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Leanne Shirtliffe

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As a woman used to traveling and living the high life in Bangkok, Leanne Shirtliffe recognized the constant fodder for humor while pregnant with twins in Asia's sin city. But in spite of deep-fried bug cuisine and nurses who cover newborn bassinets with plastic wrap, Shirtliffe manages to keep her babies alive for a year with help from a Coca-Cola deliveryman, several waitresses, and a bra factory. Then she and her husband return home to the isolation of North American suburbia.

In *Don't Lick the Minivan*, Shirtliffe captures the bizarre aspects of parenting in her edgy, honest voice. She explores the hazards of everyday life with children such as:

The birthday party where neighborhood kids took home skin rashes from the second-hand face paint she applied.

The time she discovered her twins carving their names into her minivan's paint with rocks.

The funeral she officiated for "Stripper Barbie."

The horror of glitter.

And much more!

Shirtliffe eventually realizes that even if she can't teach her kids how to tie their shoelaces, she's a good enough mom. At least good enough to start saving for her twins' therapy fund. And possibly her own. Shirtliffe's memoir might not replace a therapist, but it is a lot cheaper.

Don't Lick the Minivan: And Other Things I Never Thought I'd Say to My Kids Details

Date : Published November 3rd 2015 by Skyhorse Publishing (first published May 1st 2013)

ISBN :

Author : Leanne Shirtliffe

Format : Kindle Edition 305 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Humor, Parenting, Autobiography, Memoir



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From Reader Review Don't Lick the Minivan: And Other Things I Never Thought I'd Say to My Kids for online ebook

Danielle says

This was an easy and occasionally amusing read. The author's voice was just OK for me; I didn't find her hilarious, but she wasn't annoying, either. I actually enjoyed hearing about her experiences living in Thailand (and having her twins born there) more than I did the later parts of the book, but like I said, a quick read, and I'm sure any parent would relate to the ridiculous things you find coming out of your mouth in response to your kids being...kids.

One minor complaint is that the whole tone of the book is rather flippant and bemused (which is fine; it's humor writing) and the author puts her serious "I really do love my kids" sections in a clearly defined and easily skipped aside at the end of each chapter. That's all well and good, but she brings up her struggles with depression and anxiety kind of in the middle of things (as it happened chronologically) but she just writes about it in a kind of weird way and then moves on. Like this: "That spring I spiraled into a depression. I didn't sleep and the days dragged on. Then finally things got better." Like, literally that brief and then the humor writing continues. I dunno, it was just a weird mix. I'm all for talking about the realities of parenting (depression being a serious one) and I think it's helpful for other parents who have experienced the same thing to not feel alone. But then...I mean, it was really covered so obliquely that is almost didn't need to be there at all. Like, my feeling is, either she should have talked about it a little more (not for a whole chapter, but a few pages wouldn't have hurt) or not at all. Just my thoughts. It was sad and felt out of place with the rest of the book.

Anyway, if you want to feel like a better parent, or just commiserate with someone going through the same thing, this one's a good choice.

Aimee Ferguson says

I adored this book. Full disclosure: I had the fantastic experience of being a student of Ms. Shirtliffe's for two years. I am not currently her student, so there's no extra credit attached for being nice. Reading a book about someone that you are so familiar with is a unique experience, and I found she came across on the page in much the same way she does in real life - witty, down to earth, and hilarious. I was laughing aloud at the mastery of humour used here. It was easy to tell that thought was placed into every word and it worked really well to make these already brilliant stories of life and all of its challenges into something more. The power packed into her analogies, allusions and metaphors worked really well. Her story was told in an honest and genuine way that worked just as well as the comedy.

My mum and I both read this book from the different perspectives of mother of four and student, and yet we both shared a love of this book. More than once I ran over to her to recount a story she was already familiar with so that we could smile together.

I'm so incredibly proud (do students get to be proud of their teachers?) of this amazing author for all that she has. She's inspired me to follow my dreams, and she's shown me that though life isn't always easy, you need to be able to laugh at yourself. (And if you can't laugh at yourself, a read through of this book will help you laugh along with Ms. Shirtliffe and her family.)

Nicole says

This could have been funny, but it just wasn't. Okay, so it could have been a memoir about raising twins. That's hard, right? Especially if you live in a foreign country thousands of miles from family, right? Well, not if you have a nanny, a maid who cooks and cleans, a driver, and a husband who seems to always be home. Why was the author in Thailand and what did her husband do for work that he was home all the time and able to afford so much help? Don't know. Oh, but she had post-partum depression when the kids were 7-months old. That must have been interesting, right? It could have been if the author wrote more than four sentences that amounted to how important her friends were. Skip this dud.

Julie says

I'd had this book for quite a while, and I'm kicking myself for not having read it sooner! Leanne recounts specific tales of raising twins, along with the funny statements that have come out of her mouth in response to interesting parenting situations.

While the stories are specific to her life, including a long stay in Thailand, her themes are universal. I related entirely to the challenges of motherhood, attempts at humor to relieve tension, strange things you find yourself saying, and (perhaps especially) an intense aversion to crafts. And I laughed out loud many times.

Put away the parenting books, grab a glass of wine, and read this instead! It will recharge you to face another day with munchkins who jump on your last exposed nerve, but also fill your heart with love.

Bradley Somer says

Leanne Shirtliffe is the perfect answer to the perfect parent. Point and counter point are hilariously covered, turned inside out and reconnected. This book is an insightful look at birthing and raising twins while trying to keep a modicum of sanity. Shirtliffe artfully dances along that fine line of humour and sentimentality, leaving you both laughing and feeling her struggles. And, honestly, sometimes just laughing at her struggles.

Dan says

I enjoyed reading this funny book on child-rearing. A true-to-life nonfiction that will make you laugh-out-loud! I was reading the other reviews before I started this one, and I saw every rating from 1 through 5. That means either everyone did not read the same book, or that everyone perceived the book differently. Maybe. Overall, I think most people who read this book could relate to the mishaps of raising kids. Maybe you learned something by it also.

Anyway, it's a fun read and it kept me laughing throughout. 4 stars

Faith says

After a rotten week, what could be better than the healing medicine of laughter? And so I am (lucky me!) reading an advance copy of Don't Lick the Minivan by Leanne Shirtliffe. Of all the nice things that have started to happen to me since I began blogging this is pretty way in front the nicest and I was delighted to get an invite to be part of the book launch and to "meet" Leanne on Facebook.

I am on page 71. I promised Leanne I would read and review it. And my internet goes down on May 7th. For a week. Just long enough to leave me a shut-out on the release date (May 11th, from what I understand - which is never much. What I understand, I mean..).

I ALSO got it late (because I am dopey and cannot figure out how to make myself easy to connect to groups and stuff in Facebook land!) and then utterly failed to figure out loading a .pdf onto my Kobo in any way so that I could ever see it again. So I am reading it on my netbook. Which is kinda okay but I prefer the way you turn pages on the touch screen of the Kobo.

dlm

Oh! The book! Well, it's pretty great actually. Leanne is a Calgary-based blogger mommy with a hilarious and often interactive blog at www.ironicmom.com . If you're not following it, you should be. It's pretty fun. One of Leanne's central themes is that it's not what the KIDS say that's really shocking, it's the things we suddenly spout ourselves as parents that are really off the wall ("Take that train off your penis!"). She regularly shares these chuckle and chortle moments on her blog.

Because Ironic Mom is so funny, I approached Don't Lick the Minivan with some trepidation. What if it was trite, or tried too hard to be funny? I was queasy at the thought that such a smart, funny lady might try to make light of some of motherhood's more "unfunny" moments.

Happy news. She doesn't. Leanne Shirtliffe's book is heartfelt and honest. Within its humourous pages there is a lot of truth about parenthood. I often felt myself smiling in recognition. This is her description of the drive home (in two Thai taxi cabs) with her newborn twins:

"I watched Chris and the babies edge through lane one. I cried, closed my eyes, and hummed Sunday school songs at a frantic tempo. Then our taxi driver turned right. I opened my eyes. "Go straight," I shouted in Thai. The driver replied that he couldn't. It wasn't safe. "Follow that car," I said. "My babies are in there." He looked at me. "Maidai." "What do you mean you can't? Of course you can. The other car went straight."

"By now, it was too late. My babies had made it across the deathtrap and we were going the long way. I could almost feel the remains of my imaginary umbilical cord being torn. And I'd lost my temper. In Thai culture, public outrage is looked down upon because everyone who witnessed the outburst loses. Defeated, I called Chris and sobbed. Again. Five minutes later, the taxi pulled up to our apartment building. I crawled out and apologized to the driver for my nervous breakdown while Chris paid him a week's wages in

compensation. My mom hugged me and I looked at my two little post-goop balls.

"They'd slept the entire ride home."

This brought me instantly back to the hospital departure moments with both my own children. I remembered the new anxiety of not being able to keep your baby safe inside you any longer. The new and strange fears for them as separate little beings in the world. And Leanne has felt that too.

I am pleasantly surprised with this book. It is a joyous (and often uproariously funny) expression of love. The end of chapter "Sappy Files" are tenderly written letters to Vivian and William (the twins). Having never considered myself a "sappy" type person before I guess I will now have to re-evaluate. The first one hooked me. I nodded along in recognition of my own feelings.

Some people would call what Leanne has done "oversharing" about her kids. To those people: if this doesn't interest you, don't read it. The rest of us know that parenting is the most important and transformative job we are ever likely to undertake. Talking about it, comforting each other ("Hey! I felt like that too.") and (yes) even occasionally cracking a joke about it all - these are cathartic and reassuring moments for us moms and dads. And sometimes even educational (I never knew you could loofah stretch marks off. Wow.). And - hey - can I say sometimes it's just nice "talking" to another adult?

Slacker moms unite!!! Perhaps we are not so bad after all. Maybe just more honest than other folks. And if Leanne is with us, we can take over the world umm, err, I mean transform parenthood. Yeah, that's it.

Thanks Leanne, for helping us laugh at ourselves. I've really been needing to laugh this week.

Don't Lick the Minivan (and Other Things I Never Thought I'd Say to My Kids) comes out May 9th (or 11th). You can buy it on Amazon on May 22nd. It's by Leanne Shirtliffe.

Butterfly

Renee says

As a long time follower of Leanne's blog (ironicomom.com), I read the PDF version of this book. All I can say is it is just absolutely Leanne at her finest. As the mother to one son, I have always marveled at people with multiples and wonder how they do it. Now I know. They HAVE to have a sense of humor. There is simply no other way to get through it all.

After a very brief bout of postpartum depression (and a whole helluva lot of anxiety), Leanne -- along with her husband, Chris -- starts to find the funny around her. And she just never stops. Where some people might cry and whine over some of these events (and maybe she did at the time), Leanne presents these moments with levity.

Her stories -- almost a collection of essays that blend seamlessly together as one story -- make us remember that as long as we are parenting from a place of love, it is enough. Probably.

NOTE: My husband banned me from reading this book in bed because I occasionally laughed out loud, thus

interrupting his sleep. Totally worth it. If you are looking for a book that will let you exhale and remind you that you aren't doing everything wrong, not only is this your book, it's your release valve.

Catherine says

I finished the book this morning, and I couldn't stop laughing at some points, best exercise read in a long time. Leanne Shirtliffe completely captures what it is like to be a parent of twins in ***Don't Lick the Minivan***.

As she struggled with delayed postpartum depression, she was able to come through it all with laughter. Laughter being the key to raising children/twins. *Don't Lick the Minivan* is a must read for those considering becoming parents for the first time and for those who are already parents. Her depiction of life with twins is brutally honest, so much so that you will have no need for those *how to parenting books*.

Storywraps says

Leanne and her husband while living in Bangkok, Thailand find they are going to be the parents of twins. She manages to find so many ways to keep up her spirits while gestating two babes along the way.

But in spite of deep-fried bug cuisine and nurses who cover newborn bassinets with plastic wrap, Shirtliffe enriches her life with the help of a Coca-Cola deliveryman, waitresses who engage her, and of all things... a bra factory. Their return back to Canada after such an adventure abroad is anticlimactic indeed.

With honesty, wit and much humour she gives her take on raising her twins. She reveals her ups and downs, joys, fears, parental anxieties and the awesomeness of being a parent. She shares:

The birthday party where neighbourhood kids contracted skin rashes because of the second-hand face paint she used on them.

Oh boy, the time her twins were happily tattooing their names into her minivan's paint with rocks.

The last rights she administered to "Stripper Barbie" because it was her appointed time to go... appointed by Leanne herself and...

How glitter changed her life and will never again be a welcome visitor in her home... ever!

1. Dimming the lights takes away labor pain.
2. Every baby name can be made fun of.
3. Raising twins is easy after six months.
4. Procreation clarifies the purpose of arrange marriage, boarding school, and birth control
5. Kids love babysitters more than parents.
6. The most interesting conversations happen in vehicles or canoes.
7. Scrimping on Band-Aids helps save money for college.
8. Lazy parenting creates kids who are self-starters.
9. Lord of the Flies is a more useful parenting primer than Dr. Spock.

Enjoy everyone, I know you will!

Paige Norman says

I've followed Leanne online since I first discovered her blog while reading some random parenting article. I immediately signed up to get the "feed" and have never really stopped laughing. When I found out she had published a book, I directly ordered it IN ADVANCE from Amazon.com (I hardly ever buy NEW BOOKS). And I waited. And waited...and...

Then I got it and it sat on my bedside table for a couple of months because, well, I had to find something else to divert my attention while I can't sleep at night and I was in the middle of something.

I opened the first page and laughed. I laughed through most of the book except for the times I cried because she talked about depression and children and husbands and LEGO. If the people who see me in public didn't already think I was insane, watching me read a book while I laughed until I cried (or crossed my legs so I didn't pee my pants) convinced anyone else.

Absolutely funny and true and heartwarming. Absolutely worth buying brand new. And absolutely something I'll read over and over again.

Becky says

I love this book. It is parenthood at its most raw and realistic. I feel so much better about my parenting style (not that I ever thought I was a horrible mother) because I know that I'm not the only one who feels too tired or lazy or stressed out by the antics of their kids. With 2 preschool/toddler boys, many of her experiences have been my experiences, and I know now that I have to learn to laugh at the crazy moments so that I don't

get sucked up in them and become so furious that I want to rip my hair out.

I think my favorite story was between her and her husband, playing the "... if you know what I mean" game with children's books. Will have to remember that in my moments of desperation.

Also, I love love love her letters to her kids at the end of each age section (especially the one to Vivian, the "poet", because it made me think of the wonderful things that come out of my kids' mouths). They were so heartwarming amidst all the hilarity. Her kids may drive her crazy, but she loves them unconditionally.

Beautiful to see. :)

Leanne Shirtliffe says

Well, I'm the author, so I should likely rate it 5 stars...

Carrie says

This was such a great read for moms who love to laugh. I was lucky to get my hands on it early. Great Mother's Day gift.

Emma Sea says

A mildly humorous look at highly-privileged child rearing. I didn't connect at all with the pregnancy and babyhood sections, but enjoyed it more once Vivian and Will were small human beings.

2.5 stars
