



The other day I came across my neighbor at a coffee shop. I hadn't seen her in a while and I noticed how different she looked. Her eyes were no longer swollen, and for once she had no dark bags under them.

"How are you?" I asked her.

"I am much better, thank you," she replied, while adjusting the baby carrier in which her nine months old son snuggled against her body. He looked like an infant koala, holding onto her sides with his tiny hands and his spooning feet. He was also quite a few pounds heavier than the last time I had seen him, unlike her who looked skinnier.

"What do you mean: much better? What happened before?" I asked her, even though I already knew the answer.

"Well, it was very hard at first. I cried and felt lonely. Why other women don't tell you how difficult it is?" she confided.

"I totally get it," I said. "I bawled for two years, nearly, but it will surely change when he goes to preschool, you'll see."

I walked home thinking about the encounter. I recalled when my girl was an infant and how desperate I felt; the days seemed interminable, the loneliness a voracious throat with teeth from which escape wasn't an option. When I was offered to join a mother support group I jumped from the excitement of reconnecting with adulthood. *Finally!* I told myself, *other women will know what I mean and we'll help each other!*

But it didn't turn out that way as the discussions revolved more around baby diapers and meals scheduling than how our lives have been turned upside down. These encounters left me empty handed and I felt as if I had landed on a planet full of aliens.

One has to wonder why women don't reach out more fully and in sharing truths that are so similar. We all go through the same processes and it would benefit us tremendously if we could confide in one another; we would stop doubting ourselves and not feel so alone, and communities would spring up organically. It took me years to identify the ones who later became my best friends; in the meantime I could have easily drown in my depression and the neurosis that arise naturally from spending so much time alone.

Is this phenomenon cultural? Is it economical? Dr. Rosemary Ruether suggests, in her book [Gai](#)

[a and God](#), that the way goods are produced has a lot to do with the splitting of communities and the separation between people. As the means of productions are concentrated in geographical areas away from home, people are forced to physically leave their own turfs and their extended families. Furthermore, they are taught to portray a side that doesn't reflect what they experience at any given moment, which robs them (us) of the chance to form meaningful relationships and feel less isolated in a world where it's harder to find the help we need, especially as parents raising kids.

When crying over not knowing what had happened to me and how I was going to survive those days of extreme isolation, I called my aunt in Italy. Her reply was: "Remember, it is impossible for a human being to be with an infant twenty four hours a day and stay happy and sane all the time. In the old days there were cousins, mothers, grandparents and a whole tribe raising the child with you. Now we are alone and need to reach out for help, even if it means that of people you don't know like babysitters." Her words soothed me, and reminded me of the importance to be authentic, even if it means revealing to perfect strangers that NOT all is perfect all the time. Who knows? May be *that* person is meant to become our best friend, but we will never know unless we trust in each other.