

## Happy Mother's Day? By Tara Spinelli for Jersey Moms Blog

This Mother's Day, my 8-year-old son and his classmates made cards for their moms enumerating the 10 reasons they love us. My son's included these:

- #10: I love my mom because she reads me terrific books.
- #4: I know my mom cares because she always tries to spend time with me.
- #3: I know my mom is smart because she taught me to divide with remainders.
- #1: I love my mom because she's the BEST MOM EVER!

Awwwwwww. So sweet. And he still respects my math skills!

He then went about refuting his own claims...

- #10: "Well, really, dad's the one who reads to me."
- #4: "You really could spend more time with me."
- #3: "You know..."

Hold on there, buddy. Before you dispute my IQ for Mother's Day, howzabout you...GET OUT OF MY KITCHEN! NOW!

So much for that Hallmark moment.

As I thought about it, though, a holiday like Mother's Day—or at least what it has become—is a set-up. It tells us how to feel and express ourselves according to an ideal standard. It expects us to put the messier truth aside and serve up platitudes. And when our kids don't behave perfectly and consistently on a day especially earmarked for us, we're disappointed.

If truth be told, my son's commentary is right about #10, #4, and yes, even #3 (yeah, I know what he was going to say). I don't want platitudes. They might make for nice cards, but only make my real shortcomings feel more stark. I like the truth even when I hate it. I want my kids to feel the same way.

No, I don't want platitudes, but I'm a big fan of gratitude, not for having a mom who's June Cleaver, but for having a mom who loves you like no one else in the world no matter how far short of the ideal she falls. In place of disappointment when mom isn't exactly who we want her to be can be thanks for the good things she is.

Maybe we could even revisit the concept of mother's day envisioned back in 1872 by activist, writer, and poet Julia Ward Howe, known for writing the Civil War song *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Her idea was a day dedicated to peace where women and mothers unite to oppose war. In her *Mother's Day Proclamation*, she urged:

“Arise, then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts, whether our baptism be of water or of tears! Say firmly: ‘We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies. Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience. We, the women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.’”

Meantime, we can at least take back the sentiment and tell it like it is, not Hallmark’s way, but our way. Something more like this:

[andrewsullivan.thedailybeast.com/2012/05/thank-you-mom.html](http://andrewsullivan.thedailybeast.com/2012/05/thank-you-mom.html)