

Staying at Home: Career-Woman Gone Mom

With many moms these days having had a full career and sense of their own identity, becoming a mom and deciding to leave work, in part or in full, can be a very trying experience. The decision in itself can be riddled with fear around losing one's identity, financial uncertainty, life style changes, and attachments to beliefs about oneself, the world, and motherhood. What will I say and how will I feel when someone asks me, "So what do you do?" Instead of shying away from that and other questions like it, imagine being completely embodied in and proud of your role as Mom. Being present in motherhood is the best gift you are able to give to yourself, your children, your spouse, and your community. This state of being allows for balance and wholeness in everything you do. So how do you get there? Whether you have already made up your mind to stay home or if you are still in that decision making process, the following will help you find the peace in motherhood.

Through years of working with clients, I have found that identity and safety are typically the two things that stop us from making the leap to a new career or lifestyle. It's easy to say, "I'm a marketing editor for xyz firm". This provides an immediate identity and takes the pressure off of one having to create their own identity, as the job and the company has done it for you. You carry a 'badge' such as a key card badge, or a business card, or a symbolic badge of sorts. This badge often creates a certain level of ease and pride in ones life.

"I'm a mom." What feelings or images does that statement bring up for you? For many of us, we struggle with the fact that women have fought long and hard for our rights to work and we feel we are throwing that out the window when we choose to leave our careers. For others it feels like a loss after having worked so hard to build their career just to let it go. And still others have such aspiration that they feel they haven't accomplished what they want in their careers yet and are afraid that it will be difficult to get back in when they are ready. We have so many opportunities and choices available in our lives today that all these choices make it difficult to 'simply' be a "Mom". We are experiencing the flip side of equality and opportunity that we so appreciate about living in America.

Since our economy has forced many moms to work in order to afford their lifestyle we can find ourselves worrying about financial security with the prospect of staying at home. In addition, this economic push has affected our social culture to the point that we feel judged by ourselves or others if we are 'just a mom'. If you carry this judgment or fear around with you, you will certainly not be able to be fully present with your children and engage in your new life the way you would like to. So the first thing you must do is look at all the judgments, beliefs, and attachments that you are holding and test them to see if they support you in where you are going in your life.

One way to do this on your own is as follows:

1. Create a worksheet with two columns. On the top of the worksheet write "I'm a Mom".
2. In the left hand column write down all the thoughts, beliefs, judgments, or attachments that pop up for you around this.
3. Sit with all of those for a few minutes and then starting with the first one and working your way down the sheet, ask the questions, "What does this belief or judgment have to do with – identity or safety or something else?", "Is this belief ABSOLUTELY true? How do you KNOW it's true? Does it NECESSARILY HAVE to be true?", "Does this belief or judgment support me in being the best mom I can?"
4. Notice if there are any themes to the statements such as safety, identity, mistrust in the system, etc.
5. If the statement is true and supports you in living your true desires, draw an arrow to the right hand column.

6. If the statement is not supportive, turn the statement around and come up with an alternative belief or judgment that would support you better. (examples below)
7. Write that new statement in the right hand column.
8. When you are done. Look at the statements in the right hand column and determine which one or ones have the most charge to them – in other words, which ones do you struggle with the most?
9. Integrate the most powerful statements into your conscious and subconscious in order to truly believe them and for them to support you in moving forward toward your dreams.

Call Gretchen at (303) 642-3105, or email her at gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com for integration exercises and support in this exercise.

One example of this exercise might be, “It’ll be really hard to re-enter the workforce in the field or at the level I want after being a stay at home mom.” This statement has to do with mistrust in the system. This belief is not necessarily true and it is not supportive for you as you may make a choice out of fear versus true desire. The alternative belief might sound something like, “There will be plenty of opportunities when I’m ready, and my interests and skills might be different and lend themselves in different ways at that time.” Feel the difference between these two statements. Which one feels restrictive? Which one feels expansive and trusting? Which one will you choose to adopt? If the second statement feels like too much of a stretch right now, though you wish to believe it, start by saying, “I’m in the process of trusting that...”, a few days later say, “I love knowing that the Universe and God is in the process of helping me know that...”, when that feels easy, say, “I love the way it feels when I know that...”, and then finally the statement will hold true on it’s own.

Another example might be, “I need balance.” This statement is about emotional safety as though you wont have your own space or interests as a stay at home mom. It may be true as you may need balance in your life, though the implied assumption that you wont get it is not necessarily true. The alternative may sound something like, “There are many ways to create a healthy balance for myself as a stay at home mom and I trust I will find the balance I need.”

Being a stay at home mom can open up so many unexplored aspect of yourself and this world we live in. It may just be the best time of your life...embrace it, live it, love it! And if you’re still wanting more, put your efforts into volunteer opportunities or begin to plan for your next career so you have inroads once you’re ready to go back to work. There is so much you can do while being a mom and raising a healthy, happy, well-adjusted next generation. Here’s to YOU!