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**The Family Bed: A Story in Generations**

**By Abigail Dotson**

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If I had been born at home, surely it would have been into a family bed. As it was, my parents brought me home from the hospital, where I was promptly given a place aside my mother in the bed which slept us all: mom, dad, my brother and I. I nursed until I was nearly four, when the arrival of a younger sibling forced shared privileges. I was not, as a rule, thrilled with anything that wasn't mine alone and so gave up the breast and my place between my parents for slightly more independence on the outskirts of our small country. I slept on the edge (had my parents been a bit more intuitive, they may have recognized this as foreshadowing, and thus been more fully prepared for the journey of parenting a true Sagittarian daughter...).

By that time, the eldest Dotson child had moved on and now slept in a wood framed bunk bed hand crafted by our father. In a family of five, he was the only to sleep solo. This left me as the senior child in the family bed, a title that lent me a certain amount of privilege, and these are the days I remember most when I think back to the last time I slept in the same bed with someone under the age of two.

I remember the stories of my infancy, more from the telling and re-telling, I am sure, than from genuine memory; countless friends and family have heard of the night, sleep deprived and exhausted, that my mother lay me down to sleep next to my father. I slept huddled in his arms on the side of the bed, my mother an ocean away on her end of the king size waterbed. Lured by the scent of her leaking breasts and some clearly primal instinct, I managed, at just a few months of age, to roll over my father and across the broad expanse until my lips at last found the relief of my mother's waiting nipple. This could have been my first successful experience at rolling over. Suffice to say, mom did not sleep as anticipated, but who could deny such determination?

For years I laughed at this story, until I had a toddler of my own and understood, finally, the sacrifice that lay at the heart of attachment parenting. Despite the pain of too many sleepless nights, I am hooked, just like my mother before me. I am a co-sleeper at heart, a habit brought on by genetics, it would seem. I know the warmth of my parents' bodies, a peace surpassed only by the warmth of own daughter's sleeping body as she lay- covering me in bruises with impulse kicks and left hooks- sleeping next to me. A woman of the new millennium I never thought I would stand for such abuse, and

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yet imagine my surprise at not only standing for it, but demanding it continue. While I can't honestly say I love the pain, I can say I will happily put up with it. And while I am anxious for the day when she can confidently spend a night— or even an hour— asleep without me (a time to finally let the wounds begin to heal), I dread the day she moves out of my bed and into her own. Yet another instance, I am sure, when she will be ready for the next step far before I am ready for her to be ready. I suppose I will have to get used to this.

But this is not a story about the virtues of co-sleeping, for if you are a co-sleeper you have doubtless already read a library of those. Nope, this is the story of a co-sleeping alumna. This is the story of why we do it: it is what you will remember at three o'clock in the morning when your twenty-three month old rolls over to nurse for the seventh time that night; this is a mantra you can chant when your sex life has

disappeared completely and your idea of well-rested is a solid three hours; this is the answer to your repeated "why's?" when your bed becomes so crowded that, like my mother, you end up spending your nights lying crosswise at the foot of the bed hoping for just an hour. It is as simple as this: co-sleepers breed co-sleepers. You're giving your grandchildren the gift of their parents' bodies. You're breeding a noble instinct, a culture of love and commitment, of families raising families instead of a technology of baby monitors and flashing light mobiles. That baby you are cuddling will likely someday know all it is to cuddle his or her own baby deep into the night, evening after evening for years and years.

I feel safe in the night, for all the ways my parents held me rather than a crib. Between my mother and my father the night time was never more dangerous than the day, and when the slow transition of movement into my own bed began, my parents continued to cuddle me in innovative ways. It is only now, with a daughter of my own to keep me company through the long and short nights, that I understand the dual gift of co-sleeping. I thank my parents for the nights they kept me close, for the bond created and the emptiness avoided, for all the good I know co-sleeping does for a child. But who knew that the gifts extend way beyond childhood? Today I thank my parents for teaching me to continue the tradition; for giving to both me, and my daughter, these nights we now share together. And lord knows, I hope that one day Ruby will lie in bed next to her own sleeping infant, reveling in the little body so inspired by her side.

When Abigail's sleeping toddler wakes her up with squirms and snores, she sometimes writes by the moonlight. Her writing has appeared in the compilation *Loving Mama: Essays on Natural Childbirth and Parenting* as well as in several periodicals.

### **Scrapbooking For Generations**

**By Vera Raposo**

Generation scrapbooking is a wonderful way for different generations of your family to bond and share your family history. Spend some time to get everyone in the family involved in creating scrapbooks. Not only will you share pictures and stories, it will be a wonderful bonding experience as well.

Scrapbook For Your Child

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Start a scrapbook for your child and get him or her involved in creating the pages. You can create a new book each year together with your child. Include artwork, homework as well as current pictures of your child and friends. Ask your child to help in creating layouts, choosing embellishments and adding descriptive titles and text. Depending on your child's age, you may even want to let her do most of the scrapbooking and writing with a little assistance from your of course. You'll be surprised how much you will learn about your child's life outside of your home. The two of you will get to spend some quality time together and create a memento to remember it for years to come.

### Scrapbook Your Family History

Record your family history in a scrapbook. Put your family's story on paper for future generations. Create a special generation scrapbook that tells the story of your own childhood, teenage years, or how you and your spouse met. When your children are grown, they will appreciate being able to get a glimpse of what your life was like back then. Keep adding to the scrapbook over the years and get everyone in the family involved in deciding what should be added. You will create a book that everyone in the family will cherish and pass on for years, maybe even generations to come.

### Share Old Photo Albums

Go through old photo albums that have been in your family for decades. Spend some time with older family members to look through these albums. You will gain an appreciation for your family history and the life your family members lived long before you were born. You may also want to discuss options to preserve these old pictures.

If you would like to incorporate some of these pictures in your current scrapbooks, have copies made, or scan the pictures in your computer, edit them and then print. You can correct faded color and even some small tears and nicks with modern photo editing software. Plus you will have a digital version of the picture that will last long after the original photo deteriorates.

Grab that fabulous scrapbook that you bought months ago and saved for a special occasion and start generation scrapbooking today about yourself and your family. You will enjoy the process of creating that special book just as much as being able to share it with family members once it is finished.

Vera Raposo has been scrapbooking since her oldest child was 5. With tons of scrapbooking tips and ideas, Vera is now sharing some of her best scrapbooking ideas on her radio show at



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