

## ?Mom? is one of the most pleasant words of all

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It's been said that a mother's love is like nothing else in the world. Having witnessed this first-hand in my own family, I can attest to that fact. I sat in the backyard this past weekend, listening to the wind rustle the tree branches and blow through the young spring grass. The sun was shining, the first strong sun of the new season. It felt good. Off in the distance I heard a young girl's voice, calling ?mom?? I smiled, thinking isn't that one of the sweetest sounds in the whole, wide world? My thoughts turned to summer meadows, sunshine, streams, canoes and barbecue. I know it's not summer, not even close. And this summer may be unlike any other in my life. That single word I heard through the trees led me back to remembering childhood summers ? long grass, bike rides on gravel roads, catching frogs and crayfish, letting the minnows in the Humber River nibble my toes. I would feed these little fishies bread, sometimes loaves of the day-old No Name bread my mom got at Zehrs. It was cool. The Bolton golf club, now known as Clublink, backed onto our property. As a kid I'd often hop the fence after hours and play a round or two. The golf balls that landed in the river and our property were collected, cleaned, inspected and resold to golfers for a quarter. At 12, I often pulled in \$15 or \$20 every weekend during the summer. That was a great windfall! I learned entrepreneurial skills at a young age, while enjoying the outdoors. I never left behind much of a carbon footprint and it taught me a great many things. Sure, the course owners sometimes frowned upon my business activities, cutting into their golf ball sales and all. A few quick departures were part of the business risk model! After my chores, which included cutting grass on our four-acre parcel, I would spend hours in the back 40, just being and watching and thinking. My dad, after a day's work puttering around, would often take a walk by himself. I joined him occasionally and he would tell me secrets, passed on by the Colorado blue spruces and Austrian pines. Ancient knowledge to be sure. He loved nature and I think it helped him declutter. My mom loved her expansive veggie garden, and often boasted about the bounty at the dinner table ? home-grown cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, currants, rhubarb. There's nothing like grabbing a stalk of rhubarb, taking a big bite and making a sourpuss face! That simple act speaks volumes about childhood joy, about the simple things, about exploring and figuring things out as we go. It's a feeling, a sense of just being a kid. We weren't preoccupied with video games, Snapchat and online surfing, for the very fact they didn't exist. We could do nothing all day and enjoy every minute of it. We left after lunch and came back at dinner, when mom called us, her voice cutting through the summer breeze like a welcoming invitation. We knew whatever she prepared would be great, and we never complained about our home cooked meals. We didn't use sunscreen and never worried about cancer. If we twisted our ankle, were stung by a bee or got a few cuts and scrapes we knew help was only a few minutes away. We were loved, but didn't need constant reminders or hourly hugs. We were content. My childhood wasn't particularly exciting or eventful but it was soothing, like a comfy blanket. Our moms made sure of it. A child and mom come into being at the same time. The bond of a mother and her child is unlike anything else in the world, and as strong as steel. It's almost perfect ??forgiving, spontaneous, benevolent, unselfish and non-judgmental. My wife learned by doing, and plucking the best from her mom, with a dash of my mom tossed in for good measure. Even today, the sounds of ?mom?? bounce around the walls of our house, from two teenagers and one young adult. ?Mom,? it's so simple yet oh so powerful. It means everything wrapped into just one syllable. You can guess in an instant the nature of the kids' problem by how this word is pronounced. It's like a symphony. Kids can be a handful, and it's even said that ?insanity?? is hereditary ??we inherit it from our children! Regardless of their age, our offspring are in constant need of attention, guidance, support, assistance and yes, discipline. Our generation has lengthened the leash a bit on these rambunctious individuals. But we need to keep it taught, so we retain a bit of control. Our kids can talk to Kim about anything. She's an amazing listener, and offers sound, practical advice. I think a lot of Kim's prowess comes from her social work training and dealing with parents and children when she operated a day care. While it's a different challenge dealing your own kids, she works at it and wants them to feel they can come to her any time. Kids being kids, she sometimes has to pry it out of them, like a burrowing tick. She wants them to laugh and cry and just ?get it out.? She wants them to know they are loved and have our full support. I think that's why every time I hear the word ?mom?? I smile, and feel warm. I know when mom responds, things will be better. Dads like to defer things by saying ?ask mom.?? While it can be a cop-out, we do know that mom has the answers and solutions that we just don't have. ?Mom? is like a bandage that never falls off; it's like a salve that makes all boo-boos go away. ?Mom? is like a celebratory announcement of the change of seasons. It's a strong, triumphant call to order. Whatever ?mom?? means to you, make sure you embrace it, not only this weekend, but every day. And make sure the kids know it, too!

