

"a man can't know
what it's like to be a
mother."

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Nine months of morning sickness, pestilent cravings, and constant discomfort is not so much a price women pay to attain motherhood, but rather a well-earned ticket; a rite of passage that must be endured and survived with integrity intact in order to earn their place in the world. It is this and the agonizing climax of labor that indicates not only the dexterity and strength required to be a mother, but also the withstanding theory that men can never know what it means, or what it's like to hold this affectionately coveted status. To go on a whole tangent that men are beer-crazed, emotional vacuums of hypersexuality with minds dictated by the desires of their genitalia would be the most obvious option to resort to.

But I have taken into consideration this generalization and have in fact proven it wrong: men may love beer, men may love sex, men may not want to always hear about how tiring our days were, but who says women can't be the same way? I've surely met my share of irritating females, and this personal experience alone completely negates this paradoxically sexist stereotype. With that in mind and out of the way, the most simple, direct, and perhaps straightforward reason men can never understand the experience of motherhood is quite plainly their lack of ovaries, uteruses, and of course, vaginas. Though the physical horror of labor is only the scratched surface on the bureau of motherhood, it is the most practical. Women cannot comprehend a blow to the penis; therefore men could not possibly understand the anguish of childbirth. Since before the invention of maternity clothing lines, men have always been the bystanders, merely listeners to bouts of vomit, moans of malaise and complaints of hunger.

But the pain of pregnancy and birth, despite of the terrifying tales of our female ancestors, is not the defining facet of the journey into motherhood. It is the companionship, the bonding with a being of like flesh and blood, the literal life-or-death connection with the child as it is nurtured inside. While husbands are sound asleep within their beds, snoring their exhaustion away, pregnant women are wide awake, taking lashings from a fetus six times smaller than themselves. But as previously stated, the pain is not the foundation of this relationship. As women lay alert at all hours of the night, that baby literally beats the bond into them night by night, gradually strengthening that bond that, at the time of birth, becomes an unbreakable force between mother in child through the rollercoaster of life to come.

Picturing a man with that same tenderness, that same eye and instinct for compassion just doesn't seem to fit the image of the average or decent husband. Fathers don't share in the loyalties established during pregnancy, and therefore couldn't possibly understand the technicalities of a mother's benevolence. Fathers are, after all, the physical protectors, the providers, ensuring that the mother and their baby can not only get by but flourish in the world, whether ancient or modern. Fatherhood and motherhood, though built upon the same basic concept of deep-rooted affection, are two entirely different statuses and apply in both directions. A mother could never imagine the trials of fatherhood, while a father could never hope to understand the meaning of motherhood.