

Mum good enough

What's going to happen in your household on Mothers Day? If you're a mother, will you be allowed to sleep late, be presented with a gourmet breakfast in bed and have your every wish be your family's command for a day?

Nice work if you can get it, but the reality is it will still have to fit in with your child's footy match or netball training.

Why do we celebrate Mothers Day? Certainly, it's a commercial bonanza, so our retailers make sure we can't forget it. But aside from the commercial hype, there is a deeply felt need to acknowledge the importance of mothers.

Research has shown the importance of mothers lies in their ability to provide comfort to their children. Children of all ages need a safe place to go to regain their balance when life is turning them upside down.

As babies, having mothers who are available and receptive provides vital confidence that their needs will be met and they will have positive expectations of human contact in the future.

Like many things in life, even this important quality needs a little balance, because if mum becomes totally available and receptive to children of all ages, she can simply burn out, or develop exhaustion, depression, martyrdom or resentment.

Mothers carry a lot of guilt about what makes a good mother – does she work or stay home, breast or bottle feed, attend to a crying child or let them cry it out? Most mothers struggle through these dilemmas and find their own ways of mothering, but it's not always easy to be a confident mother because people are quick to criticise if they don't perceive you as a Good Mother.

That's where the more important concept of the Good Enough Mother comes in – a term coined by British child psychiatrist and pediatrician Donald Winnicott.

A Good Enough Mother doesn't concern herself with everyone else's expectations but does what works for her with parenting. She discovers how to care for all her baby's needs but, as the child becomes more independent, lets go gradually so the child develops some independence from her.

The Good Enough Mother also knows the importance of taking care of herself and isn't too proud to ask for help. And caring for herself is a vital part of being able to care for her family.

Happy Mothers Day to all the Good enough Mothers out there.

Survival tips

- **Don't put impossible expectations on yourself to be other people's idea of a "Good Mother"**
- **Strive to be a "Good Enough Mother" instead**
- **Taking care of yourself is a vital part of being a Good Enough Mother.**