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## **Better Late Than Never, I Finally Appreciate**

My Mom My mom tried to prepare me for this moment. She described all of the incredible feelings she experienced when I was born, 33 years earlier. On the verge of giving birth, my mom had the same burning question I asked, right now: “Where the heck is my epidural??”

“Sorry,” the doctor said, “the anesthesiologist isn’t here yet – maybe she got stuck in traffic.”

EXCUUUUSE ME? I wanted my epidural, and I wanted it now! And frankly, I didn’t care if that meant I had to get it from the stinkin’ JANITOR!

“I do have good news,” he said. Okay, I thought, but if you say, “I just saved a bunch of money on my car insurance,” I’ll rip every one of your fingernails out with my teeth!

It wasn’t much better. The so-called good news was that “things are progressing nicely - it will be over soon.” Slightly panicked, I tried to remember those breathing exercises I never bothered to practice. I started to “hee hee” and “hoo hoo” until I entered some sort of hyperventilated hallucination. If this is preview of motherhood, I thought, I don’t know if I’m ready for the whole show.

Call me a procrastinator, but until I became a mother, I didn’t appreciate all the things my mom did for me. And not just giving birth (although that’s a biggie). She did all that other stuff, too. From the moment I was born, she was there. I never gave it any thought – she was just part of the world as I knew it, like...say...oxygen. I never thought, “Gee, if I need to breathe, I sure appreciate having OXYGEN to make it possible!” I also never thought, “Gee, if I’m hungry, I sure appreciate having MOM to bring me food! If I’m cold, I sure appreciate having MOM to cover me with a warm blanket!” Nope, because from day one, she was my personal nurse, nanny, cook, maid, tutor, transportation provider and Dr. Phil, all rolled into one. I never knew anything different, and I took it all for granted.

Then one day, mom was gone. I got the harebrained idea to move out on my own. And you don’t really appreciate your mom until she’s gone, any more than you appreciate having cable until it goes out right in the middle of “CSI Miami.”

But what if it worked backward? What if you somehow grew up fending for yourself? Then, one day, you were on your way home from work, and you bumped into a woman who said, "Hi, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is "Mom," and my purpose is to make you happy, warm and comfortable. I'll be on the job 24/7, making sure you're well-nourished and always have clean clothes. I'll think you are the most beautiful/handsome person in the world, even if pictures provide evidence to the contrary. To me you'll be interesting, clever and talented, even if you're not, not and...not. I'll celebrate your smallest accomplishment - I'll be just as proud if you say, "look at me, I learned how to tie my shoes" as, "look at me, I discovered how to tie Einstein's Theory of Relativity to Edwin Hubble's law of Velocity."

You'd say, "wow, that sounds really great...but how much will it cost to pay for all that?"

"Nothing," she'd say. "But once in awhile, if you get a piece of paper and write "I love you" in purple crayon, it will be enough."

I don't know about you, but if that happened to me, I'd be happier than if I found out I was going on "Extreme Makeover."

Of course, it doesn't work that way - moms are there from the beginning. And now, it's my turn. Ever since my daughter was born, I've been her personal nurse, nanny, cook, maid, tutor, transportation provider and Dr. Phil, all rolled into one. She's never known anything different, and she takes it all for granted.

But that's ok, because eventually she'll get around to appreciating me...probably starting the moment she asks the burning question, "where the heck is my epidural?"