

"Short Term Crazy, Long Term Smart"

My husband, Scott, and I were blessed to have two children back to back. It took us three years before Miss Stella Jane came into our lives. I remember the day we found out we were pregnant with her. I cried tears of joy and felt this overwhelming responsibility to get everything right with her. Scott and I did all the new parent stuff...we read, we went to the labor/delivery class, we talked about what kind of parents we wanted to be, we talked about what we wanted our relationship to be like. We had been married for 9 years before Stella so we knew each other pretty well. We were excited and thankful. Then, Miss Stella came. And we had no idea what to do! We had some family here to help us during the first two weeks. They taught us about changing diapers and about feeding. They helped us understand that Stella would need food in the middle of the night and throughout the day. They helped relieve some of that exhaustion that we both felt. I was exhausted. I remember thinking, "Really, is this what raising kids is going to be about? Really, I have to be this tired and miserable during the experience?" Ugh...I was scared!

Fast forward four months... Miss Stella was now sleeping through the night. Scott and I were both back to work full-time. I was done breast-feeding. We were starting to feel some normalcy in our life, at least a normal routine for our new endeavor. Then, one day, I woke up and looked at Scott and said, "Babe, are you ready for baby #2?" He said, "Sure, soon. You know we always wanted to have two kids." I said, "I'm pregnant." He said, "No way. You can't be just yet." We got a pregnancy test and sure enough...positive. I cried again...this time tears of *!%\$# "how in the world am I going to go through this all again?" So, Scott and I pulled our heads together and did what we do with every other trying event in our life. We sorted through all our negative feelings and found the positives. We created our mantra..."Short-term crazy, long term smart."

Scott and I recognized that having two children this close together was going to be crazy. There would be lack of sleep and chaos and lots of supervision needed. We recognized that we would have more diapers than other households and our children were going to start sibling rivalry before they could speak words to each other. Then, we thought of all the positives. Our kids would never know life

without each other. They would be best friends. Stella and baby #2 would have a playmate all the time. They would be able to entertain each other and share developmental milestones together. Not to mention, when we were done with baby stuff, we were done with baby stuff. No more "saving it for the next one." Scott and I could get rid of clothes and toys as they outgrew them. Then, Scott and I even thought long-term. We thought, yeah, when they are going through school together, they will only be a grade apart and will have the same schedules. Eventually, they will both be out of the house at the same time as well.

So, we approached baby #2 with the same positive energy as baby #1, once we sorted through our conflicting emotions about having two babies so close in age. We also enlisted the help of Stella. We talked to her about being born into a goal driven family and that there were a couple things we were going to need from her to make this transition of baby #2 successful. We let her know that we had three goals...1. We wanted to transition her to from a bottle to a sippy cup around 10 months. We were afraid that Stella would not let baby #2 drink from a bottle if she hadn't had time to transition. She would think it was hers. 2. We would love it if she were walking. Yes, I know, a bit wishful, but why not plant the seed? 3. It would be really helpful if she were potty-training as the price of diapers is atrocious and we knew we would need to manage costs wherever we could. Please keep in mind that we did this with humor and love, knowing that no matter what turned out, we would be okay.

Sage Kelly, our son, arrived two weeks early! Stella was 13 months and 10 days. For the record, she transitioned to a sippy cup very well and was eager to show her "new baby" how to use a bottle. She also took her first steps two days before he was born...I love this girl's driven personality!

Ok, back on track...our son arrived and he was a struggling little munchkin. Sage was allergic to everything. I had decided not to breastfeed for multiple reasons and Sage was allergic to everything we gave him. He finally was able to take a hypo-allergenic, sensitive tummy formula. He was going through 1-2 cans of this stuff a week at a cost of \$25/can. Scott and I were worried and concerned about finances!! Sage was also this mellow baby who really just rolled with the punches. That was helpful because his sister was a tornado ready to take on the world.

They seemed to balance each other out. We continued to find a rhythm in our home. Some days were worse than others. All the while, Scott and I would peer at each other through messy faces or dirty diapers and say "short term crazy, long term smart."

Our kids are now 29 months and 16 months and we reflect on the first two years of being parents. Wow! The time flew by. I think those words "short term crazy, long term smart" have gotten us through nights of sick kids and trips to public places when our kids were too tired to go. We have survived restaurants and road trips. We have kept our sense of humor, managed to work full-time jobs, and kept a foundation in our marriage that is strong. Some days we say those words more than others. We know the importance of putting the time in with our children TODAY, right now. We know that they need all the love and attention they can get. We know that their brains are vastly developing and we are responsible for helping it develop and organize in a healthy way. We know that loves and hugs and kisses and attuned care giving will be the key to healthier future years for our children and for our family. We know that we must put in the time today so that they can feel safe and develop healthy relationships in the future. We know that in the short term things will be crazy and busy and sleepless and thankless so that in the long term our kids will be functioning adults who feel secure in their attachments and healthy in their relationships.