

Find a Lifetime of Memories in Your Children's Clothing

Kidz Central
Station

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By Renee Bock, Explore+Discover

My sister and I have four boys between us and I've passed down lots of my favorite clothes to her son. Every fall, just as school begins, we ritually clean out the drawers, have a reckoning with how much they've grown and make way for the new. It's a process where we say goodbye to trusted blue jeans and perfectly cozy socks that are way too small. My oldest is sixteen and her youngest is ten. There's a lot of living in all those boy years, and a lot of sharing. Bathing suits, socks, boots, even underwear.

Every now and then while visiting my sister I'll pleasantly reconnect with some of my kids' well-loved clothing—my son's shirt from two summers ago, the one he wore on the day we left him at sleep away camp for the first time; or a certain raincoat, recalling a sudden cloudburst in the backyard. My sister was pregnant then with a baby girl, and I can recall her running in the grass with her belly and four boys behind. I can remember how big that coat was when my son first wore it. These clothes are old friends. They unearth memories you didn't know you had, a nostalgia based on the ordinary things we almost leave behind.



But these clothes are more. They're really a personal map comprised of shirts, shoes, coats, pants, and even colors and smells that helps remind us of where we've been with our children—physically and emotionally. Read them correctly and they can even give us a hint of where we're heading.

Think about it. When our babies are born we often receive clothing presents that catapult our children into the future. Overalls for a one-year-old, pajamas for an eight-month-old, even slippers for a new walker. Seasons fly by. Someone's purchased a winter coat for the following year. The baby isn't yet 10 pounds and already our relatives have them walking away. As a young mother, I organized their baby drawers with an eye to the future. Still nursing, my imagination flew to his toddler years, seeing him in 2T pants from my Aunt Clara. Who would this person be?

Things past, things future. The imagination and memories can saturate a mother. With four boys—grandma calls them "the four steps"—there's an endless parade of laundry and memories wrapped up in what we wore.

Scientists muse about the connection between smell and memories of the past. We recently opened a box of baby clothes that was somehow tucked in the back of a closet for more than fifteen years. The patterns were so familiar—a sleep sack with bees in the hive, an intricate pattern of trains and trucks, a sailor suit meant for a formal portrait at six months. The smells of babyhood and everything good about the world. Four boys who shared their days, their disappointments, their dreams, now moving in larger concentric circles on their own. My oldest, the one who stands at 6'3, wore those tiny booties, his hand fit into such small mittens. It defies logic and yet is more real than anything I've ever known. You can't argue with a size 15 basketball sneaker or evidence of a onesie so small and yet so familiar you'd swear you just tucked it away last week.

Things past and things future, the artifacts of childhood come together in a web of ordinary and extraordinary memories that make motherhood what it is.

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Founded by a NYC mom of two young children, Kidz Central Station uses technology to solve the problem so many busy parents face—how to find, book, and manage their children's classes, camps, local family events, and birthday parties. Kidz Central Station offers more than 3,000 classes, camps, and birthday party options representing hundreds of NYC's top activity providers. With a sophisticated search engine and class reviews, it is easy for parents to find the best classes for their children, sign up for a trial class, and directly enroll.

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