

CHAPTER FIVE



**AWAKE, ALIVE,  
AND PRESENT**

The Power of Intention

by Chrysula Winegar



Mother, online communications consultant, social media obsessive, and entrepreneur, Chrysula Winegar is passionate about mothers and their capacity to change the world through simply raising their voices in families, communities, work, and politics. She blogs as frequently as she can, including writing regularly for the Huffington Post and the United Nations Foundation. Chrysula also champions global development issues for mothers and children at her mother activism blog, When You Wake Up A Mother (<http://whenyouwakeupamother.com>).

She truly believes that when you wake up a mother, you wake up the world. Chrysula and her husband have four children. She is Australian by birth and has lived in five countries and ten cities. For the last 12 years, she's been based in New York City and surrounds. Her husband says if she ever loses her accent, the marriage is over!

*“Intention creates a mooring for our mothering. Moorings sink deeply into the ground and anchor a building or a ship in place. In the good times, or in the difficult times when we are in survival mode, our intents are holding us steady on course. They form the bedrock of our day-to-day living. Intent serves as a blueprint, a plan; an ever-present compass that guides us. Our intents are our deepest hopes for our children. And when mothers become clear in their intentions for their mothering, child rearing, and family culture, these intentions permeate our being and steer choices and actions. They fuel purposeful living and meaningful mothering.”*

*- Elise Hansen and Abbie Vianes*

## **An Integrated Life**

I seek an integrated life. I define this as living and understanding my values; in other words, conscious, deliberate, proactive living. This goal requires me to understand who I am; what and who I value; what my purpose is in life. It asks me to live with intention, to anchor my behaviors on the shore of my best and most noble dreams.

I have four small children. Until recently, I hadn't slept through the night for eight years. I run a small business. I volunteer with my church and the kids' schools. I manage a busy household. I work with my husband in running another business. Sounds familiar, yes? There are days when my behavior is reactive, frazzled, angry and anchored in nothing more than exhaustion. Those are the days when my sense of vision is limited to how I *wish* things would play out, rather than the deeper purpose of what it is I am trying to create!

Of course, those are the same days when it becomes the most critical to breathe and stop and meditate on my greater purpose; on the mission I have chosen and recognized as my life's work.

There are moments when being a mother is the last thing I feel like being, even though I wanted this all my life, even though I love my children more than air. There are other moments when I am moved with such gratitude that these souls have been entrusted to me. And I remember. I remember that I chose this; that being a mother was a conscious, even fought-for act. I remember that being a mother is the most powerful role in society—a fact that society works very hard at concealing from us.

*“Life is not about a position, it is about a purpose.”*

*- Cory Booker, Mayor of Newark, NJ*

I worked in a traditional corporate environment when I had my first two children. I loved the company I worked for, the people I worked with, and mostly enjoyed my work. I was very good at it, too. As my husband was setting up a new business, I was also the primary bread-winner for our family. As our second daughter drew towards her six-month mark, I was simultaneously reaching the next stage of my career. Two opportunities were presented: one involving extensive overseas travel; the other my dream

job—but in another city—a move that would essentially scuttle our new business. It was crunch time.

I racked my brain through the possibilities and options, creating endless spreadsheets reflecting every scenario. My husband and I would make list after list of pros and cons. Deep in my heart, there was an enormous part of my soul that was pining to stay home with my children and to structure a career that gave me flexibility to mother the way I knew I wanted to mother, and work the way I wanted to work. There were many voices and harsh realities to consider.

### **What do You Want in Your Core?**

My husband and I counseled with each other and consulted trusted advisers. Ultimately he challenged me: “What do you want in your core? What is the life we are trying to create here?” I knew the answer. Many years before, during another time of deep soul searching, before marriage, before children, I had spoken out loud to myself who I really am. An extract of my personal mission statement reads:

“I am integrated in thoughts, words and actions, especially as an example to my children. I partner with my husband to create a marriage that is organic but enduring, exciting but a sanctuary, eternal but daily progressing. Our children look to me with trust and honor, as a teacher and one in whom they find wisdom and safety. I teach them correct principles and facilitate their own abilities to choose the right.”

The words I had written all those years before spoke deeply to me, and reminded me what I wanted in my *core*. That vision did not involve extensive overseas travel or a move to another city at that particular time. A seemingly impossible decision became instantly clear and straightforward.

I remembered who I was and my life’s purpose. Not someone else’s identity, not someone else’s purpose, but the purpose I had already established for myself. I now work full-time again and love what I do; I just do it my way—a way that is highly flexible and honors my mothering.

### **Mothers with Purpose Are Powerful**

Do you believe that? Do you feel it? Do you know what happens when a mother really embraces that truth? She changes generational patterns. She changes families. She changes men. She changes schools, communities, and churches. She changes politics. She changes countries. She changes the world. One heart and mind at a time. How does she do that? By acting on her life, rather than her life acting on her.

*“We are mothers – women who sustain and lift and nurture. We are powerful, mighty in spirit, willing to risk all in order to raise up a generation of children who can overcome the challenges and trials of life.” - Jenny Proctor*

Do you recall those long months (years) of not sleeping when your children were infants? Perhaps you are just beginning this phase. There are those nights—we've all had them—when your child has cried for hours at a time, when you've been rocking and shushing and singing and patting. You're at your wit's end. And the next day, it doesn't matter how long you were up with your child in the night. His and the other children's needs must be met. Some basic home management and meals are required. There is work, a big meeting, important community commitments.

*“Living deliberately means that we need to acknowledge that we are in a mothering phase of life. That doesn't mean that we can't or shouldn't do anything else. However, we don't want to wish our mothering years away.” - Mary Christensen*

In the midst of this period, we must realize we have a choice. We have power. We can't choose everything that happens to us, but we *can* choose our reactions and our approaches. We can dig deep into our reserves, into the vision we have for our family, and we can make mindful choices based on intimate self-knowledge of our values and purpose.

I don't know about you, but I don't always have the presence of mind in my exhaustion to make mindful choices. By evening of the following day, I can be cranky and grumpy and capable of a tantrum that would make any three-year-old proud!

But when I can keep my wits about me, I strive to simply figure out what's the most important thing I can accomplish—*what one thing matters the most right then*. I cling and focus on that one thing. How many times have you thought over and over in the midst of a crisis, “I can't do this, I can't do this” only to wake up the next morning or regroup at the end of a hard day having “done it”? Somehow you found the strength and maybe even noticed a little beauty along the way.

When we need to regroup, start over and find our flow, purpose is everything. Indeed, it is the only thing.

*Do you ever make “to do” lists? I love making lists. They help me feel organized. They help me recognize what I've accomplished. They make me feel better about my day. Like mine, I imagine your to-do list is full of household chores and other obligatory responsibilities. Mop the floors. Go to the bank. Return library books. It probably also contains other things that aren't essential, but would still be nice to accomplish just the same. Finish book for book club. Run three miles. Work on baby quilt. Perhaps we also list a few things we would like to do for others. Bake bread for neighbor that just had a baby. Call the Aunt that just had surgery. Send a card to the Grandmother that just had a birthday.*

*Would we mother differently if we applied the same sense of purpose to our children? What if our to-do list read: Listen to Henry say his ABCs. Ask Lucy about how things are going with that girl at school who's been giving her a hard time. Ask little John*

*what he wants to do and go with whatever he's interested in for a few minutes. Look in Jordan's eyes and make sure he's feeling okay about his grades. Give five hugs. Say five positive things to each child. The list could (and should) go on and on.*

*From personal experience, I know that it is possible to be with my children all day, and then look back and realize I didn't actually spend any time with them. I didn't look in their eyes. I didn't really see them. To be present in body is not the same as being present in mind and heart.*

*- Jenny Proctor*

What purposeful family-oriented things should be on your to-do list? If you don't thoughtfully consider the life you are creating, how can you know what it looks like?

*"I made a list of the messages I want my children to remember from their childhood and home life when they are grown—the positive family messages they received as children, such as: 'I was always loved unconditionally,' 'my home was warm and inviting,' 'I could always depend on my mother.'" - Elise Hansen*

What would you put on your list of messages you want your children to remember? How are they going to get these messages?

Mothering with intention has the power to change the mundane, the dreary, and the details, into stunning small and simple moments. It has the power to make the endless array of choices you face in the course of a day, clear and simple, stripped back to their essence.

*Intent is like a stream that flows underneath the surface, unseen, yet flowing into our daily actions and choices. Busy mothers don't think about their mothering intents every day, but the power in this principle is still operating. There are times when all mothers, even those who have their intent firmly in place, feel like they are doing a terrible job at mothering—so what's the use? And their goal that day is to just get through the day without harming their offspring! So much for the loftier ideals of mothering!*

*This is exactly why spending some time as a mother, thinking about your intentions for your children, is crucial. Somehow the power of your purpose kicks in and is still working even on the days when all seems lost!*

*- Elise Hansen and Abbie Vianes*

*I focus on the people. I don't love the constancy of the messes. I don't like cleaning my house. But I love the people that make those messes. For them, I push through the drudgery. Each dish removed from the dishwasher is a dish that was used by someone I love. Each load of laundry folded and put away, a load of service given to those who I*

*love. We must not blur the maintenance of a house with the maintenance of a family. If not checked, the tediousness of one can and will suck the joy clean out of the other.*

*- Jenny Proctor*

## **The Tools of Intention**

What does it take to create purposeful mothering? You will need to find what resonates for you. But here are a few tested methods that can help you craft your own vision and identify the actions and behaviors in your family that honor and support that intent.

### **Journal**

If you already keep a diary or journal, then you have insight into the therapeutic power of a place to process thoughts, ideas, and dreams. It is not just the spot to record family events and cute kid moments (though that is important, too!), but it is a great tool to help you identify trends and themes that speak to you. As you write about your thoughts and feelings and process your life on paper, you will show yourself what it is you truly value. Through your own words, you will open up your mind to the possibilities of inspiration. Thoughts will drift in, when you are in that reflective space, that allow you to see who you really are.

On particularly tough days, that might not always be a rosy picture. But it's important to examine your negative thoughts. See what you can improve on, and throw the rest out. Guilt is a very useful tool in our lives—it shows us where we can do better. Guilt that moves us to action, that helps us change something, is a friend and gift. Guilt that weighs us down, that paralyzes us and leaves us feeling hopeless, is useless and pointless. Let that kind of guilt go!

Note the joys, the moments to cherish and celebrate. Record feelings you have about the challenges in your life. Through this you will often feel inspiration and discover an idea or solution.

### **Mission or Vision Statement**

A living, breathing declaration of who you are, both in reality and in aspiration, is a thing of beauty that you can create for yourself. Mission statements range from one sentence to paragraphs. Generally though, they are most powerful when stated in the present tense. “I am, I feel, I know” as opposed to “I will be.”

*“Have you ever made a list of goals or things you wanted in life, and you tucked it away in a drawer, only to come across the list some time later and be amazed at being able to check off some of the items? I wondered how they got accomplished since I didn't proactively pursue them—yet it happened. That is the law of intent operating; it is an undercurrent that flows into our daily actions without necessarily being in our awareness.” - Elise Hansen*

Living with vision infuses you with promise, with peace, with the reality of who you are now and who you can become. It is a place where the woman and mother you dream to be can take shape and form—and allows you to shift directions when life throws you the unexpected.

*I grew up in a home with such an overarching value of independence and education; I had every intention of having my children well educated. I planned to teach them the languages I am fluent in and have them tri-lingual before they started school. We were going to hit it hard! And then I had two children with special needs who required intensive therapies and could barely converse in English!*

*After the heartbreak and grief of lost dreams, I came to realize that their becoming multi-lingual was a goal stemming from my intent for them to be well educated. That intent is still in place but a course correction was necessary.*

- Elise Hansen

## **Confidante**

Bring your spouse on this journey with you. Our marriages are too often the last item on our lengthy to-do lists! In the desire to create intentional living for our families, and for ourselves, is a chance to envision a purposeful marriage.

It is never too late to start, and we must always remember that we are married to our husbands, not to our children. *The power of an intentional marriage can ripple through generations.*

Make time for your marriage. Schedule date nights and ensure there is time for intimacy. Being with your husband will often lead to those life-changing conversations only the two of you can have. As you talk about work, children, school, life, money, friends, and family, you are able to remind each other what it is you set out to do. And you remember you are in it together.

*If you are a single mother*, make sure you are still giving yourself a personal “date night” each week to renew your mind and soul. It can be as simple as a hot bath and some relaxation or some time with your journal. Invest some of your precious time in good self-care, your health, and education. Invite trusted friends and family into your life to share whatever elements of this journey that are appropriate to your life and to your mothering.

Your responsibilities are intense. There are always more tasks demanded of you than can possibly be managed. However, adequate rest and care of your body, mind, and spirit are utterly essential. The oxygen mask analogy is perhaps even greater in this scenario. Creating space to think and “be” helps you navigate away from reactivity, helps you mother with focus and power.

## **Inspiration and Meditation**

Study the wisdom of great thinkers. Seek holy words that are relevant to your chosen faith. This does not mean bury your self in every self-help book or follow every guru. But inspirational texts and literature will lift your soul, open your mind, and plant ideas for the kind of woman, wife and mother you want to be.

Allow those words to enter your heart. Ruminates, reflect, and write about how they make you feel in your journal. Pray, mediate, and confer with the divine presence in your life—however that is manifest for you.

Do not walk this path alone. Allow the universe or God to be your partner. The answers will come. So often it is in this process that it becomes clear what a particular child needs right then and what your highest priorities need to be. Or how you should choose between a vast array of good, better, and best options.

These practices, in part and as a whole, strengthen you. They will help you discover and commit to your intention. They will give unlimited power to your life's work and help you adjust, change, and start over—again and again and again.

## **Time for Planning and Goal-Setting**

*“We need to take some personal time for ourselves as mothers and decide what direction we want our family to head. Perhaps it will be an hour once a week, maybe it is a weekend away, and maybe it is twenty minutes when you have locked yourself into the bathroom to think. We need to be deliberate in finding a time to plan our goals and direction for our families.” - Mary Christensen*

It's virtually impossible to run a business, a home, or a life in an effective, purposeful way if we do not take the time to process, re-assess, plan, schedule and set goals on a regular basis. The weekly goal-setting offered by The Power of Moms' Bloom Game is a fabulous self-assessment and planning tool. The Mind Organization for Moms program with its focused Weekly Review helps you move your projects forward and make your goals reality. Combined with a weekly planning and dream session with my husband, these elements help me keep moving towards my ultimate intentions and hold me accountable to myself.

## **Living and Breathing It: Holding on to the Big Picture**

*Does she really do all of this?* Some days, yes. Some days, no! The mechanics of fitting it all in is different for each person. What matters is that each of these tools has saved my mind and my life!

*I need to let go of wanting everything to be organized, to be perfect, and instead do some of the simple things that will make me happy. Sure a house of order is great, but life is passing me by while I pick up the toys for the 100th time or sweep the floor for the fourth*

*time that day. I want to be remembered for living life, participating in life, and not for standing on the sidelines wishing I was out there doing it.*

*I knew having a large family would be a lot of work, and I would have to make sacrifices, but I really had no idea just how exhausted and emotionally spent I would feel some days. I rely on my passion for mothering to get me through. I think about what I believe in, what I hope to achieve, and what my dreams are for my family. It helps me to know where I should go as a mother, what changes I need to make, and what direction I should take in planning and preparing my children to be the best they can be.*

*As a mother, I find that if I stick to my passions, I feel secure, I feel at peace. I know what I need to do, where my time should be spent, and where I should go with leading and directing our family.*

*- Naomi Ellis*

*There is a plaque posted in our living room with our family goals. We all decided on them together. It reads, "Learn. Love. Laugh. Listen." It is something I cherish because each day as I look at it, I know where I am headed as a mother and what we are striving for as a family. It reminds me of what my intentions as a mother should be and gives me purpose in my life.*

*- Mary Christensen*

The more we wrap ourselves in the tools of intention, and the more they become instinctive, the more patience we find—and the more joy we get to experience. In the moments of questioning what on earth we are doing and how can we possibly take another step, we can and should stop for a moment and ground ourselves in the sure knowledge that we are the right mothers for our children. *We are their mothers on purpose.*

The power of mothering and living with intention is having a vision for our lives and key relationships. It is refusing to live in a constant reactionary state. It is choosing to have control over our responses even when we cannot control the causes. It is making a mistake; as we do daily, even hourly; and regrouping, dusting off, and starting again. It is knowing who we are and lining up our doing and being with the glory of our possibilities.

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## **Hot Yoga and Motherhood: An Intention for Your Mothering Practice**

One evening, I was lying on my back and staring up at a high ceiling as a humid heat settled into every part of my body. The instructor walked slowly and peacefully into the room and welcomed us to our 60-minute hot yoga class. With a quiet, calm voice, she

asked us to become aware of our bodies, to wiggle our toes and our fingers, and to become aware of our breath. She then invited us all to set an intention for the next 60 minutes of our practice. “It might be an intention of power and strength or peace and calm—but think of what your body needs right now from your practice and try to maintain that intention throughout.” I absolutely loved the idea, and I now set an intention for every class I attend.

It is written in the Christian creation story that before every period of creation, God first set out his intention. God said, “Let there be light . . . And there was light.” Bringing thought and intention before any type of creation, whether it be writing a poem, building a bridge, or raising a child, brings power and intelligence to your design.

I decided to try the principle out for the creation of my day with two boys, aged four and one. I sat down with a lovely little journal, a pen, and my awareness, wakefulness and presence. I looked at the blank page and thought about the blank canvas of a day that lay before me. I really thought deeply about what I wanted my day to be like. I thought about both what I needed from that day and what I thought my children needed from that day. The first thing I wrote down was the word Intention and then words I thought best described how I wanted to ‘practice’ my day.

One day, I woke up feeling tired and sluggish. I set my intention as slow but steady productivity, fresh air, create. Following my intention for the day, I ended up taking a leisurely walk with my kids to the local grocery store instead of driving. It was just what we needed.

I also wrote down the tasks I had to do that day: urgent and non-urgent. I wrote down the things I needed to pick up from the store and what we were having for supper. I wrote: let there be Lasagna . . . and there was Lasagna. I wrote: let there be clean laundry . . . and there was clean laundry. It felt wonderful to see on paper a plan and a direction to my day. On Tuesday my intention was activity and productivity. On Wednesday it was calm, joy, gratitude. On Sunday it was refresh, rest, connect.

Setting up a type of mission statement for my day has been not only helpful in giving structure and direction to my days, but gives me a space before the commencement of each day to connect with myself and the divine.

From this practice, I’ve felt direction and insight come to me as I invite my intuition to aid me in my efforts to understand my family’s needs as well as my own.

**- Charla Majeran**

## Your Own Wondrous Story

There is a quote that I love that says, in part, “. . . Your own wondrous story has already begun. Your ‘once upon a time’ is now.” I am in the middle of my “happily ever after,” and one of the most beautiful and anticipated parts of my wondrous story is in full swing.

I am a mother. I have two of the cutest, sweetest, most headstrong and obnoxious little girls of all time. They are 15 months apart, and most days I love their closeness, while other, less often days, I wonder what in the world my husband and I were dreaming the day we said, “Yeah! Let’s get pregnant again right now!”

When the day begins, I have visions of getting up an hour early to get showered and dressed before waking my girls and getting them breakfast. After breakfast, I will whisk them upstairs to do their hair with adorable bows and flowers and then choose an outfit that matches those bows and flowers from their perfectly-organized closet, so we can head to the park to play.

Instead, I don’t wake up until Olivia comes into my room and throws her sippy cup at my head yelling, “I need water!” I then shuffle in to get Lucy out of the crib and head downstairs for breakfast, hoping the blinds are closed because I forgot to put on any pants. After Olivia has used her yogurt as lotion and hair conditioner, I realize that I am supposed to be meeting my friends at the park in less than half an hour.

I pull Lucy out of her high chair and accidentally dump what seems like eight hundred mandarin oranges, which I thought she had eaten, onto the floor, which I’ll have to clean up later. I tell Olivia to climb out of her high chair because, quite honestly, I don’t want to touch her. We head to the bathroom, where I stand them in the tub and do a quick wipe down. I then put Olivia’s hair in two ponytails with only one bow because I’m hoping I’ll find the other one as I go through my make-up drawer. Lucy gets one ponytail so that I only have to find one bow for her.

I put on my make-up and blow my hair around, hoping it looks like an on-purpose messy, and head to find my pants. By this time, I have three minutes before we have to walk out the door, and I notice that Olivia has pulled both of her ponytails out. I put them back in, but can no longer find even the one bow, so she will be bowless today. I rush into the girls’ room and paw through the mountain of laundry, that I have such good intentions of hanging up, to find a couple of pretty-close-to-matching outfits.

I dress Lucy, and in the process snag her hair and pull half of the pony-tail out. I’ll fix that later. I find Olivia behind my dresser with some chocolate (I am completely baffled as to where she got it) and find that she has pulled her hair out again. I put her clothes on and rush with her and Lucy to the car.

We get to the park and start to unload. I realize that I only *thought* that I had shoes in the diaper bag, Olivia had more chocolate stashed that I didn't know about that she has smeared all over her face, and Lucy's ear is still covered in yogurt. As my barefoot, filthy, and scraggly-haired children and I walk over to meet my perfectly coiffed friends and their equally well-dressed children, I wonder how in the world they do it. They laugh when I ask, as though my question is such a silly thing. For them, beauty is effortless. This used to bother me. But I embrace it now. Because I know my purpose.

I could spend a lot of time at the park staring at the cute little bows that my friends told me they made just that morning to match the new outfit, but that wouldn't serve my purpose. There is a stark difference between desires and purpose. My desire that morning was to have everything go perfectly before going to play at the park. My purpose was to love my babies and spend time with them. And I accomplished that.

We all have different backgrounds, different talents, and different passions, but we share purpose. Often we set our expectations on what the ideal scenario should be to accomplish a certain task. Then, when our children decide to throw a tantrum, or refuse to tell us the chocolate stash hiding place, or don't cooperate in some other manner, we feel we have failed. We feel that we aren't doing things correctly or we aren't doing them as well as we think other mothers are doing them. But there are many different paths to happiness.

In our day-to-day lives, when the best-laid plans go awry, or things really aren't turning out as we thought they would, we can waste time waiting for things to get better, or we can pull ourselves up and go out and create our happily ever after . . . whatever it may be.

- **Aubrey Glaus Sanfilippo**

### **Then I Remembered . . . I Am the Mom**

Sometimes I look around my apartment in confusion. Where am I? How did I get here? Usually this is around 8 am when we are transitioning from disaster and attempting to create order. We have been up for a couple of hours, and I wonder how we got to this point. The dishes are clean—but piled precariously on towels from last night's clean up. Piles of books and an empty milk sippy-cup are surrounded by a well-loved pink blanket placed in perfect tripping range right at the hall way entrance. The baby is soggy and kicking fiercely—grunts and squeaks to let me know she is still here. My husband is long gone—the only signs a damp toothbrush and a lingering scent of aftershave.

I can see my daily “to-do” list in the corner of my eye—it is so long it is threatening to teeter off the page, and I still have four things ticking in my brain. We have only one hour to be in the car and out for the day, but first we need to get three girls cute, start a load of wash, nurse, pack the diaper bag, be cheerful, and ignore the mounting piles of

random “stuff” that mysteriously accumulates each day in my bedroom. I try to show patience—gritting my teeth as I tip toe around the scattering of clear marbles down the hallway, and yet still manage to land a hard poke in the arch of my foot.

I sometimes wonder why I am here, because I love order—and this is anything but organized! I thrive on being able to 'handle anything,' and yet find myself overwhelmed multiple times a day. I give a longing glance to my pillow, suck in a deep breath, tie up my disheveled hair in a ponytail, and face the day because I have to. Because I want to. Because I just remembered . . . I am the Mom. I am the mom. I am THE Mom

It is during those cold sleepy early hours when I hear the baby, squeaking and grunting protests of an empty tummy. I roll over, drifting back into my dream because "that can't be for me. . . ." The next shriek from the bassinet jolts me to reality . . . that is my baby, and this is my life. Moments later, only half alert and sleepy, I am overwhelmed with the knowledge that yes, I am the Mom. My arms have found what they were looking for—as if holding this sleepy nursing baby is what they were made to do.

Sure there are days that I wonder what it would be like to go 24 hours without having some Disney song stuck in my head. It would be delightful to have a trip to the grocery store sans meltdown at the candy checkout. Finding time to workout any time of the day would be a dream, and church would definitely be much more enlightening if I got to actually hear the messages. Many nights I go to bed guilt-stricken and worried, convinced I have stunted my child for life because I did or didn't do\_\_\_\_\_.

Despite these hiccups and imperfections, I am still the Mom. One day I'll send them off to make their own choices and find their own ways. I know that I will miss these early days: the funny conversations, the creative play, the crazy energy and happy shouting, the baby cuddling and cozy story telling. The early morning bed-heads, first time giggles, and the outstretched arms requesting "Momma, you carry me?" These are the memories I want printed deep inside me; these are the parts I hope will never fade. Because I get to be The Mom.

- **Danielle Porter**

## **Purpose and Intention after Tragedy**

My life has been drastically changed through the birth and death of our third child, who was born just shy of 25 weeks and lived a brief 30 minutes before passing away. My time spent with him challenged me to think about my purpose as a mother, my intentions with all of my children, and how I was going to move on from this tragedy.

It has forced me to not just mother, but mother with a purpose—to do good and be good. During this difficult time, it helped me realize that I still had other children I was responsible to nurture and raise. I knew that I needed to still move forward with life and

be the mother for my other children. There were days I struggled, days I couldn't find the strength to be the best mom I could be.

Part of moving forward with a purpose means acknowledging those bad days, pressing onward, and vowing to have a better day tomorrow.

- **Mary Christensen**

### **To-Do List**

Breakfast. Kids to school. Dishes. Laundry.

Change diapers. Vacuum. Sweep. Tidy up. Phone calls. Pay bills.

Run errands. More diapers. Kids home from school.

Help with homework. Dinner. Dishes. Bath time. Bedtime.

Busy. Busy. Always busy.

*Mommy! Mom!*

Stop. Listen.

Breakfast. Kids to school (*Looking for cloud pictures . . .*) Dishes.

Laundry (*Snuggling in the warm clothes*).

Change diapers (*Tickles and giggles*). Vacuum. Sweep (*Sing a song together*). Tidy up.

Phone calls (*Let the machine get it—we're reading stories*). Pay bills.

Run errands (*Help push the cart*). More diapers (*This little piggy went to market*).

Kids home from school (*Sit, share a snack*).

Help with homework (*Mom, how do I . . .? Let's figure it out*).

Dinner (*Please pass the . . . I had so much fun today . . .*).

Dishes. Bath time. Bedtime (*Lullabies and stories, hugs and kisses. I love you*).

Busy. Busy. Always busy.

*Busy together.*

- **Karen Stavast**