

Being a full-time Mr. Mom-stay-at-home-where-sanity-is-a-figment-of-the-imagination sort of a guy with two small kids (8months, 2.5years old), I could certainly dig up a story or two. Here's one:

't Was a fine day in San Francisco as I was navigating the (yes folks!) minivan containing my then 3 month old son, my 2 year old daughter, and my 69 year old mother from The Netherlands who doesn't spikka da English too well through the City towards Union Square. I know, I know. It seemed like a good idea at the time, plus my mother wanted desperately to purchase some Osh-Kosh overalls for the grandkids back home. This had been an on-going quest during her stay, and I was frankly ready to get it over with. Circling ever closer to the target area, I tried to explain the parking situation, and how we would under no circumstance find street parking, and even if we did, the van would be stolen before we had unloaded the children. (My mom is from Amsterdam where they only steal bicycles).

In slightly under a week I found a parking place in one of those garages where they make you take out a second mortgage to stay two hours. We unloaded two kids, a double stroller and the necessary 678 Pounds worth of kid maintenance that must come with us at all times; and off we were to a day of rollicking San Francisco fun, with my mother chattering away about the Osh-Kosh overalls she wanted to buy at all cost. "Oh, look! A MacDonalds! Do they sell Osh-Kosh overalls? Oh look! A Starbucks! Do they...? You get the picture.

Meanwhile, my daughter, who is feeling "empowered" as of recently and is very enamored with this concept, was going on her own sight-seeing tour, usually aiming roughly 180° away from us, and involving happy conversations with bearded, intoxicated and unwashed people slumping in doorways. Traffic was perky; and cheerful drivers honked their horns to make us feel welcome. I'm performing my "herding cats" act courtesy of my family full of wanderlust.

Then The Boy rears his head in what can only be described as a bellow that clearly conveys the message "I must be fed now, dammit, now; lest I be fit to pose for next years' Unicef calendar - so get with the program will ya, pal! Quietly I smiled to my well-prepared self. I whipped out the thermos with warm water, the

cup that would soon hold it and the bottle, and screwed on the - where is the nipple? I brought a nipple, didn't I? Surely I did. The nipple was not in the diaper bag. Nor in the stroller. Not in the van (let's walk back five blocks through traffic to the van). It was at home in Pleasanton, 35 miles away.

So here I am, thinking: let's go buy a nipple in a nearby store. A drug store. A supermarket. A see-if-I-care-what-kind-of-store. How difficult can it be? Well, this was San Francisco, and although I could've probably bought tie-die shirts, leather chaps, chocolate Golden Gate bridges, and Jolly Street Car shaped marshmallows within a 2 mile radius, no baby stuff appeared on the horizon. It's funny how a situation like this will alter your perspective on a day on the town. "Oh look! A Macy's! Do they sell Osh-K-...?"

"Shaddap mom! Why don't you grab my kid that's trying to cross Van Ness while drinking juice from a little box! Think "nipples!"". In what seemed like several eternities, and encouraged by my son going ("waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"), we arrived on a street that had something resembling normal stores. I calmly looked around. Across the street was the bustle of hurried cubicle-dwellers looking for a pastrami-on-rye. Below the deli was a large store with many fluorescent lights, and a neon Ibuprofen sign. Thank you, Lord! A drug store, exploited by a multitude of oriental people wearing white coats, stocked to the gills with ground rhino horn, Ginseng-on-a-stick, and... baby implements. A quick glance across several racks confirmed this: bottles, bottle warmers, formula... diapers, safety pins, mashed baby carrots, ginseng root. Better look at that rack again. Could they be under the dust? They could be; they were. Triumphant I ripped the nipples off the display rack and rushed to the Express lane, of which there were none. An elderly gentleman, probably the store specialist on Ground Rhino Viagra, smiled and said: "@#\$\$%^...??", which undoubtedly was Mandarin for "Whaddaya want?". 30 minutes, a discussion in Outer East Mongolian, and a price-check later I escaped, clutching my tiny rubber prize. Arriving on the sidewalk amidst an orgy of chatter ("Oh, look! A JC Penneys! Do they sell Osh-Kosh overalls? Oh look! A Wendy's! Do they...? - "waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! - Oh look! A Hallmark Store! Do they...? I acted fast. I yanked my daughter from the path of an oncoming Humvee, pointed my mother toward Osh-Kosh Central, and went to work. Fate had somehow managed to rescue me from certain cardiac arrest; my son

was about to eat, and I was sporting the onset of my current “graying-at-the-temples-in-a-distinctive-sort-of-way” look. A sideways glance confirmed my minivan behind a tow-truck.