

5 Ways Mothers Give Away Their Power

Written by Chantel Quick, G.T.A.

Friday, 01 December 2017 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 26 March 2018 10:39

Dear Mama,

You have more power than you might think. You are the master of your domain, and the domain is you and your children. Your mastery should not be confused with dominance and control. I do not mean that you are here to control your child, but you are 100 percent in control of the decisions you must make for your child.

There are so many ways that we mothers give away our power and authority to people and systems without thought, because we don't realize there is any other way. We allow our bodies and souls, and the bodies and souls of our children, to get overridden by people who we think know better than we do when it comes to our lives and the lives of our children. But they don't.

PARENTING

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As mothers, we are constantly being thrown choices about our choices, no matter what we do. It's in part that we talk openly about evidence-based practices that are proven to have better outcomes for our children, but in many cases, people want us to just go with the status quo and do what was done to them, the way their parents did it. Don't ask questions, don't have an opinion, don't speak up, don't question the "experts." Ignore that gut feeling—that feeling you might get at a doctor's appointment, or when you're sending your kid off on the first day of school. We are told these feelings are "normal," and that every mother has them. I agree that they are common, but they are not normal. Our world has privileged other people's opinions, and being in systems beyond our communication, some of our unconscious know—no, the point that many people don't feel that intuition anymore. We are killing our kids' bodies and souls with things that we don't even have the slightest clue what they are, because we think we must. It doesn't even occur to many people that there could be another way.

This isn't about overthinking anyone to do things any way (there being a world that would be). But if you don't know you have choices beyond the mainstream world, then you aren't making decisions from a place of truth and desire. You are an autopilot, and not considering the impact of being in accordance with the status quo, where only signals are being you relying on it.

So what do I mean by giving away power?

Your power is your deep internal knowing and the actions that support it. It is standing up for what you know to be true and not feeling backlash from those who feel uncomfortable by how you live. You might feel fear, but you do it anyway. Otherwise you're living for others, out of alignment with what you know to be best for you and your family, and you won't be able to function.

I see mothers give away their power all the time. Sure, there will be women who live by the book. They do what they are told, trust the "experts" no matter what, never venture far from their predetermined path, and will insist that they are not run by fear and are not giving their power away. That is fine. I am not speaking to them. I am speaking to those who know something feels off. They have a feeling that things aren't right and they want to change something, but it goes against everything they are told about raising children. Listen to that feeling. It is OK, and very empowering, to never feel confused or afraid in your parental choices. I have had much freedom I have, and I have that freedom not because I don't listen to other people, but because I cultivated a deeper trust in myself. If you have that, then it almost doesn't matter what you do—that faith and confidence will carry you. Even if you do everything totally opposite from what I believe to be true, if you feel so good and right doing it, then your family and children will feel that.

Here are a few ways I see mothers giving away their power, where they should never do so:

1 Doctors During Pregnancy

Ninety-nine percent of women follow a predetermined agenda once they are three-two-five weeks on the pregnancy test. From that point on, they are under the control of a doctor. They view their birth experience as their working for the doctor, rather than the other way around. Remember, it is your body and your baby. Your caregiver works for you. If you don't want to drink a nasty glucose drink, you don't have to. If you don't want to be induced, you don't have to. If you don't want to labor on your back strapped to a bed, you don't have to. If you don't want an epidural, you don't have to get one. If you don't want your baby taken out of your sight, she doesn't have to be. If you ever have that "gut" feeling about anything, listen to it. It rings when I have a woman say, "My doctor won't let me."

If your doctor won't let you do something, then don't hesitate to find someone who will for you and discuss your wishes. I understand that there are special circumstances where a woman must do something she didn't originally desire or plan, but that isn't what I am talking about.

Mothers have so much choice and power around how they bring their babies into the world. Take care that right. Question and research everything.

2 Parenting Experts

The problem with listening to the experts is that they come from all ends of the spectrum. Some will say never ever leave a baby alone to cry, others will suggest you go in the nursery just to lean up the corner, make no eye contact, and get out. It's crazy, but that line of thinking actually exists. I don't think it is great to find people who suggest what you tentatively know, and refer to them in times of confusion because you trust them and their opinions on such matters. But that is different than giving away power.

Ultimately, you know what feels good and what doesn't. Yes, it is true that sometimes we have to feel our feelings to work through them, and doing that can be

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As mothers, we are constantly being thrown shame about our choices, no matter what we do. It's important that we talk openly about evidence-based practices that are proven to have better outcomes for our children, but in many cases, people want us to just go with the status quo and do what was done to them, the way their parents did it. Don't ask questions, don't be too loud, don't speak up, don't question the "experts." Ignore that gut feeling—that feeling you might get at a doctor's appointment, or when you're sending your kid off on the first day of school. We are told these feelings are "normal," and that every mother has them. I agree that they are common, but they are not normal. Our world has prioritized other people's opinions, and living for systems beyond our communities, over what we intuitively know—to the point that many people don't feel that intuition anymore. We are filling our kids' bodies and heads with things that we don't even have the slightest clue what they are, because we think we must. It doesn't even occur to many people that there could be another way.

This isn't about convincing anyone to do things my way (how boring a world that would be!). But if you don't know you have choices beyond the mainstream world, then you aren't making decisions from a place of truth and desire. You are on autopilot, and not considering the impact of living in accordance with the status quo, whose only agenda is to keep you relying on it.

So what do I mean by giving away power? Your power is your deep internal knowing and the actions that support it. It is standing up for what you know to be true and not fearing backlash from those who feel confronted by how you live. You might feel fear, but you do it anyway. Otherwise you're living for others, out of alignment with what you know to be best for you and your family, and you won't be able to function.

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I believe to be true, if you feel so good and right doing it, then your family and children will feel that.

Here are 5 places I see mothers giving away their power, where they should never do so:

1. Doctors During Pregnancy

Ninety-nine percent of women follow a predetermined agenda once they see those two blue lines on the pregnancy test. From that point on, they are under the control of a doctor. They view their birth experience as them working for the doctor, rather than the other way around. Remember, it is your body, and your baby. Your caregiver works for you. If you don't want to drink a nasty glucose drink, you don't have to. If you don't want to be induced, you don't have to. If you don't want to labor on your back strapped to a bed, you don't have to. If you don't want an episiotomy, you don't have to get one. If you don't want your baby taken out of your sight, she doesn't have to be. If you ever have that "bad" feeling about anything, listen to it. I cringe when I hear a woman say, "My doctor won't let me..."

If your doctor won't let you do something, then don't hesitate to find someone who works for you and honors your wishes. I understand that there are special circumstances where a woman must do something she didn't originally desire or plan, but that isn't what I am talking about.

Women have so much choice and power around how they bring their babies into the world. Exercise that right. Question and research everything.

2. Parenting Experts

The problem with listening to the experts is that they come from all ends of the spectrum. Some will say never ever leave a baby alone to cry, others will suggest you go in the nursery just to clean up the vomit, make no eye contact, and get out. (It's cruel, but that line of thinking actually exists.) Sure, I think it is great to find people who support what you intuitively know, and refer to them in times of confusion because you trust them and their opinions on such matters. But that is different than giving away power.

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Ultimately, you know what feels good and what doesn't. Yes, it is true that sometimes we have to feel our feelings to work through them, and doing that can be uncomfortable. Feeling our children's feelings can be even more uncomfortable.

So how do you know the difference between "good" uncomfortable feelings and "bad" uncomfortable feelings? I would say the answer to this is that the "bad" uncomfortable feelings are persistent, nagging, and have a flavor of guilt associated with them, whereas "good" uncomfortable feelings are fleeting, and you will often feel refreshed or renewed after having let yourself feel them all the way through. There also isn't much doubt in your decisions when you have "good" uncomfortable feelings that need to be loved and felt. It all feels very clear, but it still feels, and that is OK.

One example is parents' confusion over sleep and letting babies cry alone. Many think if they pick up or sleep near their baby, then they are somehow spoiling him. On the other hand, they feel terrible listening to their baby's screams. This is a perfect example of listening to our intuition, and how it often goes in the exact opposite direction of what the "experts" tell us (not all experts, of course). My opinion is that it is rather sad that we believe a vulnerable baby can have too much love and care, or be made to feel too secure, or to think a baby's needs go away at night. Understanding child development and listening to our intuition will make examples like these pretty clear.

3. Your Mother-In-Law, or Your Own Mother

This might sound a little harsh, but it needs to be said. I often see mothers posting in mom groups about how to deal with a mother-in-law or their own parent strongly disagreeing about how they parent. They complain about their beliefs and ask for advice on how to get them to "see their point of view."

Honestly, the problem isn't your mother-in-law; the problem is lack of boundaries on your own part. I get that some women deal with really nasty mothers-in-law and mothers. It still comes down to boundaries and confidence. If you know your deepest truth and you are confident in carrying it out as a parent, then there is no need to convince anyone or make them see it your way (unless they ask, of course!). If a friend or anyone in my family gives me a hard time about how I do something, I have no problem setting a boundary, whatever that would need to look like. I think my own mother knows this about me, which is probably why she doesn't give me a hard time, despite the fact she might not agree with everything I do. Seeing her grandchild and having a relationship with him is more important to her than questioning my choices. That said, I

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love having open, respectful conversations about it when she wants to.

I do believe some people just like the drama and want to appear right (I've been there!), but if you just want to be left alone about your decisions, I promise you can make that happen.

You also don't need to give away your power by doing something that you feel uncomfortable or unsure about just because that is how your mom raised you and you don't want to upset her or make her feel guilty. I know some women are very concerned that if we do the opposite of what our mothers did, then we are indirectly telling them that we're not OK with how we were raised. We worry that we could offend our mothers, and we don't want to hurt them. But it is actually less kind to go along to get along and protect your mother from feeling the truth of who you are and what you believe. It prevents potential growth for the both of you. You are not giving her the opportunity to possibly learn from her mistakes, which she wasn't aware she was making at the time.

4. Pediatricians

This is similar to my first point, but I see mothers putting up with pediatrician bullying so much more. I see women dreading going to check-ups because they don't want to feel bullied into giving an injection or medication that they're uncomfortable with, or still have very little knowledge about. It is horrible how much we shame women for questioning substances that they must decide whether or not to put in their children's bodies. I think we can all agree that it is totally legitimate to know what we are consenting to give our children, and its possible side effects. To not ask about these things feels totally irresponsible, but we treat the women who question as the irresponsible ones.

Remember, you are not obligated to keep a care provider who makes you feel horrible. You are also not required to attend check-ups until and unless you feel good about going. These experiences can and should be mostly carefree, and without stress. If you find yourself feeling dread every time you go to the doctor, consider another game plan. We personally do not see doctors unless I feel that I cannot care for my son on my own and I need the help of someone I trust. I can weigh and measure my son myself and I don't need to be told that my clearly happy and healthy child is, well...happy and healthy.

5. Schools

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Somewhere down the line we fell for the belief that once our child turns 5, we should give them away to a system that can supposedly raise and educate them better than we (or the world) can.

We trade their freedom and bodily autonomy for the safe bet that when they come out, they will be “educated”—because they can’t possibly learn outside of the starkness of school walls. We fall for the lie that learning can only be done one way, at one place, for everyone.

Once again, we are told to abandon our power as mothers and hand our children’s education over to strangers, but we are told these strangers are “experts,” so we feel justified in this decision. We tell ourselves our children must be educated, even though there are far more experiences and resources available in the rest of the world than are within the confines and limits of schooling. We tell ourselves that our children must be socialized, even though socializing is all we ever got in trouble for as kids in school. We know very well how much socializing is discouraged in the traditional school environment.

I know my condemnations of schooling will get a lot of backlash. I am not saying what you should or shouldn’t do. I am simply suggesting you know the reality of your choices and question why you have chosen your path. Remember, the path you choose is a path, but not the only path. School is not in any way a given, or required. It is a relatively newly created system designed to create 9-to-5 workers for a capitalistic society. Why have you chosen it? Was it a conscious choice, or simply the next step? Are we considering how much of our time, attention, energy, and lives we give away to the schooling system? We are on their clock all year, and having to constantly make sure we turn in assignments, wake up at a certain time, abide by its rules, etc. These things affect the entire family unit, not just children. Did you choose a life and learning path based on the wants and needs of your family? Or are you molding and shaping your life to fit the requirements of the school you send your child to?

If you think you made the best decision and your children love school, then maybe you don’t need this message. My message to you is still that you have more power than you know, and if you ever feel off, or that your child isn’t thriving in the school environment, then your job isn’t to ignore those feelings or “fix” or medicate your child, or put her in a special class with other children who are acutely aware of a broken system. Your job is to change the environment, not change your child.

Sometimes we resist this notion because it would require us to take a hard look at our deeply

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held beliefs. It would require us to realign our priorities and make big (but often very necessary) changes in our own lives. And it is so much easier to try to change our child than it is to see them as people who reflect what we need to change about ourselves. But that is why children are so great and magical. We just have to look and listen.



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