



Mommy Memory

Forgetting is easy, but it's not hard to remember the truly important stuff

By Kelli Wheeler

What was I going to write this column about? I just thought of it when I was in the other room. Maybe if I walk back into that room where I first thought of it, it'll help me remember . . .

You think I'm kidding. I'm not. And all you mothers out there know what I'm talking about. In fact, you were probably standing there with your Starbucks in one hand and Inside

Arden in the other ready to sit down for a little reading, when one of your little darlings ambushed you with a pepper of questions about a missing shoe, lunch preferences and if it's OK to wear flip-flops to go dig in the mud. Admit it: Once you expertly fielded the volley of questions and lobbed back appropriate answers toward a target that was trying to run out the door in flip-flops, there you stood with your coffee and your Inside Arden with absolutely no idea what you were about to do.

My friend has a term for this. She calls it Mommy Memory. I think people should be able to look it up on WebMD. The affliction would be defined like this: Purposefully moving toward a task or idea ready to initiate, followed by a realization that the task or idea about to be performed has completely left the cranial area. Vague recollections that had just been an intent or purpose to accomplish something or remembering to write something down before forgotten. Usually a documented side effect of pregnancy, seems to linger well into childbearing years. Becomes more chronic with multiple children.

All my friends with children have assured me that I am not the only one who suffers from these bouts of memory loss. In fact, they have been encouraging me for some time to write about it and let other mothers out there know that they are not alone. But I just kept forgetting.

I'm not talking amateur stuff either, like leaving your keys in the car or the laundry in the washer, or forgetting the name of that mother who always remembers yours. I'm talking about the stories we all have of things that seemed so important that they could not possibly be forgotten, and yet when we're distracted for even an instant to attend to something that seems important to a 4-year-old (this doll's hat won't stay on!), an idea to do something can be lost for days.

A good example of this was my daughter's 1-year-old well-baby checkup. By this time, I was well aware that I had this Mommy Memory problem. At her last doctor's

visit, I had taken the reminder card they gave me and held it in my hand as I drove home, knowing that if I dropped it in my purse, this child would not see a doctor until kindergarten. When I got home, fully intent on writing the appointment on my weekly calendar (I'd had to switch from a monthly because I kept forgetting to look at it), I refused to let myself be distracted by raspy cries for apple juice from my then 2-year-old son. I got the date in the book and felt proud of overcoming my disability.

Six months later, I opened my calendar and noted the well-baby visit the next day. At dinner, I told my husband that Whitney had a doctor's appointment tomorrow and I hoped she wouldn't need any shots. Later that night, I took a call from the automated appointment reminder, reminding me not to forget the doctor's appointment the next day. As I hung up the phone, I vaguely remembered my husband saying, "You need to have your own personal one of those." I vaguely remembered hitting him.

The next morning, I woke up and took my son to preschool. When I got home, I turned to Whitney and said, "Well, Whit, we have a whole morning to ourselves. What should we do?" I am not making this up.

You know how sometimes you walk around with that feeling that you're forgetting to do something important? (By the way, I have that feeling all the time.) Well, that morning I never had that feeling at all. It was not until a nurse called about 45 minutes

Mommy continued on page 50

past the appointment that I got that sinking feeling. And the only reason a nurse even called to remind me was because I had allowed Whitney to be part of a shot study. Yep, forgot about that too. Forgot about a big milestone doctor's appointment, forgot about a shot study, forgot to look at my weekly calendar that day, forgot about the phone call the night before, forgot that I'm always forgetting and to make sure I didn't forget.

Here's what I do remember. Rushing to the doctor's while profusely apologizing to my blissfully oblivious daughter in the back seat for being such a bad mommy that I couldn't even remember my second child's first-year well-baby visit, the one that I had filled out a whole page for in my son's baby book. Then I went and bought a daily calendar. And I promised to look at it every day.

After that day, I faced my Mommy Memory disability square on. I had been in denial. I always saw myself as a smart, with-it individual who

once organized entire professional football game promotions down to the second, gave presentations to powerful business associates, taught 34 children multiple lessons on a daily basis for years, and now was raising two healthy, happy children. I just forgot a few things now and then. They said it was normal with pregnancy. Yes, it had been more than a year since I was pregnant, but I was sure this memory lapse thing was going to knock it off any second now.

As a busy mom being pulled in more directions than I ever thought possible, I had met my match in two munchkins who stole my heart and wore Bob the Builder underwear and sang "Five Little Monkeys" all day. I finally faced up and went to a higher power for help. I said the Serenity Prayer: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

To be honest, it was actually my dad who put my frustrating memory lapses into perspective. He said, "Look at all the things you do for those kids and your family every day. You cook, you clean, you play, you wash, take them to school, to gymnastics, to the library. You read to them, sing to them, do crafts with them, you laugh with them and you love them. Of course you're going to forget some things—you're busy! But you're not forgetting the

truly important things." Forget the Serenity Prayer; I'm just going to Dad next time.

Now, as you're sitting there gloating that your Mommy Memory isn't that bad, I have one question for you: Did you remember to pick up your kids from school today?

Kelli Wheeler, a mother of two, lives in Arden Oaks. She can be reached at kellimwheeler@aol.com. ●