

## A sticky project for crafty mom

By Esther Baird

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Last Tuesday I was 'Craft Mom' at my daughter's preschool class.

The teacher reminded me the Thursday before. "So, are you still planning on doing a craft with the children next week?"

A craft? Me? Was that what that list outside my daughter's door had meant?

"Sure!" I replied with confidence.

"Good." The teacher nodded. "Just tell me what you'd like to do and we'll be ready."

"What I'd like to do?" I laughed. "Oh, it'd probably be best if you told me what you had in mind."

She gave me a big encouraging smile, much like she probably does a hundred times a day. "Well, it's really up to you to suggest the craft. You know, anything simple and fast."

"Um, hmm. OK. So for example you mean . . . ?" I tried to sound casual so as not to indicate my growing alarm.

I think she was on to me but she played along. "Well Valentine's Day is next week. They could make something with hearts and doilies, or perhaps a Valentine's wreath out of a paper plate."

I flashed a smile while wondering what wreaths and paper plates had to do with each other. "Great. It sounds great. I'll be here next week ready to go!"

Thankfully, at Christmas my mother-in-law gave me a subscription to a family magazine full of crafty ideas. I thumbed through a few issues studying the various concoctions of construction paper, glue, googly eyes and just "few minutes of prep time." Finally I landed on a nicely themed Valentine's Day bag made out of the remarkably versatile paper plate. All I had to do was staple two folded plates together, round out the edges with scissors, and I'd have heart shaped bags that the children could decorate.

Determined to make up for my lack of crafty vision with extreme organization, I bought red heart doilies that would center perfectly on the plate-bags. Then I cut heaps of little hearts out of red, pink and white construction paper. I found heart-shaped, felt stickers both in plain red and glittered red. I cut red ribbons — one for each plate-bag. I bought pink tissue paper and cut it into diamond shapes. Then I sorted all of these bits and pieces into individual Ziploc Baggies. Finally, of course, I stapled together plates and rounded edges until our couch was covered in the puffy, paper creations.

Tuesday arrived.

As the toddlers walked into the room, I tried to look chipper and bright.

"Hello!" I sang. "Who's ready to make a fun bag for Valentine's Day?"

They all sat down at the little table and stared.

I handed everyone their pre-stapled plate-bag and explained: "You can each glue one heart doily onto the middle of your bag. Then you can decorate it with anything from these little piles." I pointed to the separate stacks of stickers, hearts, tissue cutouts and ribbons.

The teacher gave everyone a glue stick and suddenly little pieces of stuff started flying. Tissue paper fluttered about getting stuck to stickers. Doilies got glitter hearts placed on them. And the glue! Oh, the glue.

Some of my daughter's enthusiastic classmates covered their entire plate-bags in glue as if to create great, heart-shaped, fly traps. No one, it seemed, cared about applying the red heart doily in the center.

The teacher and I threaded ribbons through the hole punches as fast as we could because while it was clear that speed was of essence, attention span was not. Ten minutes later — 10 minutes to my possible four hours of prep — the finished, a word I use loosely, products were all labeled with their creator's names and put up on a shelf.

The teacher then had the children thank me for bringing in such a "fun craft!" My brain was still back on gluing the big, red, heart doily into the middle. Was my morning as "Craft Mom" over? All the punching and stapling, all the cutting and folding — it was done? All done?

"Mommy?" I felt a tug on my hand and looked down to see my daughter. "Sit next to me for lunch, Mommy."

I folded myself into the toddler-sized chair and sat while absently peeling a diamond shaped piece of pink tissue paper off the table where it had been glued.

My daughter's teacher saw my dazed look and gave me another encouraging — or slightly mischievous? — smile. "Like I said, simple and fast, simple and fast."

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