

Letter To My Daughter



The night after your 7 month birthday, you and I were alone in the home. That evening, I would breastfeed you for the last time.

I sobbed, Naya. I desperately begged my body to file away and remember the feeling of feeding you, knowing inevitably I would forget how it felt the moment we were finished. And so I was mad. I was mad I had this disease. I was mad that I had to take these medicines. I was angry that the choice of when I was done feeding you was being ripped from me and no longer on our terms. Knowingly, you instantly pulled away from me and looked up at my face, perplexed. So I sat you up on my lap, each one of your tiny legs wrapped around my waist. And I spoke to you. Really spoke, for the first time in your life.

I told you how I had been diagnosed with MS around your 3 month birthday. I told you it was a degenerative disease and we did not know the form it would take across my lifespan. I told you about my fears that I would be a disappointment as your mother, that I would become an empty shell of myself and let you and Bryan down. I told you how I was contemplating whether or not to stop having children, but how that would send me into a tailspin of anxiety about disappointing you in that way. I told you how I was afraid that the landscape of later adulthood was going to look so different for me and I would rob Bryan of the kind of excitement he deserved. I told you that I had contemplated turning down my treatments, and the injections, and the steroids just so I could feed you for one more day. Or a week. Or some months. And I told you I was sorry.

All the time that I talked to you, Naya, you... listened. You turned your head to the side and

studied my eyes, not my lips, while I spoke. You pursed your lips and raised your eyebrows. Your eyes danced and then became calm. Your cheeks would flush when I cried. So in those moments when your eyebrow would rise and fall and your hands patted my shoulders, I paused.

You were okay. You did not need to be breastfed by me to be cared for and loved. You appreciated me and you would forgive me. It was an honor and my greatest accomplishment in life to feed you from my own body. It was my gift to you and yours to me, a bond we would never share with anyone else. And you would go on enjoying and loving the world you were learning about without it.

It wasn't about me.

You were a life force. A small but deliberate hurricane of emotions, thoughts, energy, beauty, ideas, charisma, peacefulness. God. And to give birth to that life force, something would have to give. And so it would be. And it wasn't your fault. It was the giving of myself to not only create you, but to earn you... And in that moment, I truly became a {your} mother.

... but I fed you one more day.

Editor's Note: This story originally appeared on [Daily Mom](#) as part of their Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign.