



Nobody Thinks Your Kid Is Cute

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A friend of a friend of mine had an ugly baby. It was ugly the day it was born, and it was ugly a month later. I think the happy couple suspected their child was “unattractive”—the father mentioned it in hushed tones to my friend after a bottle of wine or three—but such things are never really discussed in polite company. Saying mean things about babies puts you on the express train to Hell. Even if it’s the truth.

I had a conversation about ugly babies with a close friend when she was six months pregnant with her third child. She’s a bad person like me so she was cracking jokes about babies she knew who had looked like Woody Allen, Carrot Top, or larva. She could jest because her two daughters looked like supermodels. But then, three months later, she told me that the only thought running through her mind as she was pushing out her baby boy was, “Please God, don’t let it be ugly!” Her feelings were centered more around words like “joy” and “love” during her two previous deliveries. I felt a little bad when she told me, but I also laughed.

Don’t get me wrong; I really like babies. I eventually want three of my own. But there are ugly babies, irritating children, and stupid kids. There just are. Maybe we are born innocent, but that doesn’t mean we are born perfect. My best friend introduced me to her two-year-old with the words, “He’s not very smart, but he has great rhythm.” Her kid is actually the coolest little boy in the world (he rides a chopper bicycle with training wheels), but her words rendered me speechless. I had never experienced a parent nonchalantly admitting her child’s imperfections with grace and humor.

The thing is, I know there’s no real reason to point out the areas in which a child is lacking, but I really want to when I have to put up with the ridiculous behavior of the parents. It’s not just that no parent wants to admit his or her spawn is sub-par, it’s that no parent seems to think it. They all believe their tot is God’s first and only true gift to the world, out of the approximately six billion people on this planet. Do they honestly think they will get high-fives and dropped jaws when they claim their baby is the cutest, smartest, strongest, most melodic child ever born?

It’s common knowledge that people who have recently had babies incessantly talk about them or fill up your inbox with pictures. It’s as if the adult ceases to exist, like the baby is a body snatcher and now manipulates the adult like a marionette. I know a number of people who complain about this behavior when it’s exhibited by their friends and family, but I understand this preoccupation with a child when you have to take care of it 24/7. My issue is with the parents who want to inflict their child on you. These parents don’t simply want to share their love of their baby with you; they assume, or want to make damn sure, that you love their child just as much as they do.

On top of my gripe list is friends who call me and then proceed to talk to their child for most of the conversation. One moment you’re debating whether the last season of *Alias* is the best, and the next moment it’s: “Ohhh, is my widdle boopsie bear hungwy? Or do you just wanna show mommy your bum? What a cute widdle bum.” And so on.

I have sympathy for the fact that a parent sometimes has to interrupt a call and tend to the needs of a small, helpless creature in their care; however, if you must talk to your child for more than two minutes straight, get off the phone.

Strangers with strollers are even worse. With no consideration for right-of-way, they firmly believe they have the right to be anywhere. Out for a run in broad daylight, I was once clothes-lined by a woman trying to walk two dogs while also pushing Hummer’s version of a stroller. She was fiddling with her baby when her dog jumped into my path and the leash lacerated my flesh. While she glared at me and made sure her baby wasn’t upset by my yelping in pain, my wound was beginning to bubble from rope burn. I have a scar on my leg to remember her by.

She was really frazzled, right? I know that sometimes parents get overwhelmed and have to stop caring if they are blocking your path or if their kid is bugging you or putting anything up its nose. But I think most parents truly believe you will find their child’s Chuckie-like antics adorable. These parents let their kids chatter incessantly in movie theaters, smiling at you with a look that implies “Kids say the darndest things.” I deserve it if I am at *Narnia*, but it gets on my nerves if I am at, say, *Brokeback Mountain*.

These are the same parents who want to enjoy a nice, quiet meal at a restaurant with each other, so they let their toddler entertain itself by standing backward on the seat so it can stare at you for forty-five minutes. They want the world to bow down and thank them for their generous copulation with offerings of incense and myrrh.

By far the most bizarre parent I’ve ever encountered was a woman holding her baby in a knitting store. I don’t think she wanted to buy anything. She would wait until you were about to reach for some yarn, race over to you, look at you, look at her baby, then look at you for a very long time. All with the countenance of the Virgin Mary upon her face. Confused patrons would finally hand the woman whatever yarn she asked for, yarn that she always put back so that she could ask someone else for more.

She was so enamored with the baby she was holding I was beginning to wonder if she had stolen it. As I was leaving, she barged in front of me and said that I needed to open the door for her. I did it

begrudgingly, but under my breath I murmured, ‘I didn’t ask for you to procreate’”

I guess I wish more parents were more honest and aware. And less annoying. If you don’t need a captive audience when you’re making the baby, you shouldn’t get to demand one after it’s born. However, I also know that I should judge not lest I be judged. The other day I pushed my cart around a pregnant lady at Whole Foods and I smiled. Then I stopped in my tracks because of a strange, new sensation...at age 28, I think I am beginning to get the first hint of a possibility of an inkling of a biological clock. Despite my brain, my body is telling me that I might want a baby. Soon.

And I just know that my baby will be able to do the crossword in half an hour, perform stochastic calculations, run a three-minute mile, and sing the blues like Son House.

But, most importantly, my baby will be beautiful.