



‘I can’t complain. They raised us without disposable diapers’: The “Deep Story” Behind Relationships of New Mothers and Their Mothers in Latvia

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Problem and aim of research

- Soviet mothers / contemporary mothers: differences in socioeconomical background, in methods for raising children, overall prosperity, opportunities, technologies
- Rapid transformation of motherhood and family models
- By employing the theoretical framework of sociologist Arlie Hochschild, this paper explores the **unspoken truths, doubts, and grievances of new mothers towards their mothers**, “mothers-heroines” who had “had it harder” than women of democratic Latvia.
- The “deep story” has been constructed, intertwining the narratives, gained from **eight** phenomenological semi-structured in-depth interviews with mothers of the 21st century.
- 21st century mothers = born in 1980s and have small children at the moment
- Soviet mothers = given birth during soviet times

Mothering in soviet Latvia

A **'new type of family'** – an illusion, constructed through real or fictional family stories; ideal family – **materially and morally well-off**; not a family, but a **'friendly collective'**, with love and support of all members at its core' (Jansone-Ratinika, 2013, p. 142.)

'Liberation of mother' (Kestere, Stonkuviene, Rubene, 2020, p. 102.)

'Metaphorically speaking, the perfect New Soviet Man was endowed with the body of a woman and the mind of a man.' (Kestere, Stonkuviene, Rubene, 2020, p. 106.)

Solidarity and **egalitarian** family models, equal rights in public and at home regulated by soviet rules – only in theory; in reality such regulations are used for control and manipulation (Jansone-Ratinika, 2013, p. 143).

According to a survey done in 1975: **men have a 2-3 times less workload** at home than their spouse (Jurciņa, 1975, p. 82.-83.), causing women exhaustion, stress and premature ageing.

According to a survey done in 1986: **girls spend 2,1 times more time doing chores at home than boys**, which later is 'transferred' into adulthood. (Jurciņa, 1986, p. 106-107.)

'The majority of women in the Soviet Union are still engaged in back-breaking physical labor' (Schuster, 1971, p. 264.)



Mothering in soviet Latvia

Dominant discourse supports **dualism** and the falsification of reality; despite the **ideological promises of gender equality** and equal distribution of chores, soviet gender system implies **patriarchal traditions** (Jansone-Ratiņika, 2013, p. 159.)

The woman is equally employed, however, at home childcare and chores are completely her responsibility due to 'natural talent'; role of father in the family – miniature (Jansone-Ratiņika, 2013, p. 159.)

In most soviet states 'regimes took measures to induce women to work'; however, they **did not tolerate discussions** about such issues as **patriarchy or the lack of gender equality within the family** (Saxonberg, Szelewap, 2007, p. 354.)

In 1980s 'glasnost revealed the **terrible weight of the double burden** imposed on women'(Kay, 1997, p. 77.); the problem of '**masculinisation of Russian women** and emasculation of Russian men' had arisen in the late 70s (Kay, 1997, p. 80.; Zitmane, 2016, p. 23.)



Mothering in democratic Latvia

Dominant discourse in 21st century supports «**intensive mothering**» that provides guidelines for preferable actions, as well as emotions that a mother should express (Hays, 1996; Hallstein, 2006, pp. 97-100; Murray, Finn, 2012, p. 56); *new-momism* (Douglas, Michaels 2004)

‘Correct’ mothering implies **forever loving affections towards the child**, automatically classifying their struggles with tasks of motherhood and other emotions, including sadness, fear or anger, as inappropriate (Murray, Finn, 2012, p. 56); total satisfaction with the mother’s role (Orton-Johnson 2017;)

The mother is “**entirely responsible** for the social, psychological and cognitive well-being of her children” (Feasey, 2017, p. 6).

«Intensive mothering» insists that parents, especially **mothers invest «more than usual amounts of physical and emotional energy into specific activities and practices with children»**, as well as put their own needs and interests last or take upon «**enormous risks**» (Das, 2019, p. 499); «investment parenting» (Steiner, Bronstein, 2017, p. 63-64)

Mothering in democratic Latvia

«Intensive mothering» also reinforces **traditional gender norms**, even idealizes them (Schoppe-Sullivan, Yavorsky, Bartholomew et al., 2017), supports the «**pro-natalist**» position and **medicalisation** or motherhood experience (Tiidenberg, Baym, 2017)

«Second-shift» (Hochschild, Machung, 1989) still a reality:

- According to a recent survey done by the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia, the **mother is the main caregiver** in 1/3 of families with children under 18; **both parents participate in raising children with the mother investing more of her time in 46% of cases**, while only 13% of respondents had confirmed that both parents participate equally (Snapshots, 2020).

Similarities to soviet Latvia?

Deep story

Hochschild's 'deep story' concentrates on **feelings** by **speaking through symbols**; it bears **no judgment or facts as it speaks of pure emotions** (Hochschild, 2016, p. 135).

'Deep story' is a **web of narratives** that helps to apprehend **conflicting powers** in a particular social context (Palmer, 2019, pp. 339-340), **escaping rationality** and concentrating on how injustices are felt and maintained (Kantola, 2020, pp. 11-12).

In recent years, the concept of a 'deep story' has also been employed in various research. The 'deep story' has been used to detect a conflict in how a society perceives the role of journalism in USA. While journalists are supposed to be a strong defensive force, serving for the protection of society, in reality some try to abuse their power – thus, the 'deep story' of journalism in America is that of a 'bully' (Palmer, 2019, pp. 339-340).

Research design

Data gathering: phenomenological approach to unstructured interviews or 'phenomenological interviews' (Cope, 2005, p. 176):

Phenomenology truly captures the essence of experience and the hidden meaning (Prikhidko, Swank, 2018, p. 164).

While conducting a phenomenological inquiry, the researcher must take a neutral position and try to describe the phenomena only through the eyes of the interviewee, bearing in mind the phenomenological question that should pervade all the stages of the research (Champlin, 2020, pp. 375-396).

Data analysis: narrative analysis

Narratives aid individuals understand and explain themselves to others. The stories we tell help us apprehend the social life and praxis: as human beings are not simply 'actors', but also 'authors' of their lives (Miller, 2005, pp. 8-11).

Narrative analysis concentrates on revealing the experience of an individual through stories; conducting narrative analysis, one searches for similar themes and their relationships in order to create a general narrative, based in empirical evidence, that embodies unique aspects of each individual story (Kim, 2016, pp. 189-195).

Mother's profile and data

Respondent's name	Age	Age of children	Education	Age of mother	Residence
Elīna	38	4y, 2y, 3m	Higher	60	Salacgrīva
Lauma	31	6m	Higher	53	Rīga
Laila	34	10y, 8y, 6y, 4y	Higher	60	Sigulda
Mairita	29	4y, 1y	Higher	51	Rīga
Marta	32	3y, 1y	Higher	63	Rīga
Elza	39	3y, 1y	Higher	65	Rīga region
Daina	28	1y	Higher	66	Rīga
Sabīne	28	7m	Higher	52	Rīga

In Latvia, the mean age of woman at childbirth is accounted for 30.7 years (it has increased by 2 years since 2011), while the age of mother at her first childbirth is 28.1 years; 49% of new mothers have higher education and live close to the capital, Riga (Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia, 2020, p. 64.).



Results

Parenting during soviet times was undoubtedly **physically difficult**, dealing with tremulous times, poverty, lack of appliances and modern technologies, lack of trustworthy information sources, etc.

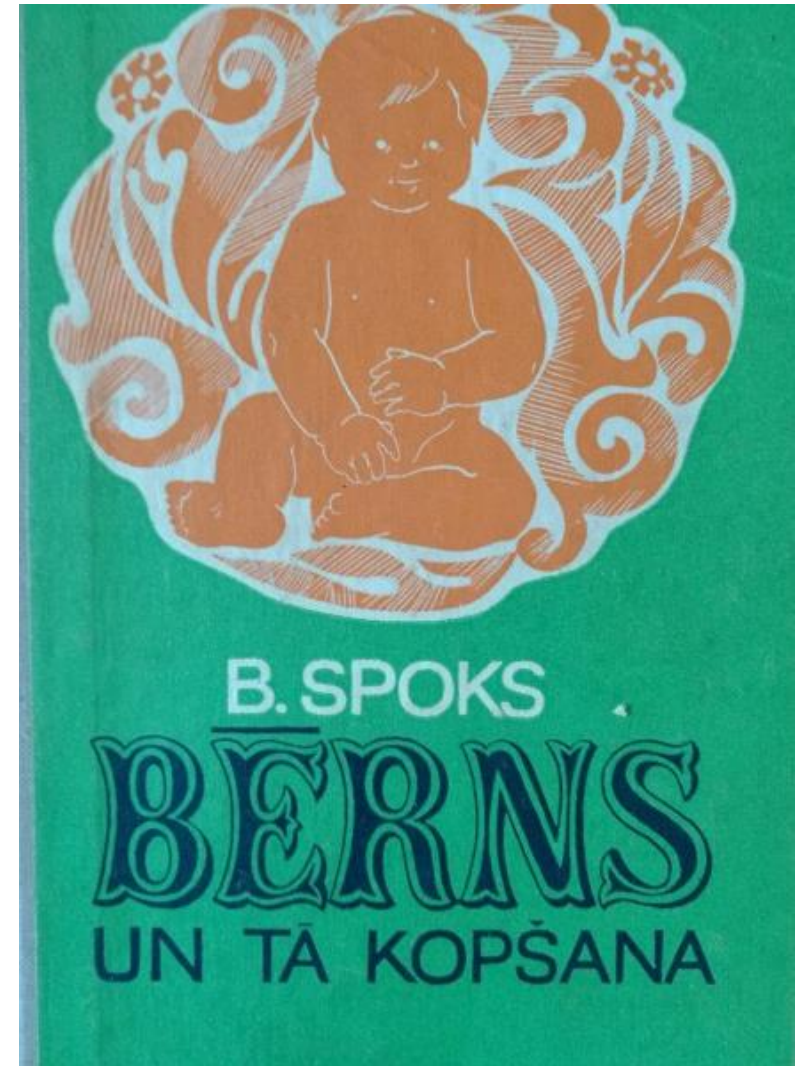
It was definately harder for them. How they toiled with nappies... My mother didn't even have hot water in her flat. [..] So they brought us up as they brought us up – everything took so much time. /Mairita/

They definately had it harder physically – had to work harder. /Laila/

Influence of dr. **Spock's** book and communist ideology – dominant authoritative knowledge (Miller, 2005, p. 28).

A 'revolutionary' book for the time that 'provoked the intense and diverse public reaction of various social actors'; 'raising by the book' gained popularity, despite 'being produced outside the Soviet tradition of child-care advice' (Chernyaeva, 2013, p. 225-226.)

- *There was only Spock, [...] relatives, grandmothers and doctors. /Sabīne/*
- *She had only Spock. [...] **You had to go against your instinct, because each mother wants to dandle their child** [...], but everyone from the side-lines says – you can't pick up your child, otherwise you will spoil him. /Daina/*
- *[Previous generation] had only Spock and the knowledge passed on from mother to mother – but in what quality. /Elza/*
- *Men didn't even change nappies, it was always the mother's job. /Mairita/*
- *You couldn't express your emotions. /Laila/*
- *If the child misbehaved, he was spoiled [...], no one searched for a deeper reason. [...] My mother advised me to look into Spock's book – 'you won't like it, but read it, perhaps something useful. [...] She was proud she had used that book while raising me. /Elīna/*



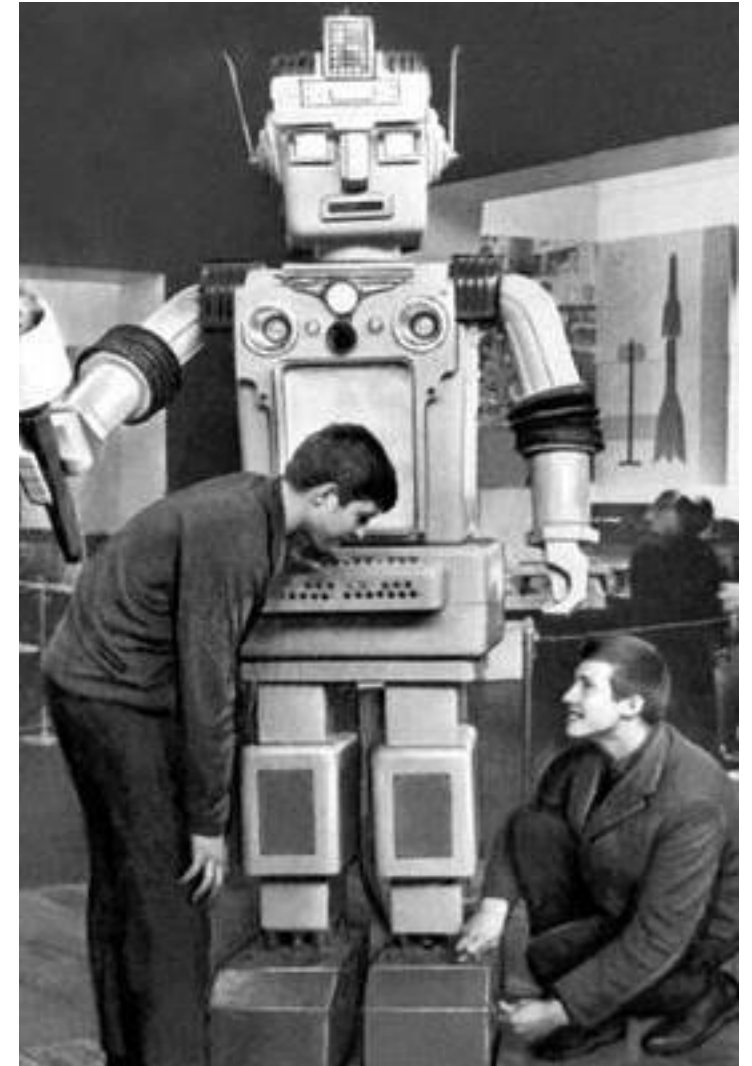
Soviet parents **loved** their children, but had **no time or lacked motivation** to spend qualitative time with them, were **strict** and perhaps even cold, distancing themselves from the child.

- *You had to separate yourself from the child. [...] I envied the families where they played board games together [...] I had parents that didn't want to burden themselves with me.* /Daina/
- *You loved the child, but had to distance yourself from him.* /Sabine/
- ***Globally, I didn't like the way I was raised.*** /Laila/
- *Our parents didn't have time for us. [...] I you constantly are worried about what to put on the table, then you won't have any resources to think about, how to raise this wonderful person.* /Lauma/
- *It was more important, how the child seemed from afar – 'what will people think, if the child starts yelling in the street?'* /Marta/



The child was «**not a person**» with views or wants. It resembles a miniature robot that has to be attuned accordingly to be part of the system. **Physical punishment** is key. **Complete obedience** must be established.

- *Create good, hardworking people that conform with the system. [...] The child wasn't a person, but a thing.* /Sabine/
- *There was no emotional upbringing. [...] You could only express convenient emotions. [...] The child was shushed a lot.* /Daina/
- *[Upbringing] was a mechanical action [...] without listening to the child. [...] It wasn't important how you felt, you had to be obedient, to comply with a standard.* /Elza/
- *The child was of a lower class. [...] There was no respect.* /Laila/
- *Children were raised as small machines.* /Lauma/



Soviet mothers are **not unquestionable role models** for 21st century mothers (their daughters).

Democratic Latvia provides both means and possibilities to treat the child as a **human being** when he/she is even still in mother's womb.

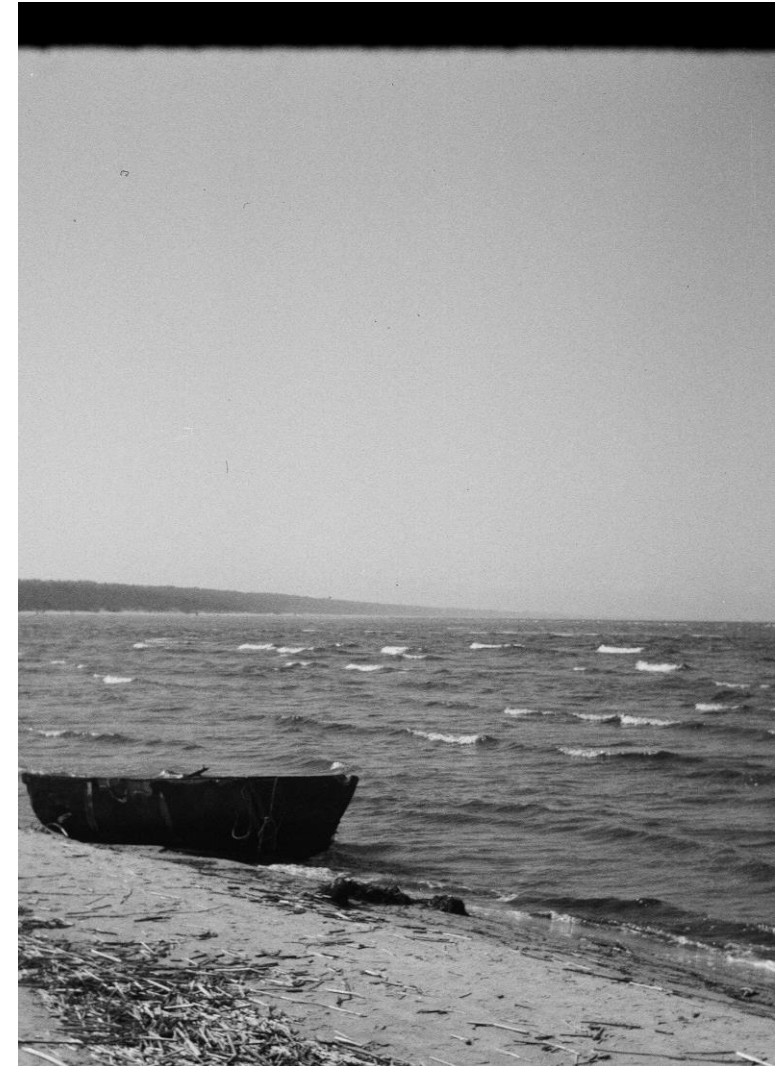
Respect for the child nowadays is key, bearing in mind his/her desires and needs and searching for a considerate compromise.

- *[In Soviet times] older women became elders, from whom younger women gain knowledge. Now it's completely different. /Sabīne/*
- *In their time it was like that – what the parents say, goes [even later in life]. /Elza/*
- *I think they're [grandmothers] a little annoyed about young mothers and that they think they know everything better. /Marta/*
- *My grandmother had a saying – you have to swallow that toad. That's how they lived – swallowing toads and resentments, and pain, and suffering. /Elīna/*
- *[Nowadays] it is important that the child is happy, he is himself, he can express himself. /Daina/*

Winners/losers

Even though parenting in soviet times demanded more from the mother physically, parenting in 21st century is still a **handful** (intensive mothering, higher standards and societal norms).

- *[My mother has said to me] In my time I could manage it all. How come you can't? [And I replied] But were you happy, managing it all? [...] Did you spank me because you were happy with yourself and with your life? /Daina/*
- *[In soviet times] people 'stuck it out'. [...] But we are not game to suffer, we stand tall. /Elza/*
- *We have the emotional pressure to be a great mother, give love, education, activities, balance the rhythm of the day, balance the diet – that's our challenge. /Laila/*
- ***They think that we are not grateful enough – [...] we are not valuing everything we've got and with our whining we don't appreciate what they've gone through. [...] It could be received as ungratefulness; that we're not saying 'thank you' every day for living in the 21st century. /Lauma/***



Some soviet mothers want **recognition** from their daughters, **gratitude**. Some feel **envy**.

- *I don't have to do copy+paste like she did, she's not my idol, [..] and that is hard for her, because we don't put her on a pedestal. [..] She wants to hear that she has been a mother-heroine, as she has raised five children, but I cannot lie, [..] I don't feel that way about her. /Elza/*
- ***'I suffered, my mother suffered, so you should suffer'** [..] **We have to suffer, otherwise it's not fair in their minds.** /Mairita/*
- *On one hand, **I do feel grateful**, that our parents raised us in such hard trumulous times. [..] On the other hand, I feel 'not completely loved'. /Lauma/*

Some 21st century mothers would like an **apology** from their mothers for their parenting style.

- *I have some **resentment**, but I try not to blame my mother. /Daina/*
- *She did the best she could. /Sabīne/*
- ***I don't blame** her for anything. /Elza/*
- *I would like an **apology** from my mum for some of the things she did, but I will never hear it. /Mairita/*



21st mothers reserve the right to choose their own path in mothering; however, they experience a **sense of guilt/need for defence**, explanation.

- *We don't have open conflicts about this. [..] But [my mother] seems to feel that I burden myself too much. /Sabīne/*
- *At the moment [grandparents] are a great help, but we have gone through a long period of quarrelling. /Laila/*
- *We want to give our children everything we did not receive – [..] time qualitatively spent together. /Lauma/*



Strain on relationships; **hierarchical disbalance**

21st century mothers are ‘**spoiling children**’, facing ‘fake problems’, having ‘a fuss over nothing’ in the minds of women of previous generations, young mothers report.

- *[Previous generation] thinks that we **fuss and whine over nothing**. /Daina/*
- ***Only now I feel I can stand up to my mother**, to speak up about things I don't like [...] and I feel a resistance – ‘how can you come across me, I'm your mother’. /Elza/*
- *I feel there's no respect [for me]. ‘I've mothered children, I know, how to do it and I know better than you. You are a small kid, you know nothing’. [They're thinking] **poor children, they're so spoiled, because nobody's hitting** them. /Mairita/*
- *They thing that emotional hardships don't count; robots, washing machines and everything – [we have] nothing to complain about, **we conjure problems and solve them, because we don't have a real life and real problems**. /Laila/*
- *Other grandparents criticize that young parents are spoiling their children. [...] And we are spoilt because we whine about everything. /Lauma/*
- *It's important that the children are well-behaved [nowadays], but not because of hierarchy. /Marta/*



Conclusion: winners/whiners

21st century mothers feel that

- soviet mothers have overcome **enormous physical difficulties** and challenges caused by socio-economical instability and overall poverty at the brink of collapse of the USSR.
- however, in soviet Latvia **children** were not raised **but attuned as small machines** or miniature soldiers; without respect and lack of affection as a result of the pressing times, dominant ideology and teachings of dr. Spock, with strict discipline enforced by physical punishment.
- soviet mothers are eager for **appreciation** for raising children during hard times, whereas 21st century mothers would like **acknowledgment** for their efforts despite the differences in socioeconomical background, even **apology** for past pains.
- their challenges seem miniscule and unworthy in the eyes of (some) soviet mothers.

21st century mothers do not hold soviet mothers as untouchable idols, thus, upsetting the traditional hierarchal family models. They want to raise children 'with respect' and 'as equals', triggering soviet mothers' worries for 'spoiling children' and 'fussing over nothing'.



Foto: TASS/SCANPIX/LETA

Vētra soctiklos: "Izjūtu dziļu kaunu, ka mammai sūdzējos par savu "grūto ikdienu"! Vai audzināt bērnu šodien ir vieglāk, nekā 1985. gadā?"

Ieteikt

LA.LV
12:47, 21. marts 2021

Kāda māmiņa sociālajos tīklos ievietoja šo

Maija Šveiduka

Tā nu tas ir! Pamēģiniet uzrīkot pilnīgu digitālo detoksu, jebkādu iekārtni, soc tīklu, interneta vietņu apmeklēšanas liegumu uz vismaz 7 dienām, ja ir iespējams.. pamanīsiet, 1)cik jums daudz ir laika 2)ko kopā ar mīļajiem varat sadomāt kopīgi padarīt 3) cik brīva ir galva ❤️

Like · Reply · 10w

3



Kristīne Liepa

Mani galīgi "nepakēra" šis raksts 😊 un vispār, cik var salīdzināt tos laikus? Atšķirības būs vienmēr. Arī toreiz bija cilvēki, kam gāja vieglāk, kam grūtāk, un ziniet, arī mūsdienās ir tādi, kam vieglāk, kas kas būs pēc 30/50 gadiem! 😊
Vismaz zinām, ka raksta autorei p

Diāna Strazdiņa Multiple Kids

Tur jau ir pieminēts, ka mammai nebija mobilais. Tieši tas ir tas kas patērē mūsu laiku. Pamēģiniet piecelties un telefonu pat nepaņemt rokās, lai redzēsiet ka jums pietiks laiks visam! Tieši

Like · Reply · 10w

↳ 1 Reply



Zanda Astašonoka

Manas bērniņas laikā daudziem trūka vecāku uzmanības. Mīļēti, pabaroti un ar sausiem dībeniem bijām, bet ne gluži kvalitatīvi aprūpēti, jo īpaši - emocionālā ziņā. Bērnu skābs attīstības jautājumi bieži palika



Inita Kovaļenko

Mēs nespējam novērtēt to kas mums ir 😊

Like · Reply · 10w

1

neko nepalaist garām, bet arī nekļūt par māti - hipohondriki. Bet stress pakausī sēž daudzām manām šim iedot

33



Sabīne Tukre

Es pati par šo ļoti bieži aizdomājos un cenšos ne par ko nečikstēt, bet tai pat laikā, man ir omīte kurai nu galīgi negāja viegli un viņa man potē to, ka es esmu nabadzīte, ka man vajag vairāk laika sev un ka vīram vajadzētu man vairāk palīdzēt un vispār viss ir slikti 😞😞 bet es saprotu, ka šobrīd ir tā kā ir, tas ir mans pienākums un man viss ir labi, bet pienāks brīdis, kad tas viss beigsies un man būs nenormāli daudz laika sev un tad es nemaz nezināšu ko tajā laikā darīt, jo vairs neatceros kā tas ir 😞😞

Like · Reply · 10w

Ģimenes studija

Jaunās mammas ikdienu šodien un pirms 30 gadiem: ko dod salīdzināšana

Ilze Zvaigzne, Mairita Znotiņa | 8. aprīlis, 14:05



Saistītie raksti

Jaunie vecāki

LSMLV / Vecāki un bērni «Gribam būt ģimene» – jauna bezmaksas grāmata ģimenēm veiktā izglītojošā sērijā
Vakar, 12:25

LSMLV / Vecāki un bērni Jauno vecāku miega kvalitāte un neizgulēšanās sekas. Speciālistes ieteikumi
24. maijs, 12:37

Iepriekšējie raidījumi

Vakcīna pret cilvēka papilomas vīrusu jānodrošina arī puīšiem
Šodien, 14:05

Kā šovasar darbosies bērnu nometnes un jauniešu vasaras darba programmas?
Vakar, 14:05

”

“Bullšīts”... 100 procenti mana mamma bija laimīgāka, mierīgāka, priecīgāka, jo viņas zemapziņā mērķtiecīgi netika pilinātas “perfektās dzīves” bildītes un ainiņas.



Ineta Inkina

Piekrītu katram vārdam, bet ir viens neliels BET! Protams, tas neatspēkos visu uzrakstīto, bet Tava mamma nebija viena. Bija blakus omes, opji, māsas un brāļi. Un kads no viņiem varēja kaut uz mirkli paņemt mazuli, lai, jā, mamma varētu "atpūsties" un izmazgāt grīdas 😊 bet šobrīd lielākā daļa jauno māmiņu ir vienas, jo omītes nespēj palīdzēt, jo pašas strādā pilnu darba dienu.

mīgāku. Aiz tā visa slēpjas mīl-

rakam un

ullšīts"...

mapziņā

bija, ar ko

mamma sa

Thank you!



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Image on the 3rd slide retrieved from: <https://ru.rbth.com/read/636-sovetskoye-vospitanie-detei>

Image on the 4th slide retrieved from: <https://www.posterplakat.com/posters/PP%20314>

Images on the 10., 12. slide retrieved from: <https://www.la.lv/kad-zale-bija-zalaka-Paradise-89>

Image on the 13th slide retrieved from: <http://cyberneticzoo.com/robots/1970-expo-70-robot-vadim-matskevichs-students-russian/>