

Honest glimpse of life 'on the other side' of motherhood

Until you're living it, no woman ever knows what life as a new mother is really like – the challenges and joys, the mundane and the glorious, the moments of desperation or those of exhilaration.

A new gift book written by professional writer and mother of two boys, Anne-Marie Taplin, offers genuine insight into life on the other side – across motherhood's bridge where there is no going back to the comforts and security of life in coupledom. Everything is new, like it or not. Most of us have to learn from scratch.

Described as 'The quintessential gift book about mothering that tells it like it really is', Taplin's book *Being Mummy* features exquisite images of real women – no air-brushed 'yummy mummies' here, just everyday women of all ages, sizes and shapes going about their business of raising young children.

"I didn't want artificial, trite images or romantic 19th Century quotations in *Being Mummy*. I set out to be completely honest with myself and ended up giving a voice to women about the lived reality of motherhood. One day I started thinking about how much I've changed since my elder son was born five years ago – the end product of that process is this book," she said.

"*Being Mummy* explores the full spectrum of feelings common to many mothers, but it never loses sight of the sheer delight that children bring. I think of it as 'warts and all', but really it is incredibly positive but somehow simultaneously raw. At the time I wrote it, I was aware of my intense feelings about being the mother of a young child and a new baby – grappling with uncharted territory and a roller coaster ride of emotions," Taplin explained.

The book features photographs by Kate Elmes and Mick Bradley that are classic, personal and powerfully emotive. The subjects are real Australian mothers and their young children – an intentional focus for the author.

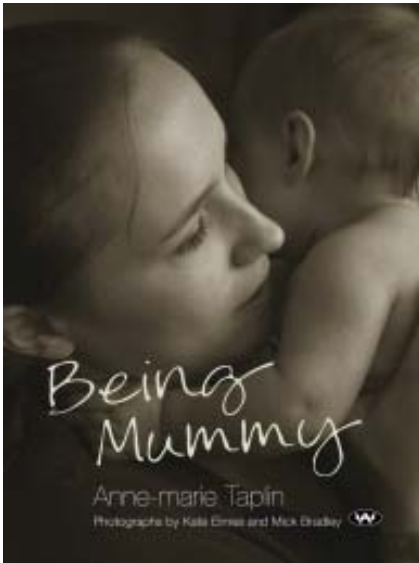
"During the first five years we parents have a huge learning curve. Our children are teaching us at the same time as learning from us. That's part of the blessing that raising children brings – that we grow so much as people by being challenged and pushed to explore our boundaries," she said. "There's also something very precious about young children's lack of exposure to the rest of society. As mothers living in the moment, sometimes we forget that this time will pass – probably all too quickly."

Though it's a gift book, *Being Mummy* doesn't shy away from the darker side of motherhood or gloss over the moments of desperation, guilt and heartache. But nor does it dwell there.

A website project, www.parentingexpress.com, extends the author's desire to share truths with other mothers and in its first year has attracted impressive web traffic and input from hundreds of parents worldwide. The website includes poems, stories and memoirs about the range of experiences a parent lives through in raising a child.

"Parenting can erode our sense of ourselves. Although it's a labour of love, the work of parenting can sometimes be monotonous and isolating," Taplin said. "There is a real need for people who care for children to express themselves – the challenges of raising the next generation can seem insurmountable and all-consuming."

Being Mummy (RRP \$16.95) is published by Wakefield Press and available in Australian and New Zealand bookshops from April 2007.



Feedback about 'Being Mummy'

From Anne Manne

Author of *Motherhood, How should we care for our children?* Allen & Unwin, 2005

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote that, "In dealing with my child, my Latin and Greek, my accomplishments and my money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails."

Being Mummy is one woman's journey as she discovers just such a truth. In this evocative book, Taplin captures the exhilarating roller coaster ride of early motherhood. Taplin's delicate prose captures the enchantment of feelings of overwhelming love. Yet she does not sentimentalise or idealise motherhood. She writes about a mother's disenchantment too, of exhaustion and of never having a moment alone, of wondering where her old life has gone.

Taplin's words are accompanied by some truly superb photography. Together they are achingly beautiful, illuminating the poetry of the everyday; the intimacy of breast-feeding, a tiny hand in ours, a small head nestled on a breast. But they also reveal fatigue, isolation and moments of alienation. Mothers can feel exhilarated by the joy in the presence of this small human being they have brought into the world, but also overwhelmed by responsibility for them. Taplin says about motherhood 'There is no 'safe zone' ...having a child means being forever vulnerable to pain.' Mothering is hard work, not just physically, but emotionally. It calls out of us reserves of energy and responsiveness most of us never knew we had.

Being Mummy is a moving tribute to the ways we are changed profoundly on becoming mothers, as our sense of self expands to include not just any other, but a precious child. In Taplin's spare and sensitive prose, mothers will recognise themselves.

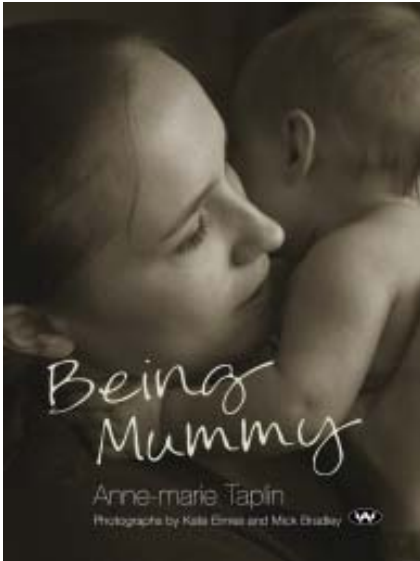
From Natasha Stott Despoja

Senator for South Australia (2007)

Being Mummy is a reflection on life with small children – the everyday ups, downs and frustrations but overwhelmingly the joy and 'catch in the throat' love that mothers and indeed all parents experience. It is a celebration of motherhood.

In a time when many Australian parents are unable to spend as much time as they would like with their babies and older children, due to increasing work pressures, it is up to all of us – and especially decision-makers – to make it easier for parents to juggle their work and parenting arrangements so they can enjoy the special early years of their children's lives.

Being Mummy is a beautiful reminder to cherish the challenging and wondrous times in parenting each day.



Feedback about 'Being Mummy'

From Kylie Ladd

Author of *Living with Alzheimers and other dementias*, Michelle Anderson Publishing
and writer for *The Child* magazines, Australia

A beautifully photographed and written book that honestly and lovingly details the shift to 'Being Mummy'.

From Sarah James

Author of *Midwife Wisdom, Mother Love*, Lothian, 2006

I absolutely love it. You have done it so well right down to the choice of images. I love the fact that the photos capture every day life and every day mums, there is no glossing over or photo-shopping, just simple honesty.

And the writing is divine, not only for the way you have seamlessly strung the words together but also because you write about mothering from every angle. The angles which are often ignored in other books are the most powerful in yours. The acknowledgement of the full rounded experience of mothering is something many women are going to treasure when they read your book. A big congratulations to you and thanks for your tenderness and openness.

From Felicity Chapman

Mothers be heard website, May 2007

The beauty and fragility of motherhood is captured in Taplin's sensitive and honest prose. Poignant imagery through incredible photography is blended, page by page, with the author's raw and moving reflections of each different facet of the mothering experience. I found myself re-living and honouring the whole array of emotions that have become a part of my life as a mum. *Being Mummy* is a wonderful tribute and honest portrayal of the transformative step that a woman takes when she becomes a mother.

From Kate Ceberano

Singer, mother

Absolutely beautiful!