

# I don't care if my postpartum body has rolls

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March 24, 2015

Tonight, for our first date night since our fourth baby was born, my sister snapped a picture of my husband and me all dressed up — and I looked horrendous in it.

In my head, I was already posting the picture to Instagram, proudly showing off a "put together mother of four" image, but when I saw the screen, I couldn't delete the picture fast enough.

Because man, oh man, let's just say that the baby weight is definitely not falling off this time around. But strangely enough, although I am the heaviest I have ever been in my life, I am also the happiest.

After each baby I had, I spent the entire 12 to 15 months after the birth and before I would get knocked up again agonizing over losing weight. I'm talking beating myself up each and every time I caught a glimpse of my body, pushing my husband away constantly and filling my head with constant admonitions of, *You're so fat, you're disgusting.*

But despite my self-loathing and intense exercise, strangely enough, I never was able to lose the baby weight until I was done breastfeeding. Whether that was coincidence because I finally had more time on my hands or related to the hormonal changes, I really don't know, but the experience of going through the intense postpartum body acceptance ritual three times before this one has finally taught me the lesson that it's just not worth it to stress out over gaining a few pounds.

Loving my baby and loving myself is just far, far more important.

Now, don't get me wrong. Body acceptance also means treating yourself well. I have been eating healthier to feel good and I genuinely enjoy exercising. I work out every single day because it helps keep my sanity intact and gives me some sort of semblance of a break away from the children. (Although, because I work out at home, they generally end up gluing themselves to my side anyways.) But I work out to feel good in my own skin, not to change the skin that motherhood has given me.

Look, I'm realistic. I know that having kids alone is not an excuse for gaining weight. I mean, Heidi Klum had four kids too, right? But we're all built with different genes, abilities and bodies and mine just happens to be the kind that gains a lot of weight when I'm pregnant. And also loves chocolate.

I have no doubt in my mind that in a few years, when I'm finally done breastfeeding and childbearing and baby wearing, that I will have more time to focus on getting my "body back." I will probably be able to achieve that fit and toned look that I've often longed for and more likely

than not, I will be able to go on all the long, leisurely runs that my heart will desire.

But that intense amount of exercise and mental energy is just not realistic for me right now at this particular time in my life.

That doesn't mean it's not right for someone else or that all moms should be OK with carrying a little extra weight around post Baby, but that does mean it's exactly what's working for me right now. I've tried to care as much as I used to, but I just can't muster up the same amount of self-loathing and hatred at this point in my life. Call me crazy, but I've lived long enough to know that there are much bigger things to worry about in the world than whether or not I am a few pounds too heavy.

Being healthy is one thing. But so is being happy.

And I'm just trying to find a nice little medium that will allow me to eat a freaking brownie once in a while as I enjoy snuggling up with my baby. Is that really too much to ask for?