

# When the Toughest Mom-Shamers Are Family

Mom-shaming is always hard to deal with, but it leaves a deeper wound when it's the people closest to you—family.

By **Sugey Palomares**

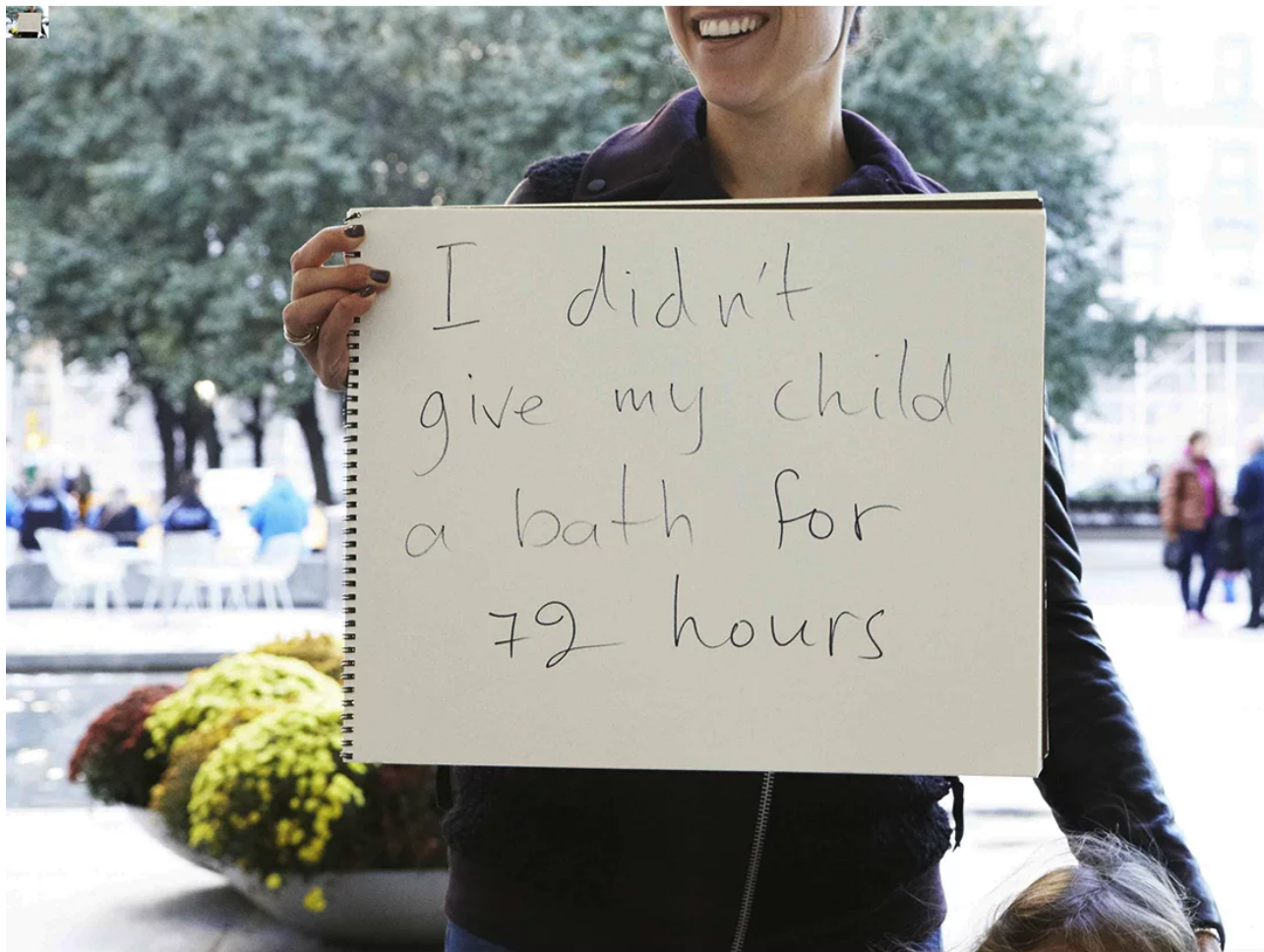


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Motherhood is hard, but finding your mom tribe is even harder. That's partly because so many people are unfiltered and merciless about picking at your decisions as a parent to highlight how awesome *they* are. I've felt the palpable

judgement from other moms and even non-moms in the last two years since having my son. That's partly because mom-shamers are everywhere: at the park, online, and even in your closest social circle. I like to picture them as little Pac-Man ghosts appearing at every corner and trying to kill my vibe as I try to navigate my mom life maze.

When it comes from family, the mom-shaming feels even more soul crushing. Family members could be the first people to make annoying comments about how you're deciding to raise your own child (the irony). According to a study by Psychology Today, 37 percent of moms feel criticized by their own parents, while 31 percent say that their in-laws were the most frequent to pass judgement on their mothering skills. It's easier to ignore or reject a stranger than it is to deal with your own family. The statistics prove that I'm not alone here.

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When I first had my son in 2015, I felt constantly judged about choosing to formula feed and deciding to sleep train. As a new mom, I also judged myself. I had a certain script of how I wanted to do things, and that didn't necessary align with real life or my reality as a full-time working mom.

I remember when I decided to go on a work trip after coming back from maternity leave. "You're actually going? He's going to miss you," my family member scoffed with disapproval. I started to spiral. "Was I being a bad mother?" "Was it too soon to go away on a trip?" The thought of getting on a plane and flying cross country was already terrifying enough. "What if something happens to him while I'm gone?" The question kept ruminating in my anxious mom brain. Part of the source? That judgmental family member's comment. She meant it with good intentions, and out of love, but sometimes that's the most difficult type of mom-shaming to shake off.

What if she was right? Maybe it was too soon to be away from my son. I had a meltdown on my way to the airport, and my poor husband was desperately convincing me to literally take my trip step by step--one foot, and then the next. "You'll be back in no time. It's just two days," he assured me. His words melted

away some of my anxiety, but I still had to speed dial my therapist and best friend to help me take the final plunge.

During my trip, I Facetimed my family, completed my work assignment, and survived my first trip away from my baby boy. That experience taught me that I define my own rules as a mother. Everyone follows their own script, but what works for one woman may not work for another. The trip also made me realize the kind of love language I was teaching my son. Even when I'm away, I'm always with him.

The reality is that there is a judgment zone that comes with motherhood. We can easily block away the online pressures, but there's no escaping the unsolicited advice and shaming from loved ones. There should be a don't ask, don't share mom code. I'm still building on my mom tribe. For now, I have two loving and supportive women who listen to my rants about my toddler's poop color, crazy stuff he says, and everything in between.

My advice: Unless a mom specifically asks you for your advice, don't pass judgement or share your own thoughts. It's not always kind or helpful—even if that's your sole intent. Also know that mom-shaming may be part of your family's love language. The best way to deal is to vent, be heard, and be unapologetic about what you decide works best for your family.

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