

DOWN HOME: Stuff I learned from my grandson

June 9, 2012

Our summer got off to a great start. Our grandson, Ezra, spent three nights and parts of four days with Joanna and me. This was his first time to stay overnight apart from his mom and dad in his almost-17-month-old little life.

(By the way, waiting until June 21 to start summer is a little off-kilter. I know all about the sun crossing the Equator, the year's longest day, blah-blah-blah. But summer starts when school is out. Or June 1. Whichever comes first.)


Jo always was the smart parent, and that apparently holds true for grandparenthood. So, we dealt with Ezra's arrival differently ...

- Jo: Figure out what to feed him so he (a) actually will eat and get a balanced diet and (b) won't choke. Make sure he stays on a decent sleep schedule, with the appropriate naps and evening bedtimes. Keep him out of the sun or make sure he's slathered in sunscreen. Put everything that can hurt him or he can break up and out of reach.

- Me: Yippee!

Jo did a great job, just as she did with our daughters—Ezra's mom, Lindsay, and his Auntie M, Molly. And I didn't let him eat any bugs.

During our quantity-and-quality time together, Ezra reminded me of important life lessons:

- **Accept help through the transitions.** Ezra's just been walking for a while, but he's still a bit wobbly on his feet. So, when he first 

encountered thresholds or approached the border of the patio and grass, he instinctively raised a hand and looked for Jo or me. He wanted to cross over himself, but he wanted to hold onto a finger.

Those are just the first of zillions of transitional places, not to mention times, he will encounter. We all need help negotiating change, and asking for help is a mark of wisdom and courage.

- **Take delight in your friends.** No matter what was happening or if he were fussy, when Ezra saw Topanga, he smiled and announced, "Do!" OK, so he hasn't gotten the hang of finishing words, like "dog" and "ball," but he knows a friend when he sees one.

- **Leave your fingerprints.** Normally, I'm a neat freak. But I love looking at Ezra's fingerprints on the French doors between our den and sunroom. They say: "Ezra was here, and we had a blast." We need to leave fingerprints on each other's lives.

- **Follow your passion.** Jo took Ezra for a walk in the park, where he discovered a fondness for ducks. He followed the little waddlers all over the place—through the grass, into the mud, up near the water. Ordinary obstacles are no match for pure-hearted passion.

- **Keep looking up.** Over and over, Ezra pointed upward and jibber-jabbered away. Sometimes, I thought maybe he saw angels, whom grownups are too jaded to glimpse. At the very least, he made a great case for looking out and about, seeing what's new and telling others all about it.