

Wendi Stewart

Essay – 654 words

### Put That Baby Down

I may have mentioned it six or twelve or thirty times before, but just in case you missed it, I am a freshly new grandmother, just out of the oven. I am a new grandmother for the second time, a fact that still astounds me. The astounding part is the privilege of it, the blessing of it, the holy cow I am the luckiest woman on the whole planet sort of feeling. Of course, I am much too young to be a grandmother despite my sore left foot that has me hobbling around like I'm several hundred years old and despite my memory that forgets to kick in to remind me that I am home now and no longer driving my daughter's standard transmission car so there is no clutch in my car. I may have to put a note on the dash of my car before we all have whiplash. Oh dear, perhaps I am old enough to be a grandmother. Darn.

Samantha, just as I knew she would, loves being a mother and is already a pro at all the hard stuff: the functioning on little or no sleep, the recovering body parts that went through the war called labour and delivery that took no prisoners, the changing of a baby boy's diaper that requires at least three hands and four is better. Thankfully, I only had daughters. A baby girl can be changed with one arm tied behind your back. I warned Aimee and Samantha, but they went ahead and had boys anyway. I put my order in nice and early for a granddaughter, but neither daughter paid attention. Turns out I'm rather partial to these wee bundles of X and Y chromosome specific babies. Who knew? Don't tell anyone though. I'll deny it if you do. Girls rule!

As many of you will remember a new mother gets all kinds of advice on every subject that touches on having a baby. What kind of diapers to use. What's the best soother. Do you really need cute clothes because using a sleeper is much easier and cosier and warmer so do you really need that three-piece suit and tie in the newborn size. These

baby wipes are drying and those aren't. Breastfeeding is best; there's no valid argument to the contrary on that particular subject.

The advice that gets the most air-time is how much time is allowable to hold your new baby. Everyone seems to feel justified in chiming in on that one and it seems people my age and older are loudly making one insistent statement: PUT THAT BABY DOWN. My advice to those individuals is to bring their lips together and press firmly, which is a polite saying of saying shut up. We weren't allowed to say shut up in our house so I hesitate to use it here, but shut up seems entirely appropriate.

I ask you. If a baby is quiet and safe and warm and loved while being held, why should we put him down? Does this make him a better baby? Will he grow up smarter and able to self-soothe? Will this baby be taller and stronger and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound if he is not held? I seriously doubt if any of these are possibilities and I am more inclined to think the contrary.

If a baby is kept close to his mother, where his needs are met quickly and automatically, where he learns to trust and feel safe, then that baby will grow up to be courageous and curious and he or she will change the world, because they were loved, love that they were able to feel in the very cells of their body. So pick that baby up, Samantha, and don't put him down until you are ready or he graduates high school. That's my advice, and just smile and ignore those who suggest otherwise.

wendistewart@live.ca