



THE *Liz Fraser* COLUMN

# ‘No, it’s not just you’

## MUST WE PRETEND TO BE SO RUBBISH?

**T**o read the Twitter stream and Facebook updates of most women I know, you might be forgiven for thinking they should be arrested for criminal negligence, have their ovaries forcibly removed and be sent to a psychiatrist immediately...

‘Uh-oh, chargrilled dinner again...’

‘Millie’s homework has just been eaten by the hamster.’

‘Hurray, it’s Wine o’Clock; bye-bye children; I CAN’T HEAR YOU!’

‘I haven’t done any exercise for six months. My bum IS jelly. Reckon I’d better just keep drinking through it.’

And so on and so on... *ad total nauseam* and somewhat disturbing as well. Are people really this rubbish at parenting and living their lives? A casual glance on the school run would suggest that no, they’re not.

In fact, most of the chattering Mummy classes seem to have remembered to get dressed, look pretty darned good, get their children to school on time (and without Cheerios down their fronts) and nobody seems to have scurvy or rickets yet.

In other words, what is ‘reported’ doesn’t tally at all with the reality.

This double-life of Dr Jekyll and Mrs Nincumpoop (the original title, in case you wondered) is all part of our new obsessive hobby: Competitive Ineptitude. And we all seem to be taking part, battling it out to be the winner of this year’s *F Factor*. Where ‘F’ is for Failure.

Of course, nobody likes a smart-arse who brags about their successes (did I mention my best-selling books and still pert-ish buttocks...?) and we Brits have a strong history of talking up our failures, playing the fool and celebrating the cack-handed cock-up. The

... butter-fingered anti-hero is a stalwart of British culture, and we learn to love the buffoon in our toddler years, laughing at Mr Bump and Paddington Bear, cheering as our hapless hero stumbles his way to victory and hissing at the big-headed know-it-alls.

Telling everyone how wonderful you are is a fast-track to social suicide, and rightly so. But going the other way is just as annoying; pretending to be completely useless at everything when you quite clearly are not is like holding out a giant fishing rod and hoping the compliments will bite.

It throws me back to those irritating kids outside the exam hall at school who stand there biting their nails, saying, ‘Oh, God, I haven’t done ANY revision. I don’t even know what this exam is *about*. I’m going to flunk it completely!’ when everyone knows they’ve been up all night with their York Notes and past exam papers, and will ace an A\* yet again.

I’m the first to point out my mistakes, gaffes and balls-ups, and anyone who knows me will attest that these are depressingly frequent! But I don’t make them up. I don’t *exaggerate* my clumsiness and failures. And I don’t strive to wear my Rubbish Mum of The Year badge with pride.

Maybe it’s time Competitive Ineptitude slipped on a banana skin and was replaced with something a little more believable.

Bring on Round one of The *H Factor* – where H is for Honesty.

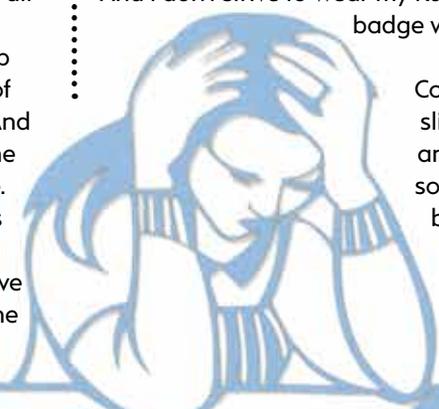


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