

Life blesses us with all manner of surprises

But I didn't want to have any expectations of myself or my partner, therefore motherhood was more of an unexpected gift than a plan.

My parenting style is gentle, but at times firm

My favorite quote comes from Kahlil Gibran who wrote a book called The Prophet. He speaks of how:

'Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

'They come through you but not from you,

'And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.'

Life is without a doubt one of the greatest gifts of all

I called all of my closest friends within the first year of being a new mum and apologised for not being more present and helpful when they had tiny babies. There is a sense that once you have had a baby, life is endless bliss, support and love - but it takes quite some time to get into a flow and navigate the huge change that a new being brings to one's life. I realize in hindsight that I had no understanding of unconditional love until I became a mum.

I am the same person I was before I became a mother but perhaps less complicated, less self-absorbed

Simple things make me happy now such as being at home in the evening versus going out, scheduling Saturday mornings around a Gaelic football match versus brunch with friends, lighting the fire and cuddling up to watch a movie. Less is more. My son has been travelling with me since he was four months old and we still love to go on adventures to India, Asia, Europe - just with a slightly different orientation, where safe beaches with hermit crabs and other kids wins over surfing beaches and cocktails.

Kindness is one of the most important attributes I want my son to have

I also want him to have peace of mind; an independent spirit; an ability to trust in his own wisdom and inner guidance and belief in his capacity to create, problem solve and innovate.

'Me' time is essential

In my world that's the bath, craniosacral therapy, a large gin and tonic, or the occasional weekend away to a secret hideaway.

I am a working mum and 70pc of the year is very manageable

But that goes out of kilter in the three-month lead up to Body & Soul over the summer solstice weekend in June. Ironically, my son loves Body & Soul, he has grown up with festival culture.

My advice to a first-time parent? 'To thine own self be true'

Your baby is an extension of your world. They feel what you feel therefore take good care of yourself, be incredibly gentle and patient with yourself, as that will also imbue your little one with love and kindness too.

Body & Soul takes place at Ballinlough Castle, Co Westmeath from June 21-23. See bodyandsoul.ie

Irish Independent