

Women's advancement means having choices, not simply mimicking men

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VIEWPOINTS

Women's advancement means having choices to make decisions, not simply mimicking men

Glynis McBain, guest writer



When my first child was born in 1998, my husband quit his job and pledged to be a stay-at-home dad while I worked to support our family. We hadn't planned to have children, but when I became pregnant, we agreed that someone should stay home to raise them. We made a deal that whomever was making the most money when the child entered kindergarten would keep working, and the other person would stay home and raise our children.

That's a message about choice that isn't very common today.

As we have advocated for equal access and rights for women in every realm of society, we've forgotten that the pursuit of equality was really about giving women the same choices and access as men. Not making women into men in the process.

In honor of Women's History Month and International Women's Day, the message our young people need today is that every person, male or female, requires the strength and character to admit that the only person you must prove something to is yourself. Women's liberation comes from giving choice and opportunity to all people, on truly equal footing — not women mimicking men.

How a person defines success is an incredibly individual thing. It might mean raising happy, healthy, well-adjusted children. It might mean earning a lot of money. It might mean managing a large global team. And whatever that definition of success is, we must empower

youth to go for what they want — not for what society tells them they should want. We must convince them that they can want any outcome — even one that is not glamorous or in the spotlight.

Believe me, my husband fielded lots of teasing when he first quit work to stay home. He was an engineer whose colleagues sent him skirts as a joke, and he just rolled with it, knowing this was the best decision for our family. He was confident and courageous about doing something unexpected and out of the ordinary. Now, our children are grown, and he is enjoying his golf game.

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There is this feeling still that women have to give up something to be successful. And that's not true. My husband raised our three kids and never returned to work. Each of us has the choice to be a parent who works or a parent who stays home — and both decisions are 100 percent acceptable.

At least they should be.

It takes courage to listen to your inner voice. My husband makes dinner and cleans the house, and I earn the money. We are happy with this arrangement. I am glad we had the courage to be pioneers of the “Stay-at-home Dad” era while I fully realized my own potential as an executive, mother, wife and entrepreneur.

The goal for any of us, regardless of gender, should be measured by how grounded we are in our decisions. Decisions that allow us to do what is right for us personally, for our immediate families and thus, for society.

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