

The Honest Truth

I am having another sleepless night. Nothing baby related as such but it has really, truly dawned on me how life changing having a baby is. Just before I pour my heart out, I know that having my baby was my choice. I do not regret this at all. I do however think I, and we as mothers, reserve the right to say that motherhood is by far the toughest job we will ever do and that we will have days or weeks where we will struggle.

I had an idea of the difficulties parenthood would bring but one thing that I didn't think would affect me were my friendships. I always thought of myself as a social person. I surround myself with good, caring people.

I invested so deeply with my friendships pre-baby and now I am trying to accept that I physically and emotionally can't do this as much as I hoped. This comes with a lot of jealousy, guilt and sadness. My core self hasn't changed. I still have the same interests, same sense of humour, same values. What I have found is that, after an influx of visitors for the first 6 weeks of my baby's life, my time spent with my friends started to become less frequent. I don't get invited out or included in plans as much as before. This is where I need to say that I don't think for one minute this is deliberate or intentional at all. I am not angry with my friends, nor am I not disappointed.

Maybe it is my fault as I forget to respond to text messages or because people think I am too busy being a mother, I don't have time to be me. There is so much self-discovery happening as I enter only my 8th month as a mother that it is confronting knowing that life is different – especially when I am someone that doesn't deal with change effortlessly.

I have never hidden the fact I struggle with being a full-time mum. I have never had anyone need me, so I underestimated how isolated and disconnected I would feel from the world. I didn't underestimate – I literally had no idea that this would even be an issue for a social butterfly like myself. I felt guilty at the start as I didn't think it was OK to feel relaxed and happy when I was having baby free time.

I did a couple of days at work when my baby was only 3 months old and I had people say "Oh but don't you miss her" or "Have you got the mum guilt for leaving her?" No was my quick answer. She was in safe hands and in a few hours' time I was going home to see her. Why is there such a stigma around having to have your baby attached to your hip 24/7 to be a good mum?

There is so much emphasis on self-love and self-care after a baby is born yet we are then judged because we want or need some timeout. What works for me is having adult interaction and daily me time. To be selfish instead of selfless. Before I had my baby, I had so much time and energy to make sure everyone else was happy that I didn't realise that I needed to be looked after too. Now I find myself pining for those friends I saw weekly to not forget about me.

Terribly insecure and sensitive I know, but this is truly what I am feeling right now. To my friends without kids, I am sorry that I am not the energizer bunny I use to be. The time I get to spend with you and continue to build our friendship outside of motherhood is something I cherish. To make plans and know the importance of not cancelling last minute is eye opening because I need you more so than ever. To my friends with kids (especially those who were in their early 20s when they started their families!) I am sorry for not dropping in or checking in on you more during the first year. What you needed was not presents but presence! I was told a great saying "when you know

better, you do better.” I am working towards reconnecting those friendships that may have fizzled out because I truly didn’t realise the affect this could have had on you a mum and person. When you find your tribe, you love them hard!

Well wishes xxx