

IOWA'S YOUNG ADULTS

Being a full-time mom is one season of our lives

By ALICIA BRUXVOORT

“What do you do?” asked the young woman sitting across the table from me at a social function. I was not surprised at the question, but for a moment I struggled to respond. I am not ashamed of what I do, nor is my job a secret. Rather, my career of choice is so complex that I have a difficult time describing it in a simple response. My current career includes being an educator, a religious instructor, a counselor, a nurse, a cook, a housekeeper, a chauffeur, a dietician and a coach. I am one of a growing number of young women across the country who choose to pursue motherhood as a full-time job. My decision is not the result of a lack of other career opportunities, or the financial luxury of being out of the work force without great sacrifice. Instead, I am pouring my time and energy into my family because I have rejected our culture's belief that a woman can “have it all” instantaneously.

Since the feminist movement of the '60s and '70s, women have been “liberated” from the home.

We have been inundated with images of the superwoman — the one who achieves great career, personal and family success all at once. However, it is evident that “having it all” and having it all at once come with a high price. Our society is filled with insecure children, disconnected families and burned-out women. The myth of the superwoman is simply that: a myth. Already a decade ago, Claudia Wallis, who wrote *Time* magazine's lead article on women in the '90s, said, “The superwomen are weary, the young are complacent . . .” Our culture has convinced women that we must attain all our goals — personal and professional — in the “prime of our life.”

We set timelines and push ourselves to “make it” before we reach the age of 30 or 40, or whatever other limit we have adopted. In the process, we live in a fast-paced world filled with stress, guilt and the nagging feeling that we are missing something that may truly matter.

Perhaps it is time for women to “liberate” their families and themselves and choose to view life as a series of seasons, each holding a different opportunity

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for “having it all.” Author Barbara Hunter suggested, “As women, we can't ignore our human connections, except at real peril. Nor can we ignore our intelligence and gifts except at great personal cost. Yet it is possible to give our families our valuable time and personal commitment. We can have it all — but not all at once!”

As women begin to recognize that they are truly needed in their homes during the child-raising season of life, they may face difficult decisions in their workplace. However, whatever the sacrifice, the intangible rewards of putting one's family first will be numerable. Research proves that the first seven years are most critical in a child's development. Who better to teach, mold and encourage our next generation of young people than their own



Alicia Bruxvoort and her husband, Rob, have two children, Lukas and Lizzy.

mothers? With women's concentrated effort, the home of the new millennium can become a haven for family members wearied by

the world, and the home can be a necessary school for life. More and more, child-development experts are proclaiming what

parents have known all along: “That to be fully human, a child needs to be intensely loved and cared for by someone who won't pack up and leave at 5 o'clock.”

Embracing life in seasons is not a step backward for women; rather, it is a step forward for the American family. Imagine a culture filled with focused and ambitious women who have recognized that a successful life is a gift to enjoy over time, not a trophy to attain all at once. What a difference this attitude could make in the lives of our children.

In the words of French Nobel laureate Francois Mauriac, “We are molded and remolded by those who have loved us, and though the love may pass, we are nevertheless their work, for good or ill.”

I am grateful to be joined by many other young women who believe that “having it all” is a lifetime pursuit, and that taking time to mold confident and kind children who are intensely loved is a privilege and a joy in a fleeting, but important, season of our lives.

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