

The Circus of Life

By Megan Arivella

Most parents who see me at preschool drop-off in the mornings are probably certain that I'm a stay-at-home mom. I can usually be seen with my 2-year-old daughter on my hip, decked out in Hello Kitty sunglasses, rain boots on a sunny day, and the binky she fought me from pulling out of her mouth. One particular morning, a sea of Spiderman, Disney characters and SpongeBob attire flooded our vision. My 5-year-old son looked down at his nice dress shirt and jeans and then quizzically up at me. Pajama Day! I debated returning home to search the laundry pile, but I guiltily wished him a good day and left.

It occurred to me that even a stay-at-home mother whose calendar is organized with everyone's birthdays, PTO meetings, book fair dates, wedding invites and all the other things that keep the family busy and crazed can mess up sometimes.

Staying home was never on my radar. I worked hard to develop my career and felt empowered keeping track of the dates for Grandparents' Tea, Spirit Week, and being able to afford daycare, for the most part. We were a well-tuned machine, my family. Sadly, it only worked well when my husband didn't have to go to work at 5 a.m., or someone didn't get a fever in the middle of the night or someone wasn't complaining about not wanting to go to daycare. I was a full-time working mother who totally felt like a superhero. Supermom. Supernuts.

We decided that our family could use a little change during one moment of desperation. Life has a way of presenting situations that we otherwise might not consider. So last September, I took a leave of absence from my full-time job to take another full-time job surrendering to my children.

I found out that life deals similar hands whether



Megan Arivella and her children, Cadence, 2, and Brogan, 5.

you're a working or stay-at-home mom. It's just about managing your time differently either way. Even now, with the ability to make my children Mickey Mouse pancakes on a Monday morning, I still struggle to get them out the door and into my two-door car. I'm caving in to the idea of a minivan every time I offer an empty threat to pull over on the side of the highway during their declarations of war.

At the end of the day, I still find myself craving a bubble bath and a good book. When I worked full time, I always told myself that I would create a blog, turn the family cassette movies into a DVD and touch up the paint in the bathroom. Those bucket-list items go untouched. Now, my time is consumed with my jobs in the kitchen, on the playground, and ongoing family commitments, among other things.

I think life seems to give us just what we need exactly when we need it. My family needed a different way of life. I do have the opportunity to spend more time with my children, but in comparison to the limited time working moms might have with their kids during the week, is it quality or quantity? Either way, mothers can mess up, feel guilty and relieved in the same breath. The grass is not always greener – it's just a different shade. Our kids quite simply love us just the same. ■

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