

They Say It Takes a Village

By Lisa Bauman PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEN SOARES

Lately I've been thinking a lot about the lifestyle of people long before our time, when families lived in villages—the time of hunter-gatherers, when everyone had a task to do that the community relied upon for survival. When meals were prepared by a group, and everyone sat together to pray, eat, drink, tell stories, laugh, dance and talk with each other. When people worked together to build huts and shelter, to fend off attackers, and to raise the children. In those days, when a child was born into a village, literally all of the women would come together and help take care of the new mother and baby. I read somewhere that it takes 3.75 adults to adequately care for a new baby. I don't question that statistic.

I've been yearning for a greater sense of community, and my mind frequently takes me back to thoughts of our ancestors. Although we've been blessed with so many great advances in technology and medicine, life back then somehow seems so much more simple and gratifying than today's world.

When Landon was born, and throughout his early infant weeks home from the hospital, help was unknown to me. My village consisted of myself, and for two weeks, my husband, Chris. We had no friends nearby, no family nearby, and no women nearby with whom I was close enough for them to offer to cook a meal, help with laundry, or help with baby Landon while I caught up on sleep.

Those early weeks and months were so filled with



© JEN SOARES PHOTOGRAPHY / JENSOARES.COM



love that I never felt sorry for myself or felt like I needed anything or anyone else, other than my new precious little bundle. But were those days hard? Unbelievably. No one tells you just how hard it is when you leave that hospital, when you leave the nurses' 24/7 help, and enter into real life with a brand-new baby as a brand-new mother. I remember breaking down and crying on our fifth day home from the hospital because my pump broke. I had a very hungry, demanding baby who refused my nipple, I had engorged, painful breasts, and I was terrified to leave my apartment with a new baby all by myself and go to Target in search of a new replacement pump. But when life gives you hard situations, you step up. You do what you do to survive. Not your own survival, but survival for this new little

gluten-free and casein-free diets. We are bombarded with new articles and research on whether to vaccinate or not, on the benefits of enrolling your 6-month-old in swim class, on why homeschooling is best for your children, and how to raise a spiritually gifted and aware child. We learn about attachment and detachment parenting, and why each is better than the other. It's simply overwhelming, and everyone out there just loves to give you their unsolicited advice on top of it all.

But advice is not what we need. We need help, and we need community.

Will we ever live in little huts and villages again? No. But we can come together and be real with each other. We can quit the extravagant baby showers and invitations for show and offer real, completely

I READ SOMEWHERE THAT IT TAKES 3.75 ADULTS TO ADEQUATELY CARE FOR A NEW BABY. I DON'T QUESTION THAT STATISTIC.

life you just created, which has now redefined your purpose as raising, nurturing and doing whatever you need to keep that new little life happy, healthy, growing, protected and well-loved.

Now, as we are trying to conceive baby number two, I get scared again. How am I going to do that all over again, while also caring for a toddler? With the passing of Chris's mother, still no family or close friends nearby, and the tighter finances that naturally come with having more kids, I feel more scared than ever to raise a baby again.

We live in a world where everything is plastered all over the Internet. Women Instagram and Photoshop and portray their best selves, cropping out all the ugly. We have relationships over the computer instead of in person, and women and mothers are constantly faced with comparing themselves to other women's Photoshopped and edited lives. As a result, instead of reaching out, we turn inward, and we feel alone in our less-than-glamorous lives.

And in this new age of never-ending information and technology, we learn on a daily basis about new techniques and parenting philosophies. We hear about the latest recalls, new safety concerns and SIDS research, and that we should feed our kids organic and

and utterly selfless acts of kindness to each other that are not done out of obligation or for recognition. We can drop by with a favor instead of offering an empty "let me know if you need anything" text message. We can show love, not judgment. We can do things for each other without an expectation of getting something back in return. And I think that really being there for each other will get us back to a community. Deep down, we know life can be so much more rewarding and fulfilling. Because life is hard. Not because we are doing it wrong, but because sometimes, it's just hard. And the loads we are carrying can be so much lighter when we have each other, rather than just ourselves. 📌



Lisa Bauman lives in Chicago with her husband and growing family. A lawyer turned stay-at-home, cloth-diapering, co-sleeping, baby-wearing mama, she is passionate about living green, attachment parenting, living simply, and loving greatly. You can

read more about her adventures and misadventures in motherhood at mummascorner.com. View article resources and author information here: pathwaystofamilywellness.org/references.html.