

# Journey of Motherhood

By Becca Henry

## PHYLICIA RASHAD

The matriarch character in *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992) Clair Hanks Huxtable was voted “TV mom closest to your own mom in spirit” by the survey participants in an April 2004 poll conducted by Opinion Research Corporation.

## ELEPHANTS

Female elephants endure 22 long months of pregnancy followed by delivering the world’s largest baby of approximately 250 pounds. Baby elephants are born blind and are completely dependent on their mother and rest of the herd. They are lovingly supported by other female elephants called “allmothers” while their biological mother is consuming as much food as possible in order to produce mass amounts of milk so she can feed her baby.

## WEIGHT

A woman who was of average weight before becoming pregnant should, on average, gain between 25 to 30 pounds during pregnancy. Underweight women should gain between 28 to 40 pounds and overweight women between 15 to 25 pounds. This should always be discussed with a health care professional to determine the healthy range for the individual.

## ALLIGATORS

The female alligator is one of the most caring parents in the animal kingdom. First they create nests of rotting organic matter that not only self-incubates, but also determines the sex of the babies. Nests built with leaves are warmer than those made with wet marsh; therefore, produce more males than cooler nests. Once the mother has planned the sex of her litter, she will protect her nest from all threats, including other alligators who love to munch on baby gator nests.

When the eggs hatch, she will carry them in her mouth taking them into the water where she will continue to care for them the following year.

#### RICHARDSON, PATRICIA

Best known for her portrayal of Jill Taylor, the mother, on ABC's *Home Improvement* (1991-99), this American television and film actress was born on February 23, 1951. Patricia is the real life mother of three children, Henry and twins Roxanne and Joseph. She was divorced from their father, Ray Baker, in 1995.

#### MARRIAGE & DIVORCE

In Western cultures, more than 90 percent of people marry by age 50. Healthy marriages are shown to improve mental and physical wellbeing, and children that reside and grow up in happy homes are shown to have less mental, physical, educational and social problems. Statistics show however that 40 to 50 percent of married couples in the United States divorce, with an even higher rate for subsequent marriages. Because both my husband and I came from divorced homes, we decided that no matter how difficult the circumstance, divorce was *not* an option for us. We wanted our children to grow up in a loving, healthy, positive home environment. We have been blessed with 22 years of marriage thus far.

#### MAMA KNOWS

Mama knows, Mama knows. Sometimes I think she's got a window to my soul. Mama knows, Mama knows. Even when I think it doesn't show, Mama knows.

#### BONNIE

She was born Bonnie Kay Curry. After marrying my dad the Curry was replaced with Miller. It would change once again with the ending of a marriage that should have lasted forever and instead ended in divorce. Through her journey she has remained an amazing example of a mom,

running a very successful daycare so she could stay home with her children. I remember coming home each day to find her waiting with an after school snack and a hug. Her love for me overflows out of her heart, and the example that she sets for her own children, carry over into her grandchildren as we strive to emulate the example of motherhood she has provided.

#### THE BRADY BUNCH

Beginning in 1969 and ending in 1974, the Brady Bunch was a Friday night favorite for families across America. It wasn't until much later that I began watching this show purely on reruns. It was my very favorite show on the planet. I loved the people, the lifestyle, the everyday lessons and I loved Carol Brady played by Florence Henderson. She was so kind and uplifting, always available for her children no matter what their problem seemed to be at the moment, from the minor issues to the major ones, Carol was there. A stay at home mom, which is what I wanted to be, I looked up to her and appreciated how she loved her kids.

#### LOVE YOU FOREVER

A mother held her new baby and very slowly rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And while she held him, she sang: "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, As long as I'm living, my baby you'll be."

#### DESIRE

I don't remember a time in my life, even as a young girl, that I didn't want to grow up, get married and have children. It was a deep seeded desire so imbedded within my soul that I was certain it would happen. I am the oldest of four children, more of a mother to them than a sibling. I have babysat from the age of 10 and worked with children all of my life when different opportunities present themselves, such as in schools or at church. True to myself I met the love of my life in high school and was married shortly after graduating. It wasn't right away that I

realized I couldn't get pregnant. I was young and naive not thinking that anything bad could happen to me, just living in my youthful innocents. It became apparent to me that it wasn't going to be an easy feat to accomplish, but children were meant to be a part of my life, so I was willing to follow the journey.

## ORANGUTANS

Female orangutans have to wait eight years between births (the longest in between time of any great ape), so they make sure their time with each baby counts. The baby is completely dependent on their mother for the first two years of their life. During the first four months, physical contact is never broken between the mother and baby as the baby clings to the mother's belly the whole time. Each night the mother will make a nest and she and baby will cuddle during the duration of its infancy. The mother orangutan breastfeeds until the baby is five years old, making them the species with the longest dependence period. Girls stay with their mother longer than the boys so they can learn the skills needed for rearing their own babies.

## ANNE BRADSTREET

*"I had eight birds hatcht in one nest, four Cocks were there and Hens the rest. I nurst them up with pain and care, no cost nor labour did I spare. Till at the last they felt their wing, mounted the trees and learned to sing."* One of the most important figures in the history of American Literature, Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) had a love for her faith, children and husband. She was a well-educated woman and spent much time with her children reading to them and teaching them as she was taught by her father. Anne's life was a continual struggle including difficult trials within a new land and her constant battle with illness.

## ENDOMETRIOSIS

Endometriosis is a female health disorder that occurs when cells from the lining of the womb (uterus) grow in other areas of the body. This can cause pain, irregular bleeding, and problems getting pregnant (infertility).

## THE JOURNEY

It was the pain that first took me to the doctor's office, not the inability to conceive. "You have endometriosis," the Doctor told me. "What is that?" I quickly responded. Thus began the journey to become a mother. It wasn't easy but I stayed hopeful and strong throughout the process. Three surgeries, monthly shots, hospital visits, doctor appointments, and 10 years is what it took to bring three beautiful, wonderful children into my life. My desire was almost lost to a disease that I had never heard of and knew nothing about, but in the end knew everything about. I am thankful for the doctors who were able to help me overcome the odds and enjoy the wonders of motherhood.

## HIS SIDE

"It was frustrating and heartbreaking at the same time," Jason continues, "To watch your wife endure so much pain and physical anguish all for the desire to have a family." His position was so much more than just a supporter, it was his journey too. Maybe he didn't physically feel the pain, but the mental and emotional stress was taxing on his own body. He stayed the course and was strong in the circumstances, talking about the future filled with love and laughter, ever thankful for when all the trials washed away and he watched each child be brought into this world and into his arms. Alongside a good mother is a wonderful father and together they make an amazing team.

## MOTHERHOOD

Motherhood is the kinship relation between an offspring and the mother. I have been told many times and feel within myself that I am a good Mother. My children are both loved and spoiled in a positive and encouraging way. They know how to do chores and clean up after themselves, but feel the warmth that comes from an embrace after a hard day. I am their biggest cheerleader in whatever they are doing, but am firm with schoolwork and insist on good grades. I will fight to my death if I think they have been wronged, but I am quick to teach that if it was indeed their wrongdoing, they must make amends with whomever they have hurt. To describe the true feeling of motherhood, one must truly experience the journey for themselves.

## HYSTERECTOMY

A hysterectomy is a surgery to remove a woman's uterus or womb. The uterus is where a baby grows when a woman is pregnant. After a hysterectomy you no longer have menstrual periods and cannot become pregnant. My hysterectomy was in May 2008, a continued reminder of the disease that lived in my body. A permanent decision made with the knowledge that my body would no longer be able to produce life. It was an odd feeling after it was over - physically, emotionally and mentally. Even though we were no longer planning on having any more children and I was happy to be relieved of the pain and symptoms of the endometriosis, it took about a year for my body to find a new normal. The new normal has been amazing and a much better place for my body.

## TO MY CHILDREN

When I spill some food on my nice clean dress or maybe forget to tie my shoe, please be patient and perhaps reminisce about the many hours I spent with you. When I taught you how to eat with care, plus tying laces and your numbers too, dressing yourself and combing your hair, those

were precious hours spent with you. So when I forget what I was about to say, just give me a minute or maybe two. It probably wasn't important anyway and I would much rather listen just to you. If I tell you the story one more time and you know the ending through and through, please remember your first nursery rhyme when I rehearsed it a hundred times with you. When my legs are tired and it's hard to stand or walk the steady pace that I would like to do, please take me carefully by my hand and guide me now as I so often did for you.

### Works Cited

Bradstreet, A., "In Reference to her Children, 23 June 1659." Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 8

Feb 2014.

Call, W., and Kramer, M., ed. *Telling True Stories*. New Baskerville: Plume, 2007. Print.

"Gain Weight Safely During Your Pregnancy." *Health & Pregnancy*. WebMD Online, n.d. Web.

8 Feb 2014.

Harness, J., "The 8 Best Mothers in the Animal Kingdom." Neatorama.com. Neatorama, 7 May

2011. Web. 8 Feb 2014.

Landers, A., "An Aging Mother's Thoughtful Advice." *Chicago Tribune*. Chicago Tribune, 18,

July 1998. Web. 8 Feb 2014.

Shenandoah. *Mama Knows*. N.d. Songlyrics.com. Web. 8 Feb 2014.

"Marriage and Divorce." American Psychological Association online, n.d. Web 8 Feb 2014.

Munsch, Robert. *Love You Forever*. Willowdale: Firefly, 1986. Print.