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Smiley Kylie

By Carolyn Tamler, March 5, 2010

Her official name is Kylie Jane, but anyone who meets her immediately dubs her “Smiley Kylie.” She is my granddaughter, the first grandchild among my three daughters. Her mother, my oldest daughter, Marilyn, gave birth to Kylie at a birthing center in Bellevue in October 2008. Jack, her father, provided the first hands that touched her and helped her entrance into the world.

Now, I know that every grandmother thinks her grandchild is special, and of course, they all are. What really makes me believe that Kylie is truly a gift to the world is that she was born with DNA for being happy and making others happy. She has a particular sense of humor that doesn't appear to come from either of her parents. And, what is most noticeable is that at a very young age Kylie got turned on by getting other people turned on....to smiles and laughter.

Kylie is blessed with having two conscientious parents who are doing all they can to make her world as peaceful and supportive as possible. Marilyn works at her job full time, but her employer lets her telecommute two days a week. On Mondays, Kylie is left at the home of her other doting grandparents; on Tuesdays, I spend the day with Marilyn and Kylie, and I am on nanny duty whenever Marilyn is involved with work or I simply wants to play with Kylie; on Wednesdays, Marilyn is home with Kylie and somehow manages to do an excellent job of working and being a mom; Thursdays and Fridays, Auntie Barbara, who is my middle daughter, comes to the house while Marilyn is at work. Most other times when a baby sitter is needed, youngest sister, Catherine, or a family friend is glad to have Kylie time.

Marilyn and Jack put a lot of energy into helping Kylie understand naptimes and sleep times when she was very little. With rare exceptions, she is totally cooperative every time someone says, “It's time to nap” or “It's time to go to sleep.” Marilyn admits that

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Kylie has a much better diet than her parents: only organic foods with lots of fruits and vegetables. And while Marilyn and Jack eat eggs from their local supermarket, Kylie must have only organic eggs from Whidbey Island. Every week, I bring her a supply.

I'm not sure when we first noticed a smile, but it seemed to have happened very early in Kylie's life, and it wasn't just that she smiled, but that she made eye contact with the smile.

By the time she was sitting up, she had created many silly games including a game with her mother where she would take the binky out of her mouth and put it in her mother's mouth and then laugh. Then, she'd take it from her mommy and stick it back in her mouth and giggle some more.

It became quickly apparent that Kylie loves to laugh and play interactive games that get other people laughing.

She has even made connections with the two cats in the house. Durango, a small black cat with white markings, became her buddy when she was just learning to sit up. They have—I don't know what else to call it—a love relationship where he bumps against her purring, she bangs him and squeals, and he purrs more. Oscar, an orange tabby, generally avoids her little pats and baby squawks and moves away from her if he is not in a tolerant mood. However, he has become our shadow companion whenever I take Kylie for a walk in the neighborhood. Whenever Kylie touches one of the cats, I'm helping her understand the word and the meaning of "Gentle."

Since Kylie has never been in a daycare, I was a little concerned when Marilyn suggested we take Kylie to the massive play area at the Bellevue Square shopping center a little while ago. I watched, I confess, with a bit of horror, as the 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds shoved and pushed their way around, having little concern as the toddlers went flying. Kylie simply picked herself up each time she was knocked down, laughed and ran off to her next adventure. I did feel a need to step in and snatch her up when I noticed her lying down next to a couple of 4-year-olds who were wrestling and tumbling.

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I realized she just wanted to be part of the action, but I was concerned that they would just roll over her.

It's when I'm alone with Kylie that her personality really resonates with me. My three daughters, who are now 25, 27 and 29, were adopted, so I guess I shouldn't be surprised that none of my daughters inherited my extroverted personality. But then along came Kylie, and my extroverted personality is having a blast with her extroverted personality. We both get our batteries charged from receiving positive energy from another human being. I have to be honest: I don't think Kylie needs much input from me because she knows intuitively how to draw positive energy from everyone she meets.

Recently, I spent a day by myself with Kylie. When she wasn't eating or having her nap, she wanted to play with me. She created special games like pushing toys into me and bursting into laughter, or picking up a pillow on the couch and throwing it on the floor and throwing herself on top of it...and laughing. She would run from room to room, giggling and daring me to chase her. She loves taking walks with me now, and I responded quickly when she grabbed her hat and banged on the front door for us to go out. When my husband, Rich, arrived after work, she encouraged him to sit down with her in an oversized beanbag chair. Then she jumped up and ran over to a bookshelf full of children's books, grabbed one and ran back to show him. This game was repeated several times and she seemed intent on making sure he was enjoying the game as much as she was.

So, I watch this little life full of joy and positive energy, and, yes, power, and I wonder how she will fare in the world as a joyful, powerful woman? I feel that Kylie is a gift, not only to her family, but to the world. I do muse as I see all of the problems that her generation will face. Will she be able to continue to appreciate this gift she was born with? Will others continue to support and nurture this spirit? Will her joyful nature continue to shine as she experiences the negativity and adversity we all bump into as we go through life? I know I'm a doting grandparent, but I believe Kylie has a spirit that will bring positive change to the world.