



*“A baby will make love stronger, days shorter, nights longer,
bankroll smaller, home happier, clothes shabbier, the past
forgotten, and the future worth living for.”
– Anonymous*

New Beginnings

Text and photos by Dr Tu Tian Ming

PARENTHOOD IS a life-changing experience. Clichéd as it may sound, nothing prepares you for this path no matter how much homework you have done prior to the big day. We even attended prenatal classes to steady ourselves for the daily grind. And with my limited paediatric knowledge from medical school, I thought I was all ready to take on the new job title of “Daddy”.

Days shorter and nights longer

Night calls during housemanship were long. The endless changes, continuous beeping of the pager, countless patient reviews and serial ECGs (yes, I still had to do ECGs as a houseman... that’s how old I am) kept me up the whole night. Nevertheless, at 8 am, bad things always came to an end. Post-call (when possible) was something I looked forward to for a recovery snooze.

Then came registrarship. Emergent decision-making took place throughout day and night. There were endless consults and admission reviews, and post-call was non-existent. Nevertheless, once again, at 5.30 pm the following day, I could pack up and go home to crash in bed.

However, daddy duties never end. This is a daily routine after working hours. My better half would perform a handover to me at 6 pm, marking the beginning of my call... I meant my after-hours parenting role. Bathing and putting Marianne to bed are my current core responsibilities. Cradling her in my embrace at 2 am and seeing her staring back with her big innocent eyes, I can only attempt to sedate her with my limited repertoire of bedtime songs and rocking motions. The Z monster often conquers me briefly, and Marianne will then promptly remind me – with a resounding wail – that the boss of the house is still awake. I will eventually be rescued from the quicksand by my ever dependable wife, and a short nap is all I am allowed before the next working day begins. The cycle repeats itself daily and this has become the circadian rhythm I have gotten accustomed

to. Uninterrupted sleep is indeed a premium!

Bankroll smaller and clothes shabbier

Overseas holidays, fine dining, musicals and movies are a thing of the past. Our home has been invaded by boxes of diapers, packets of baby wipes and cartons of baby cereals. Mess is now a norm, but there is always order in the chaos. The living room has been converted to a play area, the study room has morphed into a storeroom, and our bedroom is now triple sharing. Never have I better appreciated space management! Self-care is limited to maintenance of personal hygiene and fashion is limited to what is most convenient.

Home happier and love stronger

Despite the sweat, blood and tears, something strange has happened: there is a continuous yearning to return to the chaos; recurrent longing thoughts about Marianne occur throughout the day while I am at work. The desire to hold her close, kiss her chubby cheeks and hear her laughter is ever present. The joy of cuddling my little girl after returning home makes the day truly worthwhile.

Despite leading a simpler life now, joy fills up the household and has made us feel richer than ever before. Parenthood has also made me even more appreciative of my immensely capable wife! Being a superwoman, she single-handedly cares for and nurtures Marianne during the day so that I can work in peace. The love Mummy showers on Marianne is immeasurable. Nothing I am able to provide can commensurate with the amount of dedication given by my wife.

Future worth living for

Marianne took a long time to arrive into this world. After she finally greeted us with a resounding hello, I held her dearly in my arms. She was so small and precious.

Days have gone by and Marianne is



Round the world trip to New York City at six months!

different all the time! She learns a new trick, a new skill or even a new babbling word every day. I will always remember her first smile, her first laugh, her first solid meal, and even her first flying poop. There were many other firsts in our lives with Marianne. Our first vaccination visit, our first meal out in a restaurant, our first overseas trip... I will be looking forward to her first steps, her first words and her first day in school!

At this point, I am only at the beginning of this long journey. Many seasoned parents have told me that the challenges will evolve as years pass, and troubles will be inevitable. The going will get tough yet nothing will be insurmountable with an awesome teammate in life. Happiness doesn’t come easy, but I would not trade this adventure for anything else in the world! ■



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