**Kids, Photos and a Labor of Love**

*By Michelle Nahom*

I’m the mama-razzi. I’ll admit it. I’m the mom sitting on the sidelines of the soccer game with her camera. I have the camera at the beach. I’ve even taken my camera skiing.

We have photos all over our home…on the walls, on bookshelves, even the kitchen counter. My kids are used to having their picture taken quite often. In fact, for that matter, their friends are used to having their picture taken by me as well. A few years back, we gave one of my daughter’s friends a memory board with soccer photos I had taken of her, and the daughter told her mother it was her very favorite present.

Tonight I drove the soccer carpool with a car full of preteen girls. I knew I was going to be writing this tonight, so I posed the question…what do you like about having photos? Do they matter to you? The girls were quick to respond that they love having photos of themselves and they love looking back through old photos because they get to remember things that happened and the fun times they had! Then there was the comment that tugged at my own heartstrings…”When I grow up, I am going to take lots of pictures of my kids, just like you do.” Of course my daughter quipped, “you don’t want to be annoying like my mom.” Her friend’s response: “I don’t think your mom is annoying, I like her pictures.”

Although my kids don’t always appreciate their camera toting mom, they always want to check out the pictures after. My daughter, in spite of her comment, is always the first to want to check out her soccer pictures as soon as I download them. Studies show that having photos and albums around the house not only show your children how much you love them, they also build self esteem, and strengthen family ties. So the key is to get them off the computer!

A couple years back, I made “I Love You Because” albums for each of my three children. I gave the albums to them for Christmas and let them open them the night before. My youngest son, who was about 7 at the time, slept with the book that night and refused to let it out of his sight for the longest time. I was blown away by how happy he was to have his very own album, not just OF him, but FOR him. It was a truly heartwarming moment to see how much that present meant to him.

This year I gave each of my kids a small version of our family album. Same reaction. They were all so excited to have their own album. But for me, it was such a good feeling when I found out my oldest son, who is a teenager, and not particularly sentimental at this point in his life, came downstairs the next morning and wanted to discuss things he’d read in the album. He’d read the entire album the night before when he went to bed.



So not only are the photos important, but the stories that go along with them are equally so! Stories are such a big part of our personal history. They’re reminders of good times and special moments. When I ask people why they take pictures, often times they tell me “to remember.” But those photos don’t do us any good sitting on a computer or in a box. We need to remember to enjoy them as well!

Every child should have an album. It doesn’t have to be perfect or even chronological. Pick your favorite memories with your child and make an album out of those pictures and stories. Having photos around says, “You are loved”…it builds self-esteem and a feeling of belonging. As for me, I’m going to keep taking pictures and making albums. For me, it’s a labor of love.

About Michelle Nahom:

Michelle is a mom of 3, avid photographer, and loves to tell the stories that go with her photos in memory albums for her family. She is the owner of Creative Photo Solutions, LLC, a business focused on helping people organize their photos and tell their own stories, and is a member of the APPO (Association of Personal Photo Organizers). Her website is [www.personal-photo-organizer.com/michellenahom](http://www.personal-photo-organizer.com/michellenahom).