

Valley Moms Share Their Most Precious Moments

Written by Written by: Melissa Larsen/Photography by: Cassandra Tomei
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Though mending owies and changing diapers are some of the not-so-enjoyable parts of the job, being a mama also means endless kisses, cuddles and “I love yous.” To mark this month’s Mother’s Day holiday, AFM asks five very special Valley moms this question: What do you enjoy most about motherhood?



“The best part of being a mother is that small moment. It’s the kisses, the strokes on the cheek, that tiny voice saying ‘Mama, come snuggle,’ the sweet smell of ‘blue blank’ (even after five years), the giggles, the running leap into your arms, the book-reading and paper airplane-making. It’s wrapping your child in your arms after he’s fallen, the smile when he ties his shoes for the first time and experiencing a love that transforms you. In between all of those moments, sure, you feel like a crazy person trying desperately to keep it all together, but those moments, yeah, that’s the sweet spot.”

—**Tanya Wheelless**, Phoenix Suns Senior Vice President of Communications & Public Affairs and mother of Jake, 6, and stepmother of Audrey, 18, and Ross, 15



“My daughters keep me young. Motherhood is being a nurturer, provider, counselor, nurse, teacher and just plain role model. A lot of the time, I don’t feel I know what I’m doing but I have to make sure whatever I’m doing, I’m doing it right—I’m being watched. My daughters are like having my best friends with me all of the time. We know each other so well we don’t let anything get past us. I love my daughters so much that they are my life and could not imagine my life without them! I love being a mother.”

—**Annette Mays**, administrative assistant/marketing at Skin and Cancer Center of Arizona and mother of Sierra, 15, and Julie, 13



“As a mother, I enjoy the gift of unconditional love my children give me each and every day. I enjoy that they’re independent and unafraid to say what’s on their minds. I appreciate that they’re adventurous and willing to try new things or travel to new places with me. I take pride in knowing they’re intelligent, confident and believe in constantly challenging themselves. I love that they enjoy sports and give me many reasons to cheer. They are truly two of the funniest people I know. My children make me incredibly proud and motherhood gives me a reason to strive each and every day to make them proud too.”

—**Catherine Anaya**, anchor/reporter for KPHO CBS 5 News and mother of Briana, 15, and Christian, 9



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"Watching the discovery and joy Bebe has in learning about the world, through lessons from school, nature, family, friends, the arts and travel. So recently she was totally dependent on me and now, only though she is just 8, it is amazing, even mind-boggling, to see her self-motivation grow so wisely beyond her years. I also try to see and experience the world through her eyes of curiosity—no walls, no judging. It is so good for adults to get back to that appreciation; just love and kindness. It is just so beautiful. My husband and I feel honored to be her parents. We teach her lessons but she also teaches us."

—**Eileen Joy Spitalny**, co-founder of Fairytale Brownies and mother of Bebe, 8



"I am forever changed becoming Hunter and Mia's mommy. With each beaming smile and infectious giggle, everything is better. I am privileged to see the world through their eyes; they make everything magic. My favorite part is making holidays and birthdays special. Every last detail—from theme to menu, bouncy houses to beauty bars. I love to see the delight on their faces when it all comes together. I am so fortunate to have these amazing children that make our lives so full. My husband and I often share glances in simple family moments. Without saying a word, we think: 'This is a moment that we will never forget; it doesn't get better than this.'"

—**Samantha Bencich**, store manager of BVLGARI at Scottsdale Fashion Square and mother of Hunter, 7, and Mia, 4