

From the Sacrificial Mom to the Child Who Can Thrive Without You

I was sitting in front of my computer with a phone pressed to my ear, ready to do an online chat for pregnancy.org. For about an hour each month I serve as a parent expert to several mother Web sites and answer an array of questions from mothers all over the country about child development.

Julie Snyder, the site's chat master, was on the other end of the line to help me through the process and make sure I could get into the chat room. Apparently she coordinates about twelve different chats each month. So, figuring she had a darn good sense about what was on mothers' minds these days, I asked her, "What's the biggest thing these moms really want to know?"

She knew the answer instantly (I must admit it caught me off guard): "The one thing most moms want to know is how to change. They know they're doing too much and are stressing, but they don't know what to do to get on another track. You could really help them by telling them what to do to start simplifying their lives."

"Why simplify?" I asked.

"Because their kids aren't growing up as well as they'd hoped," she said.

"What's wrong?"

"Well, the kids are so stressed, and their moms are just doing so much. They just want their children to be happy so that one day they'll survive and thrive on their own. But they need to get back to just being their real selves and not always trying to copy what all the other moms do."

So let me ask you something: Just how satisfied are you right now with your own parenting? Seriously. Are you content with the way things are going for your children and your family? Are you worried about their future?

Here's another thing to consider: Have you ever said to yourself, "I wish I knew how to be a mom who raises kids who have what it takes to be happy and successful. I feel like I'm always spinning my wheels and knocking myself out trying to do so much for my kids. What really matters when it comes to being a good mom? What do my kids really need from me, and can I really make a difference in their lives?"

Well, you can and do make a difference in your children's lives. Sixty years of research have proven that "parents have a profound effect on their children's emotional, social and intellectual development." The problem is that we mothers have been trying to do so much and be such perfect moms that we've gone way overboard. Many of us have reached the point where we're tired and anxious but still trying to do more and more for our kids.

Real mothering doesn't have to be this hard. We really don't have to exhaust our energy and our finances, and our kids don't have to be this scheduled and stressed. Being a mom should be fun and rewarding and joyous. You just have to admit you want to change.

Are You Ready to Make a Change?

Here are a few more questions to help you realize it's time to get your family out of the fast lane—to slow down and make

a few different parenting choices so that your kids will be happier and more confident, develop stronger values, and become self-reliant. Do any of these ring true for you or your family?

- Do you feel guilty about not living up to your own image of the perfect mom? Do you second-guess your mothering or think you're not doing a good-enough job?
- Do you worry about your child—about whether the workload and schedule is too much?
- At your parent-teacher conference, do you find yourself asking more about your kid's grade and how he's competing with the rest of the class than about whether he is happy and how he gets along?
- Are you frequently stressed or exhausted or impatient with your family? Does the littlest, tiniest thing get under your skin? Are you quick to anger? Are you yelling more?
- Are you on the coach's case complaining that your child isn't getting enough game time or respect on the team?
- Has success become such a huge commodity in your family that your kids are afraid to let you down or disappoint you with a poor grade?
- Do you worry that your kid seems really anxious or depressed? That she's not having any fun?
- Do you worry when your kid seems to have nothing to do, and feel as though you have to educate or entertain him every second of the day?
- Do you always compare yourself frequently to other mothers and worry that they're doing a better job than you are?

If you answered yes to any of the questions, it's time to you make some changes for your kids, yourself, and your family. And this book will help you. We'll work on simple changes

so that you stop trying to do it all and instead focus on what really matters in giving your kid what she needs to be happy and successful on her own.

Yes, it will involve a little work—but we're talking about simple changes. I'll show you how to make easy adjustments that can have a dramatic impact on your family. And if you stick to your commitment and do make those changes, you will be happier and more content in your mothering, and your children will have a much better chance of being successful not only in school but also in life. And that's because you'll be raising your kids so they can survive and thrive without you.