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Binky--Another Name for Pacifier

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When my son married four years ago, I was given mother-of-the groom advice from my friends: Wear a beige dress and keep your mouth shut. That advice now holds for my role as a grandmother, minus the beige dress part. On a recent trip to Arizona to visit my grandsons, I had a chance to follow that advice.

The world of my grandchildren, Ethan and Adam, revolves around sleep and food. Lack of either can cause a quick meltdown. Naps for these boys usually take place in the car of all places, and food? Well, what constitutes real food deep-fried chicken nuggets, fruit loops, French fries?

Transporting and containing the boys is a big issue. There's the challenge of strollers, high chairs and car seats with belts, straps, and levers. Too tight, Ethan says, straining forward against the car seat straps after I hook him in. Wise man at age two, he points to the button at the bottom of the seat, push it, push it, he says. I conked his head on the car ceiling every single time I put him in it, never mastering the swing-the-legs-in-first technique.

I started the week with a trek all over Tucson to kid's doctor appointments, including a ten-mile drive out of the way to a wrong location, all the while spelling out D-o-c-t-o-r to Ethan's grandfather who was driving. Didn't want to alarm the boy, but it didn't work; one look at the stethoscope in the second doctor's office and he was over the edge. We followed the doctor appointment with a visit to the zoo. Ethan's binky fell into the anteater pit and Adam's popped out of his mouth into the alligator pool. Bye-Bye

Binky, I say. After the zoo came lunch. With the 20-pounder hanging from my shoulder and the 35-pounder wrapped around my ankles, dragging blankies and toys, I staggered into a restaurant where a woman looked at me and said, "Do you have the time?" *I would, lady, if I could find my wrist and the watch that's on it* Ethan what do you want for lunch? "I want lunch" he says. "Want quesadillas?" "I want lunch." Then we discover we've left THE BAG at home. My son informs me that we should never leave home without THE BAG, which contains diapers, toys, spare clothes, wipes, snacks, and at least five extra binkies. So we have a two-year old playing with straws and ice cubes, and a cranky 1-year old opening all the sugar packets.

At home, Ethan's favorite toy is his dad's battery-operated drill. He drills his binky and then attacks the coffee table before I can provide him with a piece of wood.

Ethan's workin' it, he says to me as he drills away. He digs up tomato plants in his grandfather's garden, drowns newly planted peas, squirts his brother in the face, and waters down his clothes and shoes. Open to the wonder of the world, he and his brother examine every ladybug and dragonfly, run and jump to Frog Town music. I watch the Shrek movie with them three times, but due to short attention spans, I never see the end. Does Shrek ever marry Princess Fiona?

As I prepare to come home, part of me wishes to stay. It's springtime in the desert, my favorite time. But it's no longer my world, just a change of pace. When my plane lands and I hear the familiar words of the flight attendant, "Welcome to Portland, Oregon," I know I'm home. It's the people of the small towns here on the coast, the friends and family, the familiar streets and shops, rolling sea, slower pace and wide-open green spaces I'm drawn to.

In my heart I hold what's dear to me from my trip — the glowing orange sunset over the Tucson mountains, the savory taste of a tortilla just made at Alejandro's Tortilla & Bakery served warm with real refried beans. Most of all I carry the memory of those grandchildren, laughing, running, squealing with delight at the world, noticing every little bug and leaf and fallen binky. I'm richer, filled with both memories and the comfort of coming home. It's good to change one's surroundings once in awhile. And thankfully I still have an extra binky in my purse, just in case I need it.