

The Secret to Succeeding as a Stay-at-Home Mom

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"You have NO idea what I do all day!" I shout at my husband in yet another tired "discussion" we are having about work and free time.

"And my life is just such a picnic!" he retorts back.

As a stay-at-home mom of four (well, one is in full-time school), I have to admit that I'm often guilty of taking out a little bit of my frustrations on my husband. For some reason, I have it in my mind that because he doesn't have a clue what my day-to-day life looks like, it's somehow a failure on his part.

I use that comeback a lot, because let's be honest—our husbands or our partners really can't understand what it's like to be a stay-at-home mom and shoulder the brunt of the responsibility that goes into taking care of a family's emotional and physical needs. You just can't understand the life of a SAHM unless you've lived it.

But in my constant grumbings of "he has no clue" and feeling like I somehow have the upper leg because I "do" more as a stay-at-home mom, the only person I am really hurting is myself. Because all I'm succeeding at doing is making myself deeply unhappy.

I realized how damaging my thinking and my resulting bitterness about all the things I had to do as a stay-at-home mom was when I read Gretchen Rubin's book "[The Happiness Project](#)" recently. In the book, she talks about how, as moms, we can get in the attitude of "I planned that whole party and you did nothing!" or "I always cook dinner, what do you do?" in a dangerous sort of cat-and-mouse fighting edition.

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"I'd been self-righteously telling myself that I did certain chores or made certain efforts ... 'for the team,'" Rubin writes. "Though this sounded generous, it led to a bad result because I started sulking when [my husband] didn't appreciate my efforts."

To change her attitude, Rubin cast away thinking that anything she did at home was for her husband or anyone else and instead, reminded herself that she was doing the task for *herself*.

It's a subtle change that can make a world of difference—something I saw almost immediately when I tried the technique on for size myself.

Instead of complaining to my husband when the baby started crying to eat at the exact moment I tried to exercise, I reminded myself that breastfeeding was something that *I* wanted to do.

Instead of waving him off in the morning with a sarcastic joke about how it must be nice to go to work without also taking care of kids, I reminded myself that *I* really do want to be the one to stay home with our kids.

Instead of getting mad at my husband for never being the one to plan a date night ever for us in the history of our 10-year relationship, I reminded myself that *I* actually enjoy planning activities for us.

The bottom line is—it took some soul-searching, but I finally realized that whenever I start to feel unappreciated or resentful in my role as a stay-at-home mom, a lot of my feelings stem from my tendency to compare my role with other people, whether that be a full-time working mom, a fellow stay-at-home mom, or even with my husband. It's much too easy for me to fall into the realm of thinking that takes me back to my angst-filled teenage years of "no one understands me!"

But the truth is, to be happy as a stay-at-home mom, I don't need my husband to live my life.

I don't even need him to understand my life.

But I do need to first remember that it is I who chooses to live this life—so complaining about it won't get me anywhere.

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