

## Respect for Motherhood

Sometimes the best way to learn something is by doing it. Our greatest lessons are from first hand experience. We can only understand others and respect their contributions by taking on their roles and responsibilities first hand. Recently, I had to take on the role of a single parent. I was thrown into the fire of full time motherhood.

Nothing could have prepared me for this education. My wife had to travel out of state for a family emergency and I was left alone with our six year old son who was sick with the flu. My lessons were many, but the most profound thing I learned was respect and admiration for my wife and all mothers.

My week with my son could be described like the movie, *Mr. Mom*. This movie is a classic comedy where the husband has to take over the care of the house and children while his wife becomes an executive. In the film, he fumbles through all of the normal household duties such as laundry, cleaning, shopping, daycare, and cooking. In the end, he gains the experience to become a great *Mr. Mom*, but mostly he learns respect for his wife.

Having to put on my wife's shoes for a week reminded me of a quote from Steven Covey which is, "I don't care how much you know, until I know how much you care." The truth of this statement only became clear to me after I had to care for a sick child. My life was frantic. I had to run my podiatry practice, do all the household chores, get my son to the doctor and dentist, and care for his illness. I experienced what my wife is always trying to tell me about her life when she says, "I have no time for myself." I now understand her frustrations.

My week as *Mr. Mom* gave me a test of all the stress reduction techniques covered in these biweekly articles for the Record Bee. My patience was short; I was tired, hurried by everything, and anxious. I was confronted with practicing what I preach and importantly, trusting in the process. I had to focus on deep breathing, in being kind, grateful and forgiving to myself and others. Although not easy all the time, these methods of coping with stress helped me get through the week. Now my son is healed, and I have a greater trust in the process of stress management. Mostly I have increased admiration for all mothers and for everything they do for a family.

One way to strengthen your marriage is by understanding and acknowledging all that your spouse does to run the house. It is wise to play the role of *Mr. Mom* to integrate this lesson. There are many ways to do this, all of which can be done with degree of mindfulness. I have written about mindfulness in the past and you can review the principles by visiting the articles section on my web site at [www.drmcquaid.com](http://www.drmcquaid.com).

Simply stated, mindfulness pays attention to the breath in the present moment. It does not matter what you are doing, you just feel your breath while paying attention to whatever is happening. You can fold the laundry and pay attention to your breath. No one has to even know what you are doing. You can do the dishes, peel a potato, or go shopping with a

sense of mindfulness. Take out the trash with the spirit of helping those in our lives that do so much for us. Breathe in, breath out, and remember to put the toilet seat down. You will be less stressed, and your spouse will feel grateful and appreciated. My admiration, patience and respect for motherhood have been changed forever. Now the challenge is to add mindfulness to remind myself to slow down and smell the roses.

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