

For parents who work at home, another job is not an option

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There are certain job descriptions that can't help but call to mind stereotypes. Used car salesmen, for example, h about selling you a lemon. Firemen can be counted on for bravery. And stay-at-home parents? They're taking ca and happen to take care of their kids at the same time.

Toni Garcia Carpenter is the author of *Domestic Commando: A Stay at Home (R)evolution*, and she's trying to cl that definition, but the very words we use to define it. Domestic commandos, she says, are taking over.

"There's nothing passive about the term," Carpenter explains. "And I believed [stay-at-home mom] was complet to describe the enthusiasm I had for the job and the work I put into it.

"Not to mention, I have issues with the term housewife. I didn't marry a building."

Though Carpenter finds some people diminish her value based on career choice, she says, "The self-awareness a that comes from disregarding the judgment of others, while being true to yourself is extremely empowering."

The author attributes a change in attitude to the decline in popularity of at-home parenting, which is far less con in previous generations.

According to Statistics Canada, in 1976 there were over 1.4 million stay-at-home moms and 20,000 stay-at-hom the number of at-home moms decreased to 433,000, with at-home dads increasing to 54,000.

Now, with fewer at-home parents comes less family time. A Canadian study shows that 15 years ago, women spe 248 minutes a day with their families. In 2005, that dropped to 209, and continues to drop today -- for both me

Although the changing economy plays a role in this shifting dynamic, Carpenter thinks a shift in attitude may pl; bigger role.

"The effective by-product of the mission to get out into the workforce and to compete on an equal basis was the c the at-home parenting role for those who took that path."

She notes that it's popular to claim the need for two incomes, yet there are families that manage on a single inco who want to be domestic commandos, she recommends rejecting the pressures of having the greatest gizmo of tl buying time with your children instead.

And while the media may refer to this brand of full-time parenting as the toughest job in the world or what have finds it neglects to elevate or affirm the path these parents have chosen, effectively creating stereotypes that affect this profession.

"The most you get is the occasional 'mommy makeover,' which just implies that you are not everything you should be. Mostly stories about balancing career and family."

Claire Wilson chose to stay home to raise her three children, and while she agrees that "stay-at-home" is a passive she still calls herself a 'stay-at-home-mommy.' "There is no shame in that."

But that doesn't stop others from trying to make her feel like there is.

"I am a punching bag for many," says Wilson. "I don't feel respected by others. I get mean comments from other school all the time. Or, they talk of all the material items they have that I lack."

And though she has had to sacrifice trips, Wilson finds the return on her investment far outweighs her sacrifices items can't replace love and quality time."

Just like any one career isn't for everybody, neither is being a stay-at-home mom or dad. And the same way some profession shouldn't think less of someone in another, people aren't entitled to think less of a person who prefer career path of parenting.

So, if ever you ask yourself or re-evaluate what you want to do with your life, you can now consider another position.

Domestic commando: apply within and apply with confidence.

"Is it viable for me to be a domestic commando?" Here's what Toni Garcia Carpenter has to say:

Start with a reality check of your paycheque. What's your net pay? Look at costs of working: lunches, lattes, tips, childcare, transportation and so on.

With one less income would you be in a lower tax bracket?

What can you reduce or eliminate? Change your cable package, refinance your home at a lower interest-rate, set thermostat cooler in winter and warmer in summer. It all pays off.

Be flexible. Is part-time employment possible?

Imagine if something happened to the person who babysits, cooks, cleans, chauffeurs - replacement would be expensive. Consider an insurance policy.

You never know what's possible until you explore your options.

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