

Situation Momey: A Very Special Episode in Toddlerdom

Jenna von Oy

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Raising a toast to mothers while offering practical tips, these essays provide a hard-won wisdom that psychology-based manuals often don't.

Nineties sitcom actress, singer, and Nashville mom Jenna von Oy returns in *Situation Momey: A Very Special Episode in Toddlerdom*, a jazzy follow-up to her book on pregnancy and first-year parenting. This brisk guide to navigating the terrible twos through the fearsome fours combines sarcasm, tender reflections, and Hollywood anecdotes. Von Oy portrays motherhood as an ever-shifting challenge that never fails to inspire humor.

Each chapter contemplates a theme in brief sections. The author examines a toddler's growing independence and social interactions, tantrums, breastfeeding, discipline, potty training, sibling rivalry, fears, and other timeless topics through incidents in her daughters' lives. Not intended to replace professional advice, the book offers commiseration and reminds parents that there is no single road map in what is often a taxing role. Frequent pop-culture analogies and references to wine underscore the irreverent approach, while timely observations recall the musings of Erma Bombeck. Von Oy's unabashed, genuine self-awareness when it comes to her own foibles gives parents much-needed reassurance.

Segues between memories of von Oy's early adulthood and current child-rearing scenes are occasionally drawn loosely. Still, such moments provide catchy introductions to the chapters. They also add a fascinating glimpse at the less glitzy side of acting; the author emerges as a down-to-earth figure whose advice remains grounded in sound principles. The book compels most when general bemusement gives way to deeper contemplations. Issues that are historically more likely for mothers than fathers to face—such as a loss of identity, and the struggle to reclaim it—are brought to the forefront without judgment for the different choices women make. Other serious threads, including the importance of valuing a child's individuality, and frightful concerns about the future, reveal a thoughtful, long-range view of parenting.

Situation Momey remains free of endorsements and lifestyle suggestions. Here, all respectful parenting philosophies are welcome. Raising a toast to mothers while offering practical tips, these essays provide a hard-won wisdom that psychology-based manuals often don't.

KAREN RIGBY (May/June 2017)

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