

Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This
Stories and Strategies for a Less-Stressed Life
by Jean Gatz - © 2013

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Introduction

“Is it morning time yet?”

This was the question I called out to my parents upon awaking every morning, eager to get started on a brand new day. I was five years old and life, as I knew it, was extremely good. Since I hadn't started “big school” yet, there were no worries about schedules, no homework, and no rules and regulations. Equally comforting was the knowledge that no one depended on me for anything! I smiled in anticipation of a carefree day ahead. My smile expanded to a big grin as I realized *my only job that day was to have FUN*. With a day filled with such promise, no wonder I couldn't wait to bound out of bed and get started!

Now fast-forward several decades later to how this morning started. It, too, began with such promise – until I mentally reviewed my to-do list, thinking about all the obligations, deadlines and projects that lay ahead. Nowhere on that list did it say *my only job today was to have fun!* As the reality of what awaited me began to sink in, I had absolutely no desire to bound out of bed and get started. In fact, my first instinct was to pull the covers up over my head, close my eyes and remain hidden away, safe and secure.

Does any of this sound vaguely familiar? Do your days often hold promise – until you actually get out of bed and begin them? Maybe you've had a day when a customer yelled at you for something that wasn't your fault. Perhaps two of your employees are embroiled in a personality conflict. Maybe a teenager at home is testing his or her limits and your patience. Perhaps there are so many people demanding your time and energy, you feel you never have a minute of privacy.

I remember such a day. It was quite a few years ago, but some days you never forget! Steven was nine years old, Michael was four, and I was pregnant with Jennifer. I dragged myself out of bed, feeling no excitement whatsoever that it was “morning time” once again. I was rushing around, getting the kids their breakfast, helping Steven find his misplaced homework, feeding the dog, packing school lunches, and getting Michael dressed for pre-school. In short, I was downright frazzled. Looking out the kitchen window, I sighed as I realized the stormy weather meant an extra 20 minutes of waiting in the “rainy day carpool line.”

At least I was still on schedule, which meant I had the luxury of 15 whole minutes to get dressed, put on my make-up and do my hair – alone. That morning, however, I hadn’t allowed any extra time for morning sickness. This was extremely shortsighted on my part since I managed to spend the first two months of every pregnancy engaged in this particular activity. In the midst of my misery, four-year-old Michael started beating on the door.

“Hey, Mom, come on. What’s takin’ you so long?”

Certain I could appeal to his sense of compassion if I explained my plight, I answered in my most pitiful voice, “Michael, I’m feeling really terrible. I’m even throwing up.”

After a moment of silence, while he pondered the significance of my situation compared to his own, he replied, “OK, but could you hurry up? I need you to tie my shoes.”

That’s when a pearl of wisdom my mother had passed down to me saved the day, as it had many times before. I smiled to myself as I recalled, “Mama said there’d be days like this.”

Is your life filled with days your mama warned you about? As a woman born and raised in the South, I've learned a great deal about life from her bits of wisdom and advice, usually accompanied by a phrase that succinctly made her point. As a teenager I vowed that I would NEVER repeat those silly phrases to MY children. And as it turns out, I've shared them with my children and grandchildren because they really do help me keep things in perspective.

When did we become so busy taking care of other people that we became the last ones on our own to-do lists? Surely we're not destined to be in charge of so much *stuff*. That is the dilemma and the challenge I address in my presentations and in this book.

I've been privileged to speak to people of all ages and at all stages in life. Many of them are juggling a variety of demanding roles and responsibilities, including the ones below. Perhaps you can relate to some of them. And I'm sure you can add some of your own!

- You head home from work, determined to leave behind your role as business owner, executive, manager, team leader or support staff. But you know your day isn't over yet, as you walk into the house to begin your *other* job as spouse, parent, chauffeur, cook, therapist, pet caretaker and homework advisor.
- You drive to a nursing home to visit an elderly parent.
- You've moved to a new area and you miss old friends but you haven't had time to make new ones yet.

- You've gone back to school or you're taking on-line courses while holding down a full time job.
- You have a difficult time saying "No" and you're overwhelmed with volunteer projects.
- You've been promoted and you have to manage coworkers who are also your friends.
- You're trying to manage a younger – or older – workforce and understand what makes them tick.
- You're a home-based entrepreneur and you're feeling professionally isolated from your peers.
- Your children are grown and you're worried you and your spouse have nothing in common any more.

Although I believe everyone is unique, meeting so many people in my programs over the years has made me realize we're all much more *alike* than different. Haven't we all tried to change someone we love before finally giving up? Who among us hasn't tried to fix a problem when our advice wasn't wanted?

At some point we've come to understand we're not in charge of what happens around us. All we're really in charge of are the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors we bring to those events in our careers, our relationships and our lives.

We've discovered we can learn a lot from challenging people, insightful people, and experienced people who bless us with their wisdom.

And we've found a good sense of humor helps keep our hurried, harried lives in perspective. With wisdom and courage, we've learned to celebrate the good times and survive the not-so-good times.

As a keynote speaker and author I have the unique pleasure and privilege of sharing my life lessons with thousands of people every year. My goal is to feature relevant, entertaining, and thought-provoking stories and strategies that lift spirits, lighten hearts, and help people focus on the people and the issues that really matter.

I trust that this book will also do that for you!

Enjoy!

Jean