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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## The Parent Trap

Emily Beers convinces her mother to try CrossFit and experiences the trials and rewards of raising a new athlete.

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By Emily Beers

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Kim Bellavance

### Conception

I'll never forget the moment her CrossFit life was conceived.

My mother phoned me up, hesitated a moment, and then blurted, "Em ... I think ... I think I'm ready to try CrossFit."

I had been trying to get my mother to try CrossFit for months, but to no avail. At one point, I was so desperate I tried more artificial ways to get the ball moving—this involved Tabata squatting in her living room and doing sit-ups with her while watching a movie, our feet tucked under the couch to hold them down.

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But this wasn't satisfying to me. I needed her at my gym, attempting pull-ups and box jumps with the other 57-year-old women.

Needless to say, when she finally popped the question, my heart was filled with warmth as feelings of happiness and relief shot through my body. Following this was the morning sickness and nausea, as I feared the journey ahead.

"Do I really want her at my place of work? Will she even enjoy it? Am I capable of raising my mother into a CrossFitter?"

I knew I was in for one challenging adventure.

### The Birth

Her birth induced massive labor pains.

"When is the gym empty? I don't want to come in when anyone else is there," she said to me firmly.

"Our quiet time is between 9 and 11 a.m., generally," I replied.

"So nobody will be there at 9 a.m.?" she persisted.

"Well, not necessarily nobody, but it'll be almost empty," I reassured.

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**"No bloody way."**  
—Angela Beers

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"Who's going to be there then?" she asked, continuously insisting she needed an empty gym.

"Mom, we don't rent out our 10,000-square-foot facility to someone just because they're scared to work out with others," I said.

I started to wonder if she'd ever come in.

After enduring painful conversations like this for what seemed like weeks, my mother finally decided it was time.

And then one Monday morning in early January, with a patch of freshly fallen snow covering the ground, she tentatively walked through the doors of CrossFit Vancouver. She looked as if she was seeing the world for the very first time.

### Toilet Training

"Em, hold me," she insists, clinging onto the GHD machine for dear life.

"Mom, you're not going to fall. The GHD machine isn't going to flip. Let go and lower your body. Your core is strong—you'll be fine. Only lower as far as you're comfortable," I say.

"No bloody way," she screams, insisting that I guide her down with both hands firmly on her back, supporting her entire body weight in my arms.

Time for box jumps.

She stands staring at the box, afraid. Paralyzed.

She swings her arms and chickens out. And again. Then she turns her back on the box and walks away.

"I'm going to go for a walk around the gym to gather myself," she says.



**Angela Beers trying to ignore the 20-inch box looming on her left.**

Kim Bellavance



Emily Beers

***Slowly but surely, Angela Beers got to know the CrossFit movements, and then of course she was hooked.***

She's ready. I hold her hand as she finally makes the 18 inch-leap. She lands with a thud.

Little by little, she gains the confidence she needs to jump onto the box alone. Her early box jumps have no grace to them. The amount of effort she puts into each jump makes it look like a max attempt, and she lands so hard on her heels she sends echoes across the gym.

But the look of satisfaction on her face makes me so proud I don't bother telling her to try to land softly, that the neighbors don't need to know she's doing Kelly this morning.

### **The Endless-Questions Phase**

After a few months of one-on-one personal training, my mother's interest in CrossFit starts to grow, and the millions of questions begin.

It really forces me to learn patience because, while her questions seem obvious to me, I forget sometimes that she is still a baby when it comes to this stuff. Sometimes

she reminds me of my little 4-year-old cousin, who, while at an NBA basketball game, once asked, "Emily, whose ball are they playing with?"

My mother's questions are as such:

"Why are those thrusty things we do so hard?"

"What are the ones called where you go like this?" she asks, her question accompanied by a continuous shoulder-press motion but done with speed in a way that looks more like cheerleading—"Go, Tigers!"—than any recognizable CrossFit movement.

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**"Did you see I did 15 burpees unbroken today?"**

**—Angela Beers**

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"What do you think I'm sore from?" is another common question she asks.

"Probably from the sumo deadlift high pulls," I reply, after she does Sasquatch for the first time.

"Oh no. Those were the easy part. I think I snatched a couple of those high pulls right over my head," she replies, satisfied.

"No mom, you didn't," I sigh.

### **Gaining Confidence**

My mother's CrossFit idol is two-time Games athlete Alicia Connors. She can relate to Connors.

"Em, if I were in my prime, I think I'd be like Alicia Connors," she says one day. "I'm the same kind of athlete."

"Oh yeah, mom, how is that?" I inquire.

She changes the subject.

"Did you see I did 15 burpees unbroken today?" she boasts. "And I'm down to a thin band on the pull-ups?"

"And your double-unders looked pretty good too, mom," I say. "You were stringing them together this morning."

"Oh those I mastered a while back," she replies.



Kim Bellavance

*“No rep, mom!”*

### Rebelling

“That rep doesn’t count,” I say.

“Why not?” she asks, annoyed.

“Because you didn’t get full depth on that squat,” I reply.

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**“They’re called  
Turkish get-ups, not  
Turkish get-downs.”**

**—Angela Beers**

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“But it’s way harder when I squat deeper,” she says.

“That’s kind of the point, mom,” I sigh.

She ignores my coaching and moves on to the Turkish get-ups.

“You have to go back down for the rep to count,” I say.

“You never told me that. Going up is good enough for me,” she says. “They’re called Turkish get-ups, not Turkish get-downs.”

### Gaining Independence

It has been a year since she first walked through the doors, intimidation dominating her face.

She insisted on doing one-on-one personal training for the first five months because she was too scared of group classes. When she had enough confidence, she began group classes but would only show up to my quiet 8 a.m. class on Tuesdays.

But when she saw how much more fun and bustling the 7 a.m. class looked, pretty soon she found herself socializing like a normal person as she sweated it out with the 7 a.m. crew.



Kim Bellavance

**Emily's mom may be an independent CrossFit athlete now, but she still needs her daughter to help her perfect the clean.**

Despite her big gains, after 12 months she still refused to show up to any class that I didn't coach. Until one morning.

It's Friday. I don't coach the early-morning classes on Fridays, and I give my mom a ring at 6:30 a.m., knowing she will be up and about.

"Mom's not home," says my dad.

"What do you mean? It's 6:30 a.m. Where is she?" I ask.

"She's at CrossFit," he replies.

"What?" I yell. "Does she know I'm not there this morning?"

I start to panic, wondering if she'll be OK on her own. I feel compelled to drive down there and make sure she's all right. I even get into my car.

And then I stop myself.

This is exactly what I have been trying to do in the last year: help her grow into a confident, independent CrossFit athlete. However, now that she's fully capable on her own, I feel almost abandoned, like a lost empty-nester.

At 8:10 a.m., my phone rings. It's my mom.

I don't even have time to say hello before she starts speaking excitedly.

"I just did the 12 Days of Christmas workout, Em. My time was 35 minutes. Everything was good, except those cleans slowed me down. I need some more help on them."

I smile to myself. I might be a CrossFit empty-nester, but moments like this remind me that my mother still needs me.



### About the Author

Emily Beers is a *CrossFit Journal* staff writer and editor who finished a master's degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts **WOD HOG**, a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness. She ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010 and served as the Canada West Regional Media Director while recovering from surgery. Beers also competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver's team. She finished third at the Canada West Regional in 2012.