



## INSIGHTS

## Hands

Neha S. Joshi<sup>1</sup>*Pediatric Research* (2021) 89:1571; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-020-01128-4>

## Hands

That pick you up, sweet girl, with your outstretched arms, at dawn.  
That wrap around you too, little man, holding you both close as the sun awakens too.  
That change diapers and clothes.  
That fix breakfasts and broken LEGO creations.  
That tie together the familiar yellow laces of bright blue scrubs.  
That grip the steering wheel past green mountains and along windy roads.  
That gel hands for the first time today.  
That gel and don and gel and doff and gel.  
That gel 52 times in a busy hour, I counted.  
That hold your newborn for the first time before even you do.  
That rub your babe's back, waiting for that first cry.  
That push air into her lungs when your babe forgets to.  
That bring your little one back to your arms, to your embrace, to your new life.  
That gel.  
That don and gel and doff and gel.  
That sting and burn with every gel, raw and red.  
That drive home.  
That meticulously decontaminate at home, soapy suds several times over the rawness.  
That pull those two babies close.  
That feed and bathe and help into pajamas.  
That brush wet hair, rock and sway, hold until softly asleep.  
That sneak onto Epic to check on those newborn babes.  
That wash dishes, wincing at the hot water and soap.  
That hold husband's hands, roughened from his own medicine ways, and let the guilt out.

Forgive me sweet girl and little man, for not sheltering in with you in this sheltered in place world.

Forgive me, new mama, for not rubbing your shoulder while telling you what a great job you did.

Forgive me, new dad, for not letting you squish next to me, reveling in parental love.

Forgive me, new parents, for hiding behind the same PPE that makes me feel safe.

Forgive me, hands, for scrubbing you raw as if you're the ones to have betrayed me.

Did I do it all right, and right every time?

Did I bring it home?

Did I remember the humanity and privilege of practicing medicine, while physically distancing myself?

Did I convey joy and gratitude?

Did I hide my fear?

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