

# And baby makes

# FIVE

SINCE HER FIFTH BABY ARRIVED, SUPERMUM **GILLIAN HARVEY** HAS HAD TO DEVELOP EXTREME PARENTING SURVIVAL SKILLS...



**Bear Grylls eat your heart out! You might have jungle survival skills, but I've just managed (with a little help from him indoors) to walk to the market with five children, aged 5 and under. What's that? You don't think the experiences compare? Let's see...**

We are suffering a heatwave, which meant shoving five reluctant children into clothes and slathering them in sun cream. Then we packed a bottle of milk, two sizes of nappies, a change of clothes for all of them (because you never know), baby wipes (or 'lifesavers' as I call them), extra sun cream, water and a muslin square.

Next, we assembled two pushchairs (our old faithful buggy and a new snazzy Silver Cross Reflex) loaded them with bags, keys, shopping lists... after which we even managed to comb five children's and two adults' heads, clean six sets of teeth and sterilise three dummies. Finally, we left the house.

See? See?! The preparation alone eclipses that required for an epic adventure – and this was just for a quick trip down the road. We arrived back an hour later with four smiling cherry-stained monkeys and one squalling baby. I was exhausted from the

“The preparation for a quick trip down the road eclipses that of an epic adventure”

effort of buying fruit, preventing Timmy from filching strawberries from the market stall and apologising to an elderly woman after Joe gave her a fright by yelling “DOT COM!” (his current favourite saying) at her.

Add to this the cumulative effect of six years of sleepless nights, and I think you'll find my survival skills impressive. Mind you, sleep deprivation can take its toll...

Motivated partly by the heat, and partly by guilt, I decided to take the twins to the local pool yesterday. Having not worn a swimsuit since the pregnancy (and having been too busy to shop) I managed to

assemble something that fitted from the top of one old bikini (pink) and the swimming shorts from another ensemble (black). I was hardly going to be scouted as a potential model, but neither was anything going to fall out. Then, I whipped out the razor and was 'beach ready' (or as beach

ready as I'll ever be) within minutes.

Not wanting to hang around too long in the tiny changing rooms, I shoved all my clothes – knickers and all – over the top of my bikini before we left, packed the twins' trunks, wrestled the boys into their car seats and finally zipped to the pool.

Once there, things went pretty well (other than the fact that Joe, used to being starkers in our back garden, kept slipping off his shorts and at one point decided to pee into a bush at the side of the outdoor splash pool). It was when we went to get an ice lolly that things fell apart.

The pool was very quiet, but there was a group of teens sitting near the kiosk and I had the feeling they were sniggering at me. “You wait until you've had five kids, then see what you look like in a bikini!” I thought self-righteously. Then I looked down. On top of my swimming shorts, I was still wearing my black lacy knickers – a Superman-meets-Ann Summers kind of look. Some people call me a 'supermum' (not realising I'm simply surviving each day) but that's not because I dress like a superhero (usually). Mind you, I wished I'd had superpowers that day – if not the power to time travel and whip off my knickers before entering the public arena, at least the power of rapid flight.

So: stress, sleep deprivation, pushchair pushing, theft prevention, old-lady calming, toddler comforting, swimming pool splashing and embarrassment all in the space of one weekend? I might not be drinking my own pee (yet), Mr Grylls, but when it comes to survival, I could definitely give you a run for your money.