**A BETTER SOCIETY BEGINS AT HOME**

There is something special about hearing your child’s first word and watching them take their first step as they giggle with glee. Only a mother can have the joy of experiencing this.

“Are you hot?

Are you cold?

Are you wearing that?

Where’s your books and your lunch and your homework at?

Grab your coat and your gloves and your scarf and hat.

Don’t forget; you got to feed the cat!”

Renfroe Anita wrote these catchy words for the song “Momisms”, sung to the familiar tune of the William Tell Overture. Her words best describe a typical day of mayhem through the eyes of a mother. Mothers who stay at home know that at times, their lives can be hectic. Despite the chaos, “stay-at-home” mothers get the tremendous responsibility of only having one chance of raising their children in such a way that makes a difference in their children’s lives and in society. And with this one chance, they know they have to do it right.

Throughout history, society has looked upon the male as the breadwinner: the one expected to work and support the family. The mother has been viewed as the nurturer: the one to stay home and raise the children. During the 1960’s, women wanted more rights, power, and the ability to get higher paying jobs. Women were given this right so they expressed this new found freedom by going to work outside of the home. As women sought employment, their children were left to the care of babysitters and day care workers. Because society has redefined the role of a mother to be one who is an important element in the workforce, the loss of the mother in the home has led to the decline of the family unit, and thus, to society. This forfeiture has created a generation for whom social morals and values are not as important as they once were. Perhaps this is due to a working mother being absent from the home where she is unable to personally instill these ethical standards in her children, thus leaving her children to receive their value system from strangers. And by strangers, I’m referring to the people who are hired to care for these children while their mothers are away and busy working. “Society truly does begin at home”, asserts Sibyl Niemann, so, in order to return to a culture with better morals and values, the importance of the role of the “stay-at-home” mother should be restored. In this way, “stay-at-home” mothers can improve society. Although it is not wrong for mothers to go to work and earn a living like their male companions, this has a downfall since it compromises the key values that they should’ve taught their children while being at home, and thus building a better society.

It is disappointing when mothers are devalued for staying at home to raise their children. Richard Lowry states, “There is something valuable in a mother’s caring for her own child.” In general, no one can take care of your child in the same way his or her mother would. A mother’s care is usually superior to daycare since she naturally wants what is best for her child. “According to a non-partisan Public Agenda survey in 2000, roughly 80 percent of parents with children five and younger say a stay-at-home parent is best able to give children the “affection and attention they need.”

A mother’s individual care can also curb the aggression that is evident in day care centers. “A study done by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), reports that, kids in non-maternal care tend to be associated with qualities such as “gets in lots of fights,” “cruelty,” “explosive behavior,” “talking too much,” “argues a lot,” and “demands a lot of attention.”” Teachers who work in a preschool environment, like my daughter, are frustrated with how badly the children usually behave. Workers in day care are governed by strict rules which prevent disciplining children the way one can do at home. This causes a disregard and loss of respect for others because many children grow up thinking they can do what they want. Today, many of the younger generation act like they are owed something. In the workplace, it is shocking to see the way they treat others with their degrading manners and think there is nothing wrong with their behavior. They also tend to have lazy work ethics and “cop an attitude” when asked to do anything extra. This makes it difficult for many employers to find hard working and respectful employees. There is so much freedom that these children are made to think they have and although it is right to some point, it ends up degrading the values that should be upheld as they continue to grow.

It is important to note that not all children in daycare grow up to be aggressive and unproductive adults. Even though many women in the work force find raising children to be a very difficult task which leaves them feeling lonely and bored, they do a fine job of balancing their jobs with raising successful children. These women enjoy being able to show their children the advantages of working outside of the home. They are able to “teach their children how to be independent, inquisitive, and ambitious”, as well as “learn the value of personal fulfillment and goal setting.” It is also important to note that successful working mothers give their children one of the best gifts any parent can: the example of a life lived to its potential. I think that all of these examples are helpful in raising successful children, however, I believe a stay at home mom can also teach these same qualities in the home. I know this to be true because I was fortunate enough to have a mother who stayed at home to raise me and my two siblings throughout our childhood. She was the one who was the nurturer and demonstrated love and compassion to me and my siblings. She was a no-nonsense type of mother and disciplined us at every chance she saw fit with no remorse. She was personally involved in teaching us throughout all the stages of development and shared in the joy of our accomplishments, throughout our primary and secondary education. My mother was able to mold her children’s character by instilling good values and morals that taught us to be independent and set goals for ourselves, such as being on time for school and appointments. These attributes have helped to contribute to society in a positive way and leave her feeling as if she’s done a good job. With all she’s had to sacrifice for us, it is only right and fair for us to do well in school and work towards achieving greater things in life and thus contributing to a better society.

Despite the seemingly successful results of a stay at home mom’s efforts, “our culture no longer values the household supported by a sole breadwinner.” This is demonstrated by the many women who currently do work outside of the home because they feel the need to contribute to their families’ well-being. According to Niemann, “everything-from buying a house to applying for a college loan for one’s son or daughter-seems structured around the two income family.” A household that has a dual income helps “boost many families into middle class”, some would argue. This allows their children to experience the comforts, options for education and opportunities that they might otherwise not have had.

As tempting as this extra income may be, couples should be careful that this does not impact their relationship as husband and wife. When spouses compete for power in the workforce and then return home too tired to deal with the many needs of their children, the harmony of the family unit can suffer. This is because husbands often feel threatened by the success of their wives. Some may claim that “men are more likely to divorce women who are ambitious.” Lowry explains that “just the specter of divorce creates a kind of intra-marital arms race. The wife works to hedge against getting abandoned, but her very act of working, research shows, makes it more likely that the marriage will fail—a dismaying downward spiral.” Since divorces negatively impact society, we should refocus on preserving marriage and on strengthening the family unit. When men and women are happy and comfortable in their roles as the father breadwinner, and mother-caregiver, marriages can thrive.

Women who do remain at home should not hide behind their children or husbands but instead should be proud of their role. They should be vocal about how productive they are with their children and family. This allows working women and men to see and appreciate the importance of the role of a “stay-at-home” mother. Perhaps they will see for themselves the advantages of remaining at home and raising their children. According to Lowry, “most women would like to stay home and care for their children, but society pressures them into believing that a career is more important than family.” Unless some changes are made, the family unit will continue to decline. Less time spent with children building character increases the risk for disregarding and disrespecting others. The current attitudes of “you owe me”, “I deserve it”, as well as “it is all about me” will probably continue to get worse as time goes by.

Even though being a “stay-at-home” mom may have periods of loneliness, boredom, frustration, and feelings of futility, the rewards of being personally involved with raising one’s own children greatly outweigh the negatives. One of the greatest accomplishments in life is being a “stay-at-home” mother where one can teach and model good behavior and moral fortitude. By emulating these morals and values, children enter into adulthood with the necessary tools needed to produce a successful society. As tough as this unpaid task may be, this self-sacrifice of staying at home to raise ones’ children can be the most society enhancing job a woman can do. As it was before, the father as the bread-winner and the mother to care for the children and discipline them personally, that was the way to go. Yes, women can have the power, self-importance and independence they seek from seeking well-paying jobs and all, but is it worth it if the next generation suffers due to bad morals that make the society “rot”? I still think mothers should be fully committed to raising their children directly and thus a better society in the generations to come.

Reference:

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* Lowry, Richard. “Working Mothers Are Harming the Family.”
* Karaim, Reed. “Women Should Not Be Encouraged to Be Stay-at-Home Mothers.”
* Rhoads, Steven E. “Traditional Marriage Roles Would Improve Male/Female
* The poem extract at the beginning, “Momisms” was written by Renfroe Anita.