

Does Nanny know best?

Whether it's a wrench or a relief, child minders always know they can hand their little darlings back at the end of the day. But what happens when a nanny becomes a mummy? Is the advice she gave her employer forgotten as quickly as the first mashed banana hits the floor – or is motherhood just a walk in the park? Gillian Rowe went to find out

Brooke Gentry-Potter, 26, was a full-time nanny and now runs her own agency, Kent Nannies. She lives in Kent and has a daughter, Alexia, two.

It was a shock when I had Alexia. Everyone said it was going to be a breeze because of what I did, but I thought, "I've never had a baby before and they didn't teach us how to breastfeed at college!"

I used to be much more relaxed and tolerant with the children I looked after than I am with my own child. I think it's because I was being paid to do a job. With your own child you definitely do lose it at times. When you're working you don't seem to get as fraught, and you can see a light at the end of the tunnel. The parents are coming home at the end of the day and then you can relax. But when you are a mother, it's 24 hours a day.

At college they teach you to do everything by the book, but you soon learn on the job. For instance, we were taught never to bribe a child, but I soon started doing that with the children I looked after and I couldn't get through life sometimes if I didn't do it with my own daughter.

Now I've had my own baby, I'm much more sympathetic to mums. Before I had Alexia, I used to feel I was closer to the children I worked with than their mothers were. Sometimes I was with them for 12 hours a day – and they can cry so much when you go home.

I remember witnessing a toddler's first steps and not telling the mother, so that when she saw her daughter walking at the weekend,



Brooke Gentry-Potter with two-year-old Alexia, says, "Now I've had my own baby, I'm much more sympathetic to mums"

