

FALL 2002

THE
ANGELOS
of KAPPA DELTA

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Stay-at-home moms trade 9 to 5 for 24/7

Imagine a job description that looks something like this: You're on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Every task you are assigned will be undone soon after you complete it, if you are able to finish it at all. Your first performance review won't come for at least 18 years and you won't receive a paycheck — yet you have the most important job in the world.

Does this sound like a job you would enjoy? Many KDs have answered yes, and say they have no regrets about taking on this position of stay-at-home mom, even if it meant leaving a high-powered, high-paying, high self-esteem job on America's corporate ladder.

Mary Elizabeth Smith Christian, Epsilon Sigma-Wofford, was a general surgeon. Anne Cheek Meyer, Alpha Tau-Oglethorpe, was a press secretary to a U.S. congressman. Amy Coleman Knowlden, Zeta Epsilon-Kansas, used to be the senior marketing manager for Travelocity.com.

Despite their successful professional careers, these women chose the job of stay-at-home mom, a position they say is more challenging — and more important — than any other they could have.

They are not alone. The recent U.S. Census reports that 55 percent of women with infants under a year old were in the workforce in June 2000, down from 59 percent in 1998. This represents the first decline in 25 years.

Priority shifts

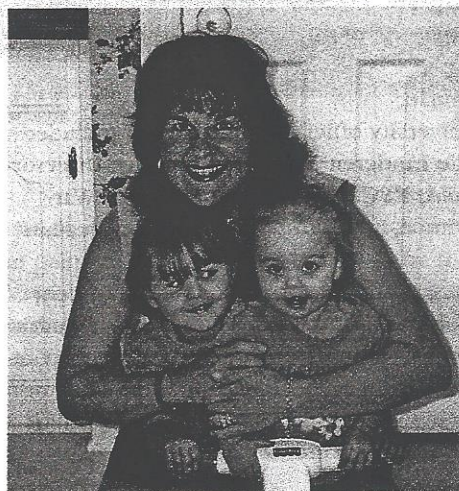
What's behind this trend? For one, many women find that their outlook on life changes once they have a child. "Once my son was born I had a huge priority shift," says Amy Knowlden. "Gratifying work seemed so irrelevant." Anne Meyer made the decision to stay at home before her daughter was even born. When she found out she was pregnant, she knew that even a fulfilling career could not compare to watching her child develop.

In addition, the events of September 11, 2001 altered our psyches as well. "Now that we are living in a world of fear and uncertainty, staying at home with my children has become all that much more important," says Lisa Palladino Claus, Beta Mu-Bowling Green State.

Lisa has a master's degree and a license in



Lisa Palladino Claus, Beta Mu-Bowling Green State, with Natalie, 19 months, and Alexander, 3.



Susan Sansing Page, Epsilon Lambda-Alabama/Huntsville, with Isabelle, 3, and Catherine, 1.

professional counseling. She always knew she wanted to be a stay-at-home mom. After several years of counseling abused and neglected children, she became a mother and left her job. "I wanted to give my own children what these children did not have — a stable, loving home with a mother they knew would always be there."

Demands on a mother's time

Women are finding, too, that it's not just priorities that change when a child enters the family — the demands on a mother's time become nearly unbearable. Mary Elizabeth Christian felt guilty and overextended, and former teacher Jennifer Shrader Palmer, Alpha Pi-William and Mary, remembers, "I was stretched too thin. Everything suffered."

It's not always priorities and demands that send women back home — sometimes it's simply a matter of finances. Although a salary is lost, the cost of childcare often will offset the benefits of a paycheck so that the money left over after child-related expenses is negligible. "More than a third of my paycheck went to daycare," says former teacher Susan Sansing Page, Epsilon Lambda-Alabama/Huntsville, "and what was left over wasn't worth it."

No matter how they came to the decision to stay at home,



and the toughest job they'll ever love

by Carol Lynne

all the moms agree that it's the best decision they ever made. Their families are happier, they are closer to their children, and they are experiencing things they never could if they were still tied to a desk.

Watching them grow

Playtime, tickles, spontaneous hugs and real time growth-in-progress make at-home motherhood worth it for these women. They are on hand to witness each stage of their kids' development, sharing their accomplishments as they happen, rather than at the end of the day when the novelty has worn off. Micki Olin, Sigma Omicron-Illinois, was a medical center director. When her 7-year-old wrote on a school project, "My mom is special because she quit work to spend time with me," Micki realized that being at home with her child was having an impact.

But it's not all picnics in the park and running around the house in comfy clothes. Women who leave their jobs to stay home find childcare extremely demanding. It's tough to leave the real world behind and go charging headfirst into a never-ending spiral of diapers, dishes, and laundry. "My life is so different," says Amy Knowlden, "going from running marketing strategy meetings to being covered in sweet potatoes."

The inability to complete a task or hear yourself think can frustrate even the most dedicated mother. As well, the monotony of cleaning house, doing laundry, picking up toys, and fixing meals can be discouraging. On a rough day at home, Amy Moffat Afont, Beta Rho-San Diego State, remembers wistfully her days in the classroom as a teacher.

Isolation

Stay-at-home moms also find that they miss certain things about the workforce: namely, adult interaction. The isolation can be a real shock to the system, especially after being a part of the workplace where they could socialize with coworkers and receive feedback on their performance.

It is this lack of adult interaction and need for identity that leads some women to become more dependent on their husbands for social and emotional needs and support — and this changes the balance of power in the relationship. Husbands become the sole breadwinners. Although they are happy that their wives are home being a mother to their children, they feel the pressure and worry of switching to a one-income family.

Still be a couple

Elayne Savage, Ph.D., author of "Breathing Room: Creating Space to be a Couple," says this lifestyle change creates a different dynamic in the family and women need to be aware of that. "It is very important to make space to be a couple, and

to make space to meet our own needs as well."

She suggests that, even though at the end of the day a stay-at-home mom may practically break her neck getting to the door to hand the kids over to her husband and talk about her day, backing off — at least for a bit — can work wonders for the relationship. "Many husbands need space to make the transition from work to home," she says. "Try giving him a hug and a kiss, making a loving connection, but then allow him a few minutes before you come together as a couple."

Every stay-at-home mom dreads the question, "So what do you do all day?" Strangers and husbands alike seem to be perplexed at how such little creatures could take up an entire day's worth of a woman's time. Unless they are there to watch, they don't realize that the demands on a mother's

"My life is so different, going from running marketing strategy meetings to being covered in sweet potatoes." Amy Knowlden

time are unrelenting. "There is no time to get bored," observes former mortgage loan originator Pam Oakley Dorris, Alpha Psi-Drury. "Household chores can be worse than an inbox at work, because the chores never go away — they just keep coming back."

The never-ending and often thankless job of motherhood can leave women feeling frustrated and isolated. That's why it's important for stay-at-home moms to keep a network of friends and activities. "I talk with some friends on a daily basis, belong to a playgroup, and attend library story hour," says Lisa Claus. "Nothing beats talking to another mom and finding out that she has experienced the same problems as you." Many KDs say they keep active in their local alumnae group, where they are able to share experiences with sisters and receive valuable advice.

Identity crisis

Our KD sisters who have chosen to stay at home and be full-time mothers are proud of what they do, and they honestly believe that their choice to be at home is the best thing they can do for their kids. But ask them about it and they'll admit that they feel a little guilty, even sometimes embarrassed, about not having a career. So many women are used to being identified by what they do that when the business cards are thrown away and the title removed, their sense of self-worth disappears as well. "It is very disconcerting to suddenly, after 23 years, not have any kind of paycheck," says Jennifer Palmer. "The paycheck is a bit of a validation that what you do is important, that you matter."



Author Elayne Savage says this is common. "Working women not only get respect and identity from the workplace, but rushes of adrenaline as well," she says. "This change can leave a void in the lives of stay-at-home moms. Why not try filling those spaces with healthy substitutions? Resentment and depression can take up so much space there is hardly room left for connection to our partner. We respect ourselves as professional women, but we haven't learned to respect ourselves in our newest job — stay-at-home motherhood."

The great debate

Where does the guilt and lack of respect come from? Society is the main culprit. Researchers, intent on "proving" that one type of mother is better than the other, pit stay-at-home moms against working mothers. Amid this back-and-forth debate over who is right and who is wrong, women are forced to second-guess themselves while trying to be Supermom. "We live in a society that simultaneously idealizes and devalues the mother," says Jane Swigart in her book, "Myth of the Perfect Mother: Parenting without Guilt."

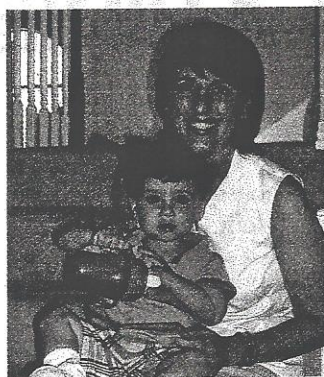
"You have many years to use your degree, but your kids are only young once." Susan Page

The women's movement opened doors for women in the workplace, earning us the respect we deserved as the glass ceilings began to break — but sadly, this respect hasn't spilled over to stay-at-home motherhood. Dr. Savage says women need to respect themselves not only as professionals, but as mothers as well.

It is this dialectic debate, and our society's emphasis on capitalistic success, that causes women to feel bad about their parenting decisions. Pam Dorris sheepishly admits she used to be one of those people who stereotyped women at home. "I viewed stay-at-home moms as less productive and weak. Of course, now I realize the absurdity of it. Being home is extremely challenging both mentally and physically."

KDs believe there shouldn't be any controversy between working and stay-at-home moms, that every mother is special. They say that all mothers doubt themselves, feel exhausted at the end of the day, and worry over their children. They both work equally hard at keeping their families happy, houses clean, and trying to find time for themselves. Lisa Claus says, "Stay-at-home moms and working moms alike should be rewarded for their selfless contribution to their families." Tammy Smith Call, Gamma Delta-East Tennessee State, who serves as Kappa East Collegiate Province President and used to work in marketing, puts it simply: "We are all working mothers, just in different environments."

Women staying at home to raise their children should not feel guilty about having a college degree and not "using" it. Most of Lisa Claus' stay-at-home mom friends are professionals: teachers, engineers, accountants who



Amy Coleman Knowlden, Zeta Epsilon-Kansas, with Cole.



Tammy Smith Call, Gamma Delta-East Tennessee State, with Taylor, left, 5, and Jordan, 3.



Jennifer Shrader Palmer, Alpha Pi-William and Mary, with Noah, on her lap, and Jacob.



Pam Oakley Dorris, Alpha Psi-Drury, with Blake, 5, and Brianna, 17 months.

believe that what's important now is that women have the choice to be college educated and stay at home with their children, or have careers outside the home. Susan Page recommends KDs use their degrees before they have children. "There is a time in your life to use your degree and a time in your life to be a mom," she says. "You have many years to use your degree, but your kids are only young once."

Gaining control

Women who want to alleviate some of the boredom associated with full-time childcare can keep abreast of developments in their field or take classes to stay on top of new technology. Not only does this provide a social outlet, but also it gives stay-at-home moms leverage if they decide to re-enter the workforce. Getting out to attend seminars, training sessions, or just to have lunch with former colleagues gives moms an opportunity to connect with their peers.

So where do you start when you find yourself out from behind the desk and faced with a household to run? Susan De Ritis of the Family and Home Network suggests that you first give yourself time to adjust. "Any major life change takes time to adjust to — this is a major change."

Making friends with the dust bunnies under the sofa is the first step in gaining control. Organization is the second step. Susan Page keeps a calendar in the baby's room so she can jot down important firsts and cute stories; she also relies on her

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How to survive the transition from office to home

KD stay-at-home moms share their top tips

- * Join a local moms club.
- * Attend classes, workshops; feed your hobbies and interests.
- * Network with other moms in play-groups, story times, or KD alumnae associations.
- * Establish a daily routine.
- * Prioritize and schedule time for yourself every day to exercise, enjoy a hobby, or spend time alone.
- * Just say no . . . don't overextend yourself and say yes to every opportunity that comes along.
- * Let go of perfection — you don't have to be the perfect housewife, spouse, and mother.
- * Maintain old friendships and cultivate new ones.
- * Simplify your life . . . get rid of junk.
- * Accept every day as a gift with your children.
- * Keep your expectations real about what will get done in a day.
- * Stay up to date on your chosen field; keep in touch with coworkers.

Resources

Family and Home Network
www.FamilyAndHome.org Phone: 866-352-1075 Email: fahn@familyandhome.org
Monthly publication called "Welcome Home," \$22/year.

A Place for Everything/Elaine Bloom
www.organizeit.com Phone: 973-378-9002 Email: elainebloom30@aol.com.

National Association of At-Home Mothers
www.athomemothers.com.

Hearts at Home www.hearts-at-home.org
Phone: 309-888-6667 Email: hearts@hearts-at-home.org.

Dr. Elayne Savage www.elaynesavage.com
Phone: 510-540-6230 Email: elayne@elaynesavage.com.

Good reads:

- "At-Home Motherhood, Making It Work For You," Cindy Tolliver
- "Myth of the Perfect Mother: Parenting without Guilt," Jane Swigart, Ph.D.
- "Professionalizing Motherhood, Educating and Equipping Mothers at Home," Jill Savage
- "It's Not the Glass Ceiling, It's the Sticky Floor," Karen Engberg, M.D.
- "Breathing Room — Creating Space to be a Couple," Elayne Savage, Ph.D.

Making the Transition Easier

by SUSAN DE RITIS of the Family and Home Network

- * Re-evaluate your definition of success: You are your own "boss" — the rewards are no longer given in paychecks, bonuses or promotions.
- * Set realistic goals for yourself: Don't expect to get things done according to a timetable — your children will set your schedule — learn to be flexible — set small goals for yourself and don't despair if only a few things are accomplished — you are home for your children, not your house.
- * Seek the support of family and friends: Network with other at-home mothers via a support group, playgroup, babysitting co-op, etc.
- * Find time for yourself and your marriage: Leisure is not a luxury — plan on away time to pursue your interests, find time to exercise, and meet with friends — don't forget to "date" your husband.

Get Organized

by ELAINE BLOOM

A Place for Everything

Get the kids into the habit of putting their toys away and categorizing things. Get some kind of bin or storage system. Dinosaurs here, toy trucks there, doll clothes together, etc. You can label the bins or put on pictures if the kids are too young to read.

Get the kids to start dealing with their own laundry. You might want to try a different color laundry basket for each kid so that they can take their own laundry to their rooms to fold, or hang and put away.

Get a large calendar for a central spot in the home, usually the kitchen. Use it to list everyone's activities so you know who has to go where and when. Include school activities, doctor appointments, family stuff, everything. This way you know what is going on. You may want to write each person's activities in a different color so it's immediately apparent who the item is for.

Make sure you have some kind of filing system set up for all that paper coming into the house.

Plan out your time. Use your calendar to block out time for food shopping and other errands so you don't just try to do it whenever you can get to it. Try to schedule your food shopping for the same day and time each week.

When you're going out to do things, group your errands. If you have to go to the post office, dry cleaners, video store, etc., group what you have to do so you're not running out again and again.

Put the same things in the same place every time. Car keys, check-book, anything else. Get your kids to put things in the same place every time. Papers they bring home from school about activities, permission slips, anything else should be put in the same place every time so there is no hunting for it when it's needed. Set up a box or bin or basket and make it clear that this is where the stuff goes.



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mom when she needs to run errands. With an extra adult in the car, she can leave the kids in the car with someone when she has quick errands to run, such as the post office or dry cleaners.

And don't begin the job thinking you'll have a hot meal on the table every night and a spotless home. "Women about to stay home are under the great misconception that they will have tons of free time," says Susan Page. "Forget it. If your children are fed, cleaned, and loved many times a day, then you have done your job. If you managed to squeeze in a load of laundry or dishes, you have gone beyond the call of duty."

This is the reason flexibility is key. You have to be able to juggle many things at once and leave yourself some wiggle room. It's well known that if you're not paying attention to the kids (you're on the phone, for instance), the more attention the kids need. So stop trying to be Supermom and relax and enjoy your kids. Delight in their firsts, their smiles, the darling things they say. Childhood goes away too quickly, but dust tends to hang around.

The valuable qualities a woman learns through her Kappa Delta experience — responsibility, self-discipline, love —

help prepare her for a successful lifetime no matter what life path is chosen. The qualities needed for a successful career can make you a successful mother; and vice versa. Each family is different. Everyone has different parenting styles and different needs. No mother should feel ashamed of her choices.

For Susan Page, it was simple. "I absolutely loved my job and I hated leaving it. But I would never in a million years have stayed. My time with my kids is a gift."

Every mother should be given a chance to raise her children according to her beliefs. That is an important lesson to teach our daughters, the future Kappa Deltas. ☺

Carol Lynne is the pen name of Lynne Switzer Crowder, Alpha Mu-Mississippi, an award-winning freelance writer who has been a stay-at-home mom for five years. She lives in Columbus, Ohio, with her husband and four-year-old daughter, holds regular meetings with the dust bunnies under the sofa and has come to think of them as her best friends.



The Angelos wishes to thank the following stay-at-home moms for taking time from their busy schedules to provide background and assistance in the preparation of this feature.



Michelle Sens Novo, Omega Chi-Cornell, with Alex and Jennifer.

Lisa Palladino Claus, Beta Mu-Bowling Green State

Amy Coleman Knowlden, Zeta Epsilon-Kansas

Jennifer Evanoski Dugger, Xi-Pittsburgh

Sally Kish Twill, Alpha Rho-Maryland

Tammy Smith Call, Gamma Delta-East Tennessee State

Susan Duffy Fu, Alpha Rho-Maryland

Pam Oakley Dorris, Alpha Psi-Drury



Denice Chess Delgado, Epsilon Upsilon-Cal Poly/Pomona, with Sydney, 4 months, and Cameron, 3.

Anne Cheek Meyer, Alpha Tau-Oglethorpe

Susan Sansing Page, Epsilon Lambda-Alabama/Huntsville

Jenny Shrader Palmer, Alpha Pi-William and Mary

Elizabeth Nichols Mikkelsen, Omega Chi-Cornell

Mary Elizabeth Smith Christian, Epsilon Sigma-Wofford



Denise Richardson Jessup, Beta Rho-San Diego State, with Cassidy, 2.



Nancy Ward Platt, Beta Epsilon-Tulsa, with Kemmerling.



Shirley Mogen Stephens, Sigma Psi-North Dakota State

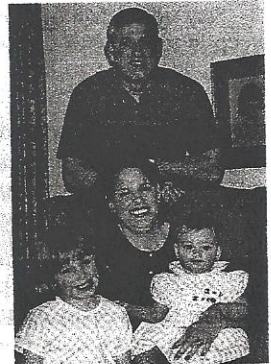
Lucy Reiser Stimmel, Sigma Kappa-Ohio State

Michael-Ann Pruett Schrick, Beta Epsilon-Tulsa

Amy Moffat Afont, Beta Rho-San Diego State

Stella Hac Murphy, Gamma Alpha-Northern Illinois

Micki Olin, Sigma Omicron-Illinois



Meg Lamond Zehmer, Epsilon Pi-Virginia Tech, with husband George, Eliza, left, 6, and Cameron, 1.



Libby Reedy Ray, Delta Tau-Morehead State, with Aaron, 5 months, and Christopher, 4.