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A Student Parent

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Being a parent is one of the most important jobs a person can have. Few people would doubt that. The life you bring into this world may someday change the world ---for the better. Because of this, it is so important to give your children the tools to become caring, responsible adults. The choices I made to do this were simple. I wanted to be an active part of their lives, so I was a stay-at-home mother for the first 10+ years of both my children's lives."

A Student Parent

Being a parent is one of the most important jobs a person can have. Few people would doubt that. The life you bring into this world may someday change the world --- for the better. Because of this, it is so important to give your children the tools to become caring, responsible adults. The choices I made to do this were simple. I wanted to be an active part of their lives, so I was a stay-at-home mother for the first 10+ years of both my children's lives.

I was in the military for the first year of my son's life, so that I found out quickly what it was to miss out on part of his growing up. I missed seeing him walk for the first time, and other milestones along the way, and quickly realized that I needed to be a part of this miracle: The 'making' of my child.

Two years later, my daughter was born. That glorious event added equal amounts of joy and responsibility.

Choosing the stay-at-home route, I had to put my education on hold. That was acceptable for the time being, I decided. I felt that 'at home' was where I needed to be. I would, however, like to quantify my "staying at home."

I did not just sit at home and wait for my children to return. As my children got older, I volunteered for Sunday school, at their schools, I helped/ran Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and most anything that allowed me to be involved with my children and their friends. My commitment to not 'being on the sidelines' of their growing up grew stronger as they grew older.

When my children were well entrenched in productive activities, friends and mindsets as they entered the preteen years, I felt they needed to be given more independence. This was the time to evaluate our family's goals, and I decided it was time for me to go back to school. Don't get me wrong: I wanted to continue to be a vital part of their everyday lives, but we all know that 'strong roots' and 'strong wings' go hand in hand as crucial gifts a parent can give each child.

I have been going to school for almost three years, and let me tell you, it is HARD. Not only is it hard to be the oldest student ---by far--- in ALL of my classes, but I have added pressure in that my children are watching everything I do. They know the expectations I have for them, and they have the same for me. I also have the issues of time-management. I find it difficult to give up quality time with my children to study. To me it is invaluable to be an active force in their lives, especially now that they are teenagers. There is always a 'pull' between my education and my family. My children are not old enough to drive, so it is necessary for me to take them to all of their activities. This means that I have to be able to study and do homework 'on the fly.' This can create problems with focus. Sometimes I wish I had gone to college when I was young and before I became a parent. That said, I'm honest enough with myself to realize that I simply was not READY to be a devoted student right out of high school.

Being a parent, for me, is the job of a lifetime. I truly will never find as much joy in any other aspect of my life as I have with raising my children! I know it is important for me to go to school, get a job and do some things to better my life, and the lives of \

everyone in my family. I just feel that sometimes people don't realize what a commitment it is to be a parent. I also think sometimes that people forget to find the joy

in their children and forget just how important the job of a parent is. There are many days when I feel like I am drowning with all the responsibilities of being a parent, a student and a wife, but then one of the kids will come over to me and give me a hug, and tell me how much they love me, and my heart feels like it will jump out of my chest. Those are the moments that make it all worthwhile and keep me afloat.

And, afloat I will continue to be. With a smile on my face, and---one day soon--- a degree in my hand. As I take pride in my children, they do and will continue to take pride in me.

Mechele Timmons

