

Well, we survived our first year as parents I would say relatively unscathed. Here we are at the holidays and this year we have more energy to enjoy them! Tyler is at an age where he can enjoy lights and decorations, so it has been fun sharing that with him.

### ***Our First Year as Parents***

This year has been such a blur. Neither of us realized just how much a baby would change our lives. Tyler has brought so much joy into our lives and at the same time has challenged us. Parts of you change when you become parents and parts of you struggle to stay the same. I have come to realize that patience, flexibility and spontaneity are vital. When things don't go as planned, usually naps and bedtime in our case, we have to get creative and go with the flow. Thankfully, after a year, Chris and I have some pretty good parenting tricks up our sleeves when we need them. Even with the challenges Tyler presents, nothing compares to a giggle, a smile, a wave, or a pat from him.

### ***Tyler Amazes Us Everyday***

#### Baby in Motion

Tyler is 13 months now and is growing and learning so much so quickly! He pulls up on everything he can, including Mommy's legs and is starting to cruise around a bit. He is a crawling maniac heading into every nook and cranny he can! He likes to climb our stairs and this weekend just figured out the "safe" way to go down the stairs – backwards. Previously, he would proceed downstairs headfirst and give his parents a heart attack! He isn't walking yet, but I am sure that is just around the corner!

#### Learning New Things Everyday

One reason Tyler may not be walking is that he is too busy figuring out how his world works. He loves to turn the volume up and down on the radio, turn off light switches, and is trying to figure out doorknobs. He is able to take the caps off pens, open DVDs, and loves to open and close any door he can get his hands on. He has been watching us turn lids and I think is trying to figure that one out. There are all these things that I used to give him to play with that I can't anymore because he has figured out how to get into them! One of his latest discoveries is that he can stand up in his crib, reach for the fan dial and turn on the fan!! It is hilarious. Of course, it probably won't be so funny when he learns to turn on the light and can do that when he doesn't want to go to bed! :-p

#### Mealtimes are fun!

Tyler feeds himself table food and now wants to hold a spoon when I feed him. As I feed him, he scoops food with his spoon and dumps it on his tray. Sometimes the spoon does get to his mouth! Tyler makes the BIGGEST mess when he eats. His Daddy calls him "mush mouth". Food ends up in his hair, on his hands and face and all over his clothes. Every day we try to figure out what he ate for lunch at daycare by smelling his hair!

#### Tyler Talking Up a Storm

With the exception of being able to say "cat", "dog", and "Dad", everything else is a "dat". Tyler will point at everything that fascinates him and say "dat!" It is so cute! He is starting to say more words. He recently said "clock", "Chase" and tonight was working on "moon". He also just started saying "bye", but it sounds more like "ba!" He is a crazy kid and everyday is something new and fun!

### ***Tyler's first road Trip***

It had been two years since our last vacation and Chris and I were itching to take trip. It just so happened that my parents were planning a trip to Cloudcroft and invited us to join them. It took us all of a second to say "Yes!" Of course, the first place we have to go is REI to get some gear for the trip! We bought a big cargo box for the top of the Forester knowing with Tyler along we would have plenty to pack and found a great backpack carrier on eBay for Tyler to hang out in on hikes. The car was packed tight, but everything fit!

The road trip was great and Tyler was awesome in the car! We left early in the morning and took lots of breaks, so Tyler ended up sleeping about 6 hours of the 9 hour driving time. We had a fabulous cabin in the forest that was our home base for the week. Every day we were there, we did some hiking. My parents and Tyler were troopers and joined us on all but one – even a 4.25 mile hike! Tyler really liked his carrier. He would lean to the side and watch the scenery, reach out and grab leaves from trees, and when he was ready for a break, he would fall asleep. The scenery in Cloudcroft was amazing!! We were so impressed by the diversity of the New Mexico landscape. We were also lucky to hit the fall foliage right at its peak; it was gorgeous! Chris took tons of pictures on this trip and has put them up on his photography website. You must check them out; he was really pleased with what he took. If you are looking for a quick, inexpensive getaway, I would highly recommend Cloudcroft and Ruidoso, New Mexico.

### ***Doubling our Pleasure***

Chris and I wanted to have our children close together and we were very lucky to have our wish come true. Yup, I am pregnant!! I am 3 months along and am due June 26<sup>th</sup>. Some folks have also circled the end of May just in case “Deuce” (our working title :-p) decides to enter the world early like Tyler. If we thought our life was crazy now, it is only going to get more so. I don’t think the reality of having two kids has even hit me yet or the fact that I will be staying home with both of them. It is going to give my life a nice flow though as I was thinking of changing careers and possible moving into the management of non-profits. Staying at home will be a nice, natural break in between all that and will allow me to spend a few years really enjoying both of our children.

### ***New Floors!***

We finally replaced the floors in our house. On the first floor, we had the carpet and tile removed and replaced them with gorgeous, rustic wood flooring. We put new carpet upstairs, on the stairs, and in all the bedrooms downstairs. The transformation was impressive. The house feels so warm and cozy. It looks absolutely amazing with all the Christmas decorations! I told Chris that I like my house again! :-p

### ***Family Updates!***

Chris’ parents are finally fully retired! They sold the bed and breakfast in Georgetown this November and have a lovely house here in Austin about 15 minutes from us. They are enjoying decorating their new house and sleeping in!! You never realize how precious sleeping in is until you can’t do it anymore! ;-) Mom is seriously pursuing her art and has sold several paintings!

We also want to congratulate Dr. Lorena Lopez Gonzales! This December she completed her Ph.D!! It has been a long, challenging academic road, but she did it and while working full-time. She is going to have a lot of free time on her hands and she deserves every bit. Bryan has changed jobs and thankfully also has more time on his hands. They have been very supportive watching Tyler for a couple of hours in the evening once a week. It has been a nice break for Chris and I allowing us some time to go to the gym together or get a few things done around the house.

My parents are doing well. The projects continue at their house, but they should be done by 2006 (my Mom is praying that is the case!). They anticipate their travels will slow in 2006, but took a ton of fabulous journeys this year. I think they are looking forward to a peaceful year part of which will be spend helping their daughter survive motherhood and two kids! :-p

Well, that is all the updates for now. We have been so busy this year and have been utilizing our weekends to catch up and have a little fun. We are so sorry to have fallen out of touch with so many of our friends and family. We think of everyone often and thank everyone for all the wonderful cards, gifts and blessings when Tyler arrived. I do hope that we will travel around Texas a little more before the baby comes. Hopefully, we can get together with you in person and get caught up.

Until then, I keep my blog updated at [www.hedgefamily.net](http://www.hedgefamily.net) and we keep Tyler’s album updated on that same site. So please check in to see what is going on with us. Also, Chris is still taking amazing photos. You can see his work at [www.alphadogphotography.com](http://www.alphadogphotography.com). We are urging him to start displaying and selling his work! He has a great eye for nature.

Have a most wonderful holiday season and we wish to a joyous New Years filled with lots of joy and laughter. Take good care!

*{The following is an addition from Chris}*

P.S. – life continues for Chris