

# THE HUFFINGTON POST

## 7 Life Lessons For Moms From Oprah

Last weekend I attended Oprah's "The Life You Want" conference in Miami. Spread out over two days, it was 10 hours of Oprah's life-changing mantras and inspiration at its best. Live and in person. Oprah and her trailblazing team of experts -- Deepak Chopra, Elizabeth Gilbert, Rob Bell and Iyanla Vanzant -- pushing and rallying a crowd of 15,000 women (and a few men) to live their best lives.

After watching *The Oprah Show* for 15 years, filling up dozens of journals and making dramatic changes in my life as a result, I felt like I had to be there. How could I not?

And as I sat in section 112, row 6, seat C, and took in all the life-changing words of wisdom, it dawned on me that there was something I had to do after leaving.

I had to translate these remarkable messages for mothers.

While the conference was powerful beyond belief, none of the content was geared specifically toward moms -- despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the audience was indeed mothers.

Oprah often encourages people to "follow their passion and it will lead to their purpose." My passion is to help make the lives of mothers easier. So perhaps it was my purpose to go to Miami and not just listen to the life lessons Oprah offered, but to listen to them through a new filter for the first time... through the filter of the chaotic and often messy life of a mother.

It's one thing to live your best life. It's a whole different thing to try and live your best life while taking care of an entire family.

Here are seven life lessons brought to you by Oprah and filtered through the reality of modern motherhood.

### **#1 Happiness is an inside job.**

OK, this one was not from Oprah: it was from my Uber driver on the way to see Oprah. He asked why I was going to the conference and I told him, "Oprah taught me how to live the good life and I'm here to learn even more." He chuckled and told me I didn't need to pay hundreds of dollars to attend a conference in order learn about the good life. "There is only one thing you need to know about the good life," he explained. "The good in life can never come from the outside. It must come from the inside. Happiness will never come from things outside yourself."

Fair point, well made. Wise man, that Uber driver. He should be Oprah's driver.

Yes you love your children and your partner, there's no denying that. But they live outside of you. What about what's going on inside of you? Do you love yourself? Do you value and respect yourself? Are you kind to yourself? Happiness comes from the inside and as much as you adore your children, they cannot and will not be your driving force of happiness if you're not happy with yourself first. And the good news is that the more you love yourself, the more you can love them.

### **#2 Fear is saying yes when you mean no.**

This is one of Oprah's favorites. She's said "yes" a lot in her life when she wanted to say no and she now realizes those "yeses" were out of fear. How many things did you say "yes" to this week when you really wanted to say no? The gift you didn't want to buy, the dinner you didn't want to make, the smile you didn't want to fake. Dozens probably. When your gut says "nay" and your mouth says "yea," it means you're afraid of something. You're afraid of letting someone down, you're afraid of someone thinking less of you, you're afraid of looking like a bad mother. Think about the last three times you said "yes" against your better judgment. What were you afraid of?

### **#3 You are the master of your fate. You are the captain of your soul.**

Oprah encouraged the audience to "stop letting other people captain your ship." If you're a mother, I'm willing to bet that you have some form of the "disease to please," which means the rudder on your sailboat isn't quite long enough and strong enough. It means you're easily swayed by other people's opinions (Don't you think you travel too much for work? What does your husband eat at night since you don't cook for him?). You allow those opinions to chart your course and change your actions. Nobody should be sailing the ship but you. It's your life, it's your family and it's your future. You get to steer. When you feel like you're being swayed by the wind or someone else's opinion, picture the rudder on your ship getting longer and stronger -- helping you stand your ground and stay your course.

### **#4 Your outer world is a reflection of your inner state.**

If you constantly tell yourself you're not good enough, smart enough, nice enough, tough enough, pretty enough or mom enough, you're going to spend your days, nights and weekends overcompensating for your perceived weaknesses. And you're going to wear yourself out. The average human being produces 50,000 different thoughts each day and 70% of those thoughts are negative. See what you can do to be happier on the inside (start by being nicer to yourself) and your world will transform on the outside. As Stacy Griffith from Soul Cycle preached during her time on stage: "Your issues stay in your tissue." Be careful what you say to yourself. Try to avoid yelling at yourself like a drill sergeant when you forget to send lunch money to school with your daughter or when you forget your best godson's birthday, again. It's OK. Forgive yourself.

### **#5 Life is always trying to tell you something. You just need to find the courage to listen.**

As a hardworking, busy mother you're likely running from point A to point Z and everywhere in between every single day. Along that path, there are likely signs that tell you whether the life you're living is working for you. The signs typically start out as a whisper (a voice in your head saying you should not have volunteered for another activity at your son's school) and they get louder and louder (stomach pains or headaches) until they smack you in the face, like when Arianna Huffington collapsed from exhaustion at work and split her head open on her desk on the way down. It happens. Arianna saw the clues, she heard the hints, but she ignored them. Life always tells you the truth. Your job is to recognize and accept it. Think of some hints your life has dropped lately. What is your life trying to tell you?

### **#6 The life you want is just on the other side of the labor pains it will take to birth it.**

Iyanla Vanzant shared this nugget of greatness. She has made a lot of tough decisions and radical changes in her life, including leaving her husband of 40 years after marrying him twice. She wanted the audience to know that making change is indeed painful, but it's worth it. Just like childbirth. So if you're going through change or desire to make change in your life, know that it's going to hurt like hell, but trust that the pain will pass and you'll emerge on the other side a stronger and better person. And if it's as life changing as having a baby, you might just keep going back for more.

### **#7 After you've done all you can do, just stand still and surrender all.**

Oprah uses the notion of surrendering to let things go (she admitted that letting things go is her biggest weakness). Here's how to think about surrendering when you're a mom. At the end of the day when you've tied all the shoes, packed all the lunches, driven all around town, baked all the spaghetti, enforced all the time-outs, helped with all the homework, brushed all the teeth and read all the bedtime stories, it's time to let it all go. It's your time to surrender. You've done all that you can do. Don't take the doubt and the worry and the unaccomplished things on your to-do list to bed with you. Tomorrow is a new day and today you did the best you could.

There you have it. Seven tips for living your best life while you're simultaneously trying to run the lives of many other people -- particularly little people.

In the conference workbook Oprah handed out, there was a quote of hers that I fell in love with: "With the setting sun each day, go to bed with a heart filled with gratitude for yet another day lived on purpose."

By sharing these tips with you today, I feel as though I lived this day on purpose.

I hope these words of wisdom help you do the same.