

Why I Love Being a Working Mom - Metro Parent

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It's not easy – and it's not for everyone – but it's how I tap into my talents and teach my children that I have a purpose beyond being their mom.



On the third day of school this year, my son texted me five minutes after I had dropped him off. “Forgot my pencil case. Can you bring it to school?”

He’s in eighth grade, by far old enough to step into being responsible for himself. And this is the kid who would leave his right arm at home if it were not attached.

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For the longest time I'd debated whether responding to scatterbrained requests like this would enable his absentmindedness or be helpful for my little boy.

But this time, it wasn't even a debate. After dropping off the other kids at their schools, I had a 9 a.m. client meeting across town, followed by an 11 a.m. appointment. I'm a working mom. I don't always have the luxury of jetting home to recover forgotten items and save my kids' skin.

"Sorry, honey, but I have a packed day. You'll just have to borrow from classmates," I texted back.

I've been a working mom since my children were born, though thankfully I have the luxury of working from home and setting my own hours. When they were young, I fit the work around nap schedules and nursing, but as they got older and more mobile, I realized that to be productive, I needed help.

That meant part-time nannies and early preschool to guarantee precious work time. Growing up with a stay-at-home mom, I felt latent guilt about plopping my kids in someone else's care so I could work, but my feminist side believed it was a gift to my kids to see their mother as a confident, independent member of the workforce.

I still believe that. Not that there's anything wrong with staying at home – truth be told, I think it's the harder of the choices.

For me, being a working mom has never been a choice. My first husband was a musician, so you can imagine how much we depended on my steady income to keep us afloat.

When I was a divorced mom, there was no question I had to work to complement the meager child support I received each month, and now that I am remarried, we need my income to live the lifestyle we prefer.

By working, I show my children that women can take care of themselves. We don't need to depend on anyone else for survival. So when we pair up, we do so to add joy and partnership to our lives.

When I think about it, I've been working since I was a teenager.

Back then, work meant freedom. My early jobs at Dunkin' Donuts, a local cleaners and as the receptionist of an aerobics studio gave me spending money and cash to call my college boyfriend when my parents wouldn't foot that bill.

It also taught me the ethic of working hard and managing money. I loved the exhilaration of a job well done, of people depending on me to achieve business goals.

I took that with me into the workforce as a 20-something, when the stakes were not quite as high as today. As a new college graduate, it really doesn't matter what you earn. Your living expenses are the lowest they are ever likely to be, and your tastes are usually simple.

But it gets harder, the stakes higher, the fall greater as you add a spouse, then children to the

picture. Now, it's rarely about me. I can forgo the pedicure or massage that I want, but the kids need their school supplies, new shoes when they trash the old sneakers or outgrow them, healthy food for their constant growth spurts.

Sometimes, I lament that I have to work so hard. I'm in my 40s now, and there is college to save for. Orthodontist bills. Athletic pursuits with all the requisite gear.

This summer, I spent a lot of time with my kids – working, then taking off to kayak down a local river or pick blueberries in an orchard on the outskirts of town.

I loved it. The time in nature, the sound of their eager voices, the smell of their skin (well, the little ones at least).

But I missed my work. And I was more exhausted on those days that I did both than when I have whole blocks of time to focus on one or the other.

Without question, parenting is the hardest job you will ever do. There is no training, no manual, no easy resolution for sudden problems. And it's 24/7, never-ending.

Career-work is another story altogether. You clock in, clock out, do your best and most of the time, succeed. You can leave, take vacation, pick back up where you left off.

I love my work. I love creating strategies for clients, then composing content and implementing plans. I love the feeling of a hard day's work achieving goals I never thought possible.

I love having my own interests and talents and using them every day. I love that I can put food on my family's table. I love that I have built a reputation around my expertise and talents.

I love that I am realizing what I was put on earth to do, and earning a living by stepping into my destiny.

Most of all, I love that my children see what meaningful work is – that I have priorities, but I can juggle those priorities and in the end, everyone wins. Sometimes I am sure they are annoyed when I am not at their beck and call. But deep down, I know that the lesson I'm sending them is that I am my own person, with my own passions and pursuits, and I hope that will teach them to follow in my footsteps.

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