

Women, Walking Out on the Workforce Is Not Woeful

If I could summarize the many headlines I've seen relating to parenting lately, "Woe for Working Women" would be the slogan I would choose. The media seems to think women with children are the new victimhood class as we trudge through endless COVID purgatory.

I'll be the first to acknowledge that COVID has been hard on women with children. Being a working mom is hard enough when life is normal, but throw in paycheck uncertainties, intensified schedule juggling, school changes, and other factors, and working mothers have a ready-made scenario for a nervous breakdown.

Perhaps that's why [recent labor statistics show](#) "that women have been choosing to leave the workforce in staggering numbers," a fact which *The New Yorker* recently highlighted. These "staggering numbers" are four times the numbers of men doing the same, for "caregiving burdens have fallen disproportionately on women."

One of these mothers is Leslie Chiaramonte of New York, who was [recently highlighted in a USA Today article](#). Once a nurse on a COVID floor, Chiaramonte reluctantly gave up her job (and its health insurance) when she realized her husband had to continue running the family business and therefore could not monitor her daughter's schooling. The accompanying video shows Chiaramonte going about daily life, sadly helping her daughter with school and declaring, "I don't think anyone really understands the impact – the long-term impact this is having on parents, on children, on those that were affected by COVID."

She's absolutely right. There are many impacts of the virus

and accompanying shutdown that we don't yet understand. Many of them are negative. But could some of the impacts we view negatively actually be more positive than we believe?

The reason I ask that is because while Chiaramonte was mournfully explaining the tragedy of losing her job in order to stay at home with her children, I happened to look at her daughter's face. Perhaps it was just the excitement of having a TV camera follow her around, but the little girl looked as though she was struggling to hide her delight. She was enjoying attending school at home, and enjoying the fact that mommy was there with her, overseeing her schoolwork and spending time with her.

How many other children are like this little girl? I have to believe there are many of them. Yes, the fact that mommy had to quit her job may be putting financial strain on the family, there may not be money for dance lessons or fun vacations or even dinners out or movies. But these children have gained a caring, supportive adult who is present in more of their lives than before.

That's something today's children desperately need. As recently mentioned in a Canadian magazine, *The Walrus*, the [state of children's mental health](#) is of special concern during COVID, and the best way to handle these problems isn't necessarily through professional help:

Broadening the coverage of mental health resources is certainly desirable, but it doesn't represent a complete solution: interpersonal relationships are key. The presence of just one supportive adult—a parent, an extended family member, a coach, a guidance counsellor—can be a major determinant of how well a child copes with stress.

Think about that for a moment. It can be extremely sad for a mother to give up her job, to even feel like she is worthless because she is not contributing to society. But this is a *lie*

that society has sold women over the years. The fact of the matter is that a woman's job as a mother is unbelievably valuable. That little life for which she gave up acclaim and praise from the general public needs her. That little life could grow up to save a bunch of people. That little life could become president one day. That little life could make a world of difference... and all because one mother made that little life her world.

Women love to be needed, and it is likely because of that love that it is difficult for mothers like Chiaramonte to give up their jobs. Yet shouldn't women rejoice that our children need us? That we can help them? That we can support and love and nurture them and help them grow?

Speaking in the aforementioned *New Yorker* article, public policy Professor Betsey Stevenson cautions that "Ignoring our children will end up hurting society for decades to come." She's certainly right. In fact, I would argue that we have already ignored our children in the past several decades and are reaping the consequences today. Those children have grown up feeling lost, lonely, and adrift. They've had the best of childcare, education, and activities, yet many of them have lived life away from their families, as both mom and dad rush off to work every morning.

Today we see a culture of easily angered young adults, restless, and ready to tear down society as we've known it. If more of today's adults had grown up with a loving parent ready at hand instead of buried in the workforce, could that anger have been stemmed?

We'll never know the complete picture of COVID's impact on society. But perhaps one positive impact will be that parents, one at a time, will reconnect with their children, causing a chain reaction leading to the raising of a generation of well-adjusted, happy, contented adults, each ready to go out and soothe the anger that our topsy-turvy society is currently

experiencing.

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