

month eight

Outrageous Living: Reclaiming Adventure in Your Life

Courage is not the absence of fear, but
rather the judgment that something else
is more important than the fear.

—Ambrose Redmoon, author/rock band manager

Remember reading about a parenting survey that asked adults, “What was the single most memorable experience of your childhood?”

Emily, thirty, shared that it was the time her mom woke her up in the middle of the night with a box of donuts and a blanket, telling her they were going outside to have a star party. A rare meteor shower was supposed to be visible in the night sky at three a.m. Emily said this out-of-the-ordinary experience had always stayed with her and instilled in her an appreciation for adventure and spontaneity. She says growing up with moments like this made a huge impact on how she views life.

Erin, forty-two, said it was the time she saw her typically shy mother try paragliding for the first time. She and her siblings were in elementary school and knew their mother had a fear of heights. The image of her mother flying free and high in the sky—her purple shirt blowing in the wind—stays etched on her mind even today.

I myself am a risk-taker and love going new places and experiencing new things. I attribute this largely to a father who constantly surprised us with outrageous ideas and mini-adventures. Whether it was making us all line dance at the local Greek festival, trying his latest recipe (fig and apricot whole wheat fried pies!), digging a private limestone cave for my siblings and me in our backyard, surprising my mom with a box of Valentines’ chocolates the size of a small country (much to our delight!) or taking us out to the Texas Hill Country to experience Fourth of July fireworks Peterson style (meaning he bought one of everything), my dad truly embraced his adventurous side, and his gusto for life was contagious.

Experiencing and embracing our adventurous selves—whether that means skydiving or trying a Vietnamese restaurant—is a marvelous way to reconnect with and nurture our

essence. Often, when we have kids, we think we're supposed to act "parental" and squelch our desire to try new things. Where did we get that?!

Pushing ourselves a little outside of our comfort zones can be healthy and invigorating.

I attended a weekend coaching conference in Scottsdale, Arizona with a friend. I had scheduled a "me day" at the end of the conference and was looking forward to some downtime. I started driving around the area, dressed for an outdoor walk, but with no itinerary in mind. When

I saw signs for Camelback Mountain, I pulled over and parked in the recreation area at the base of the hills. Without reading signs or paying much attention to my surroundings, I started hiking up the winding, red dirt path (it was a Monday, so the trails were mostly empty). An hour and a half later, clinging to the side of a granite mountain face, scaling up a dramatic incline, I realized this was a serious climb. (A fellow climber equipped with major climbing gear told me it was a level five climb, on a scale of one to five!) Thoughts sped through my mind: *Is this safe? I can't do this—I'm a mom! Am I strong enough to finish this hike? What have I gotten myself into?!*

While holding onto the rocks with my bare hands and looking for places to put my feet (trying not to look down at the hundred-foot drop below), something within me ignited. I felt a burst of energy and confidence and pushed forward. Two hours later (and two miles up), I reached the top of the mountain. As I sat on the red rock enjoying the beautiful vista, I savored the feeling of sweat running down my back and a cool wind on my face. I felt incredible and more alive than I had in a long time! I have a piece of rock from the top of that mountain sitting on my bathroom counter as a reminder of my adventure. I see it every morning.

Trying new things, taking the less-traveled path or doing something out of the ordinary is very rewarding and can:

- make you feel alive
- open up your mind to what is possible (personally and professionally)
- breathe new life into relationships
- help you have a shift or see things in a new way
- remind you of who you really are

- inspire your children and friends to try living outside of their comfort zones

What is one thing you have always wanted to try but never have?

Many mom friends share that taking a trip alone is one thing they've always wanted to do. Those who have done it say it can be completely life changing, or at the very least, give you a new outlook on life. I try to take one solo trip a year (usually to a retreat center or a personal growth workshop in a beautiful natural setting), and every time I do, I'm reminded of how powerful it is just to be with yourself and get reacquainted with your hopes, dreams, fears and desires.

Others share they've always wanted to take up music lessons, learn how to grow vegetables, go back to school, complete a triathlon, go rock climbing, learn how to speak Spanish or French, write a children's book or swim with the dolphins.

I had a wonderful boss years ago when I headed up the marketing and tourism group at the state agency for historic preservation. The head of the agency was an archeologist and had a passion for learning and exploring that was unlike anything I've ever encountered. He told me one afternoon (he was sixty-two at the time) that he had a list of things he planned to do before he died, including visiting polar bears at the North Pole, swimming under the full moon in Lake Louise and hiking the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in Spain. One afternoon, he shared that he only had two more items left on his list of one hundred. He died three years later. I hope he was able to experience those last two goals before he passed.

I challenge you to explore and reconnect with your essence by spreading your wings and trying something new.

Here are some simple ways my friends and I have injected adventure, passion and spontaneity into our lives. I'm hoping this may inspire you to come up with your own ideas:

- Take a trip alone (try an afternoon drive in the country; an overnight stay at a campground, B&B or spa; or a culinary vacation in Mexico).
- Take part in a full-moon activity (most cities have full moon hikes in local wilderness preserves, full moon yoga classes, etc.).
- Attend a local music or cultural festival in your city or a neighboring town (e.g. Chinese New Year or Mediterranean Festival).

- Pack a picnic dinner and head to the park—on a weeknight!
- Go canoeing, kayaking or rent a paddleboat—experience life in slow motion!
- Take your family (or yourself) out for a banana split and order three different flavors!
- Go hear live music (check with your local symphony, hear summer concerts in the park, visit a local jazz or blues club or check your weekend entertainment section for listings on your favorite bands).
- Line up a sitter and meet your husband (or a friend) on a Friday evening at a bar for happy hour and appetizers.
- Gather a group of girlfriends and take a salsa dance class together.
- Go on a hot air balloon ride or rent a convertible for the weekend!
- Organize a group family camping trip to a local state park.
- Check out your university’s informal, non-credit class schedule—take a class on massage therapy, creative writing, meditation or Indian cooking!

GUIDED JOURNALING EXERCISE

Pushing the Boundaries, Trying New Things

Schedule a twenty-minute break to further explore this topic. Have your journal nearby to record any additional ideas or thoughts that come up around this topic. Share your answers with a friend or your partner.

What did my parents teach me about taking risks and trying new things?

What do I want to teach my kids about living outside of their comfort zones?

If I were to celebrate one time when I really stepped outside of myself and tried something new, what would that be?

What is one thing I have always wanted to try but haven't? Why not?

How do I feel when I try something new (whether it be a new food, a sport, a creative activity or a skill)?

TAKE ACTION

Adventure Challenge

Spend a few minutes thinking of two ways you'd like to add more adventure to your life in the next three months (or pick from the list on page 105). Write these down, share them with a girlfriend and then follow up with each other in a month to find out where you are and how your lives have changed. (Marking your thirty-day follow-up "date" with a girlfriend on your calendar will help you remember to have this conversation.)

(1)

(2)

SELF-RENEWAL TIP FOR THE MONTH

Listen to Your Body Talk

Set aside ten minutes in the early morning or evening for peace and quiet. Lie down in a comfortable space. Take some deep breaths. Be still for a few minutes, then ask your body, *how do you feel; what do you need?*

What comes up? Are you craving movement/exercise? More sleep or rest? Are you hydrated? How is your energy level? Your digestion? Are you depressed or anxious or have you been having mood swings? How are your menstrual cycles? How do your feet feel? Your teeth and gums? Think about your neck and shoulders—are they tight or relaxed? Mothering asks a lot of our bodies; carrying, lifting, cooking, sleep deprivation and rushed or skipped meals can take a major toll. (My chiropractor says he is amazed at what mothers' bodies go through!)

Take note of how you feel and make it a priority (today!) to address your physical needs. Do you need to get a massage or see a chiropractor? Make an appointment for a general check-up or for your annual Pap smear or mammogram? Get support for healthier eating that meets your body's needs (maybe easing off the sugar, starting a multivitamin or adding more green leafy veggies, protein or fiber to your diet)? Do you need new shoes (they're often the culprit when it comes to back or headaches)? More physical activity (walking with a neighbor is a great start)? Make it a priority to listen to and respond to your body each day for a week. The more you check in with how you're feeling, the more attuned you'll become to your physical needs. And eventually, physical self-care will become more and more a part of your everyday routine.

Note: *I particularly love www.texasmedicinals.com. This mama-run company offers earth-centered, handmade organic herbal products for mothers and their families.*

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

101 Things to Do Before You Die, by Richard Horne

1,000 Places to See Before You Die, by Patricia Schultz

Make Your Creative Dreams Real: A Plan for Procrastinators, Perfectionists, Busy People, and People Who Would Really Rather Sleep All Day, by SARK (www.planetsark.com)

REFLECTIONS ON

Reclaiming Adventure in Your Life

Use this space to expand on your thoughts and feelings around this topic. See “Tips on Journaling” at the end of the *Guide* for support if you’re new to journaling.

THE POWER OF SELF-CARE

Learning to say “no” was a huge milestone for me. It improved my ability to manage my time, care for my family and care for myself. Magically, saying no increased the power and significance of saying “yes.” Now, if I decline a coffee date, a project, a meeting, an event or a volunteer commitment, I do not feel guilty. I feel smart and in control. I feel more reliable. But I have to keep practicing. In my journal, I started a list of things that I decided not to do or declined. I’m more confident in my ability to make good decisions. I honor my family, myself and my time by saying no. And the rewards of that are so great. When I say no to many big and little things, I get to say yes to a few, very important things, beyond my family. I now have a leadership role in a local professional group. I have budding new friendships through my Personal Renewal Group. I am able to help clients whose work I love. I can usually whip out a dinner or an afternoon of babysitting for a friend with a new baby. I can spend a weekday at home with my daughters without checking email. For me, that is the power of self-care and learning to say no.

—Laura, mom to Megan, four, and Emily, two