

In this empowering book, author and working mom Stephanie Williams looks at leadership through the "lens" of motherhood, and shows working mothers how to apply leadership skills, developed in motherhood, to professional leadership roles.

Mommy Leadership: How to Use Your Motherhood Experience to Grow as a Leader

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Mommy Leadership



*How To Use Your Motherhood
Experience to Grow as a Leader*

STEPHANIE WILLIAMS

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9826054-0-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010922064

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Empow*WORD* Publishing 2010

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Empow*WORD* Publishing
P.O. Box 414
Dearborn, Michigan 48121-0414
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Cover design by Ivory Coast Communications.
Interior graphics by R.Allen Graphics & Photo.

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INTRODUCTION

If you are a mother, there is a leader in you. You may or may not have developed or exercised the leader in you, but rest assured that she is in there. You have influence on the thoughts and actions of others. It is the purpose of this book to help you identify your current leadership skills and develop them to their fullest potential. Whether your leadership contribution is in a Fortune 500 company or in your local PTA, it is a contribution that you should fully equip yourself to make. You owe it to those you lead and you owe it to yourself. You can make a difference in your environment, whether it is at home, work, or your community. Your potential is limited only by the limits you set for yourself.

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One day, it occurred to me as I drove home from work to my husband and children that I felt trapped in motherhood. Of course, I am ashamed to admit it because I know children are a gift from God and motherhood is a blessing. So why did I feel trapped? Based on the recent events of my life, I became keenly aware of the constant weight of responsibility for my children's well-being and development. The time I spent doing the very best for my children left me little time, if any at all, for my own personal and professional development. I didn't want to take on more challenging assignments at work for fear they would steal time that should be devoted to my children. I realized more challenging assignments are generally the cost of admission for leadership positions in the workplace. It was the same situation at my church. I wanted to be more involved and take on more responsibility at my church, but who would take care of my children while my husband was busy? I felt stagnant. I felt trapped. Then another thought occurred to me. Why does my development as a leader have to be separate from being a mother to my children? The answer is that it doesn't. Why can't I use the same skills at work that I use in motherhood? The answer is I can (with a little modification that is.)

The truth is that motherhood offers a wealth of opportunity to develop leadership skills. Every day as a mother I learn something else about myself, about relationships with others, and about achieving my objectives. Each lesson is so valuable that when I reflect on it, I find new ways to add to my growth as a person using that lesson.

Introduction

Every now and again, we hear a research study on what stay-at-home moms would earn if they were paid for the job that they do. Stay-at-home moms work hard. Sometimes there is a misunderstanding of that truth. Because of this truth, working moms continue to search for the elusive balance between work and family. Whether stay-at-home mom or working mom, motherhood is arguably one of the most difficult jobs around. While many moms make it look easy, motherhood requires women to develop and motivate people, resolve conflicts, manage limited resources, handle crisis situations, use creativity to solve problems, and the list goes on. If these skills were listed on a résumé, it would look quite impressive. Many of the situations mothers are called upon to handle can easily be likened to leadership situations. Sadly, mothers seldom get the credit for how much they do with so little. Some moms have successfully developed amazingly efficient and effective "systems" of managing work while raising children. What is even more disappointing is that mothers themselves often don't realize the skills they have developed and regularly practice in their daily lives.

The purpose of this book is two-fold: 1) motivation and 2) instruction. Motivation is the number one purpose because mothers, like leaders, cannot effectively motivate others (children or employees) if they themselves are not motivated. It is important for mothers to understand the value of what they do and the lives they affect. Mothers shape the adults of tomorrow. Those adults will make up our society. It is my objective to make sure that every mother I reach recognizes the "big job" that she does. Motherhood is

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not for the faint of heart. Any mother can tell you of the many times she was stretched by being a mother. From the time her child is born until adulthood, the responsibilities are numerous in caring for that child. It takes a lot of courage to be a mother...especially these days. The world is not always a safe or welcoming place, and to nurture and train a child to deal with the culture of today is difficult. It seems that there are so many precautions we need to teach our children to help keep them safe. Furthermore, the fortitude a mother must have to guide her child through the struggles of life should not be underestimated. It normally is not smooth sailing from ages 0 to 18. More often than not, stormy seas are encountered at some point in raising a child. Yet these experiences give a mother great insight on relating to other people, problem solving, crisis management, and other beneficial skills. The motherhood experience adds to a woman, not take away.

I have a friend who was interviewing with another company while on maternity leave from her current employer. She was so concerned that the potential employer would be turned off by the fact that she had a baby. Many women feel the same way because society doesn't yet understand that motherhood can bring out the best leadership qualities in a woman and enhance them by their practical implementation into daily life. I admit that before motherhood I had more time and schedule flexibility, but I have never been so resourceful and creative since I became a mother. Believe it or not, our motherhood experience can be an asset at work and not a liability.

Introduction

My second purpose for this book is to teach women a simple method of capitalizing on their motherhood experiences for leadership. Through a series of four discrete stages, Mommy Leadership takes mothers from recognizing their specific leadership skills and talents to actually implementing them in the workplace. The process builds from there, and the result is that women will become better leaders at work, church, or whatever organization a woman chooses to serve. It is high time that mothers stop compartmentalizing their skills and talents and capitalize on all that they are and have to offer. Of course, no mother does everything right, but all of us can point to something we do well. That *something* is our focus.

As you read this book, take the time to reflect on each section and make it personal. Great leadership requires reflection. Many leaders are so busy leading that they don't think about the plusses, minuses, whys and how of what they do. They just do it. Reflecting on the skills you are learning from motherhood will give you great insight into the many ways you have developed as a leader, along with the potential leadership development you may want to pursue. Leading is just as much about what's going on inside the leader as it is about what's going on with your followers.

When it comes to your role as a leader, my message is clear. Find it, embrace it, and begin to build upon it. This book was written to help you begin (or continue) the self-discovery process of your leadership destiny.

Throughout the book, I will encourage you to also reflect on various aspects of motherhood and leadership. I recognize that mommies are busy people who seldom have

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long segments of uninterrupted time to spend to thinking, let alone writing something down. However, I feel it is important to do so in order to get the maximum benefit from this book. I cannot count the number of books I have started and not finished for lack of time. For that reason, the chapters have been intentionally kept short so that my readers can read and digest the information in small chunks of time. I like to call those chunks of time *Mommy Leadership Moments*. Enjoy each one of your moments.

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