I do remember adults milling around my house on my birthday. My mom in a 70's miniskirt chatting up all my aunts, my dad and my uncles sitting around a table playing cards and then I remember my mom sticking a candle in a lemon icebox pie and saying,

"It's Angel's birthday everyone. Quick Angel blow the candle out before the pie melts. Now eat your pie and then go upstairs and play with your cousin George."

I should mention, my mother swears these were actual "birthday parties" but I've repeatedly tried to tell her - poker night - is not a theme of any 6 year old birthday party I know.

I don't remember sending out Barbie invitations. I don't remember inflatable blow ups in the yard. And I don't remember a pony. That's right with my very own eyes - I've seen a pony with a big red bow on it! Now - that's a party a kid remembers.

My gifts consisted of twenty dollar bills my aunts and uncles would hand to me. Straight out of the wallet - no card.

So, I was a little taken aback when my kids came along and we started getting the invites to these birthday parties. It was as if I entered another world - a world of how my birthdays should have been celebrated! I immediately called my brother after attending about three of these events to inform him "we were robbed!"

"There is a whole other world out there. Kids wear party hats, the parents serve CAKE on party plates and the children play games that don't involve poker chips. Oh and get this, the kids at the party are not just cousins - they are actually kids they go to school with."

"What? Mom said birthday parties were only for family."

“Yeah - well she lied.”

Together we swore we would love our children way more than our parents had obviously loved us.

And so for years we each threw big birthday bashes for our children. We had themes, games and petting zoos and once I even booked a clown.

My dad just shook his head, “ Don’t you know kids are scared of clowns?”

“No they are not - those are tears of joy!,” I said as the children openly weeped.

It’s funny though how you slowly turn into your parents.

For years I tried to keep up with the party circuit, but then I realized something my parents must have known all along. Parties for kids you barely know are not that fun. Standing around for two hours with people you’ve never met before is rather uncomfortable. Watching a 4 year old trying to tear open the wrapping paper on 20 presents is exhausting. And I undoubtedly always leave hungry because my kids refuse to share their piece of pizza with me.

As I get ready for the 5th party this month, my daughter calls out, “Did you get a present?”

“No - but I’ve got a twenty - so we are good.”

I have now officially turned into my mother!

*Angel can be reached at*