Convictions of the Best Mother

Are you a mother? If you are, you know that it is the most important job on earth

And it takes guts to be a good one.

A mother's job is to protect and nurture. No decisions ought to be made based on conveniences, styles or her own emotional desires.

Does that sound old-fashioned? You bet!

Does it sound hard? Yes, that too.

Mothers should always do what is best for their children.

But there's no room for selfishness here. Every decision, no matter how uncomfortable socially, personally, culturally or professionally, must be based on what is genuinely best for the child.

We live in a world that seems to work really hard at trying to convince us of a different way. It's a world of marketing, careerism, pseudoscience, persuasions, routines, self-interests and selfishness.

It can be difficult to stand your ground. And I'll confess, I too have been swayed.

I'll not forget when my son was attending a short stint at a school that deemed it was developmentally premature for him to begin playing piano at six. I play piano, and my father and brother are professional musicians. And yet, I foolishly acquiesced to the "expert" advice given me by a teacher who was nearly half my age simply because she had a Waldorf education.

I was intellectualized right out of a verdict to allow my son to take piano lessons. How stupid I was.

But through the years, my mother helped me understand the principle of children first and I developed an ability to depend more on my instincts than on data.

Remember, the information was emphatic that mothers should not breastfeed. It was deemed unsanitary, unscientific and crude. Two generations of children were deprived of a most vital aspect of human health because OBGYNs' and pediatricians' unwise opinions were taken seriously.

Recall that the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Emmett Holt, warned mothers that a baby will be indulged of bad temper if picked up when crying.

Lest we forget that mothers used to be strapped down and administered general anesthesia when giving birth and babies were pulled out by forceps (a euphemism for pliers).

These protocols were all in the name of scientific advancements.

When faced with a dilemma, answers rarely come at the spur of the moment. In fact, they often present after processing, a few good nights' sleep, talking to our husbands, mulling it over with our mothers, our best friends, praying and doing our homework.

Through the years I made it a rule to never make an important decision in the setting in which it was being presented. In other words, don't say yes or no while still in the arena of the persuader.

You can always vaccinate. You can't un-vaccinate.

You can put Ritalin into your child's mouth any old time, but once it's swallowed, it's in there for good.

If it means begging out of a conversation with a pressuring pediatrician, it might stir him enough to write, “non-compliant mother” on your child’s chart.

Consider it a compliment.

Stepping away from the school counselor’s office, may in fact get you labeled as a troublemaker.

Stand proud; it’s for the sake of your child.

If standing up to others on behalf of your child doesn’t come naturally to you, learn how to do it. It’s actually a skill that can be developed.

Train yourself to say, “I’ll have to think about it.” Or what’s an even more compelling argument if you feel that you’re too easily persuaded is “I have to speak to my husband about the decision.”

Who can dispute *that*?

If there’s any message I hope to relay, it’s that we must learn to separate what sounds academically acceptable, socially suitable or not all that bad from what we know or simply suspect is legitimately true.

Then do homework to confirm.

But if you can’t find verification, hold to it anyway.

After all, *you* are the mother.

The best moms are the ones who understand that mothering is a sacrifice. They are the ones who put their children above all else, especially the opinion of others, personal fears and anxieties even when it’s uncomfortable or embarrassing.

You’ll recognize these moms by their well-developed instincts with a will to do what is morally right for their children and the rest of the world matters not.

You’ll know when you’ve met one by the look on her child’s face. It’s one of confidence knowing that his mom will never forsake him for any reason. He feels safe and protected in her charge.

And then pass this power on to your children. That’s what my mother did. She taught me and I dedicate this to her, Della Calabrese.

My mother made me feel safe and loved and I’m eternally grateful.



My mother