

Feel Great about a Job That's Never Done, Episode 42



Power of Moms A Gathering Place for Deliberate Mothers

April and Saren tackle the age-old question of how to feel great about a job that is never done.

Motherhood is never done. We are continually wiping counters and noses, cleaning up the same mess over and over and OVER again. But even in these repetitive chores it is important to remember that this matters. All these little things of motherhood really do matter and it all adds up to be beautiful.

We want to feel that we are progressing, and that we are good moms and doing good things. There are so many beautiful moments that make us feel like we are doing a good job, like little arms around neck, 'I love you's' from little voices, and seeing our children progress and learn. Instead of earning money, we are paid for in kisses. But there is a flip side: Mundane work that is repetitive.

In all their research about motherhood, April and Saren have seen numerous examples of individuals who have felt that motherhood is a waste of time or boring or exhausting. These ideas hurt April's heart because she's been there. She (as I'm sure many of us have experienced too) was overwhelmed by the lack of emotional and intellectual stimulation and repetitiveness of daily tasks. In her heart she knew that motherhood mattered and strove to find meaning in the mundane and value in this work.

Usually it takes time to think and consider doing things differently, especially on days where it feels like you've cleaned up exact same toys from same places, folded the same shirts, done the same laundry, and mopped the same floor, and let's not mention the diapers and other gross messes. These repetitive tasks can get frustrating; a lot of this stuff is not very fun or glamorous.

It's important to remember that every single job has mundane and repetitive tasks. Accountants update spreadsheets. Even in Hollywood, which seems like it's always glamorous, actors spend hours memorizing scripts reading the same lines over and over again. Even at Power of Moms, a job which is so exciting and adventurous, involves a lot of computer work, such as answering emails and linking up the back end so that all the connections go to the right places. April gives the example that they never stop painting the Golden Gate Bridge. They start on one end and by the time they finish, they have to start all over again.

Saren gives the example of a TED Talk she heard about how one control group had to build Legos and the second control group takes them apart right in front of the first group. When asked to build them again for more money, the first control group refused.

In motherhood, what seems particularly stressful is that these tasks are undone almost immediately right before our eyes without any real payoff. Payoff in motherhood is different. Our payoff is the relationship we are building with our children.

April's key point on building these relationships is to never do mundane work alone:

- Empty the dishwasher together
- Clean up the house together
- Pull weeds together
- Fold laundry together
- Sing, laugh, and turn on music together
- Make it fun

Turn these mundane tasks into relationship-building activities. Remember to see what works for you. Working one-on-one might be better if your kitchen is small. Do dishes with one child at a time. Structure it for your family but try to have a buddy or do partnerships by assigning two kids to a task.

How can I make it fun? Set a timer: last week we cleaned the house in 6 minutes, let's see if we can beat our time. Have a scoop of ice cream or some small reward.

What are you making? Allyson Reynolds was at the craft store. While waiting for fabric, everyone asks 'what are you making?' On this day, Allyson had dragged her kids out so not everyone looked super awesome but she looked down in her cart and asked herself, "What am I making?" In motherhood, we're not just making a meal or vacuuming a carpet. We're making a family.

Look beyond what's right in front of us and see what is coming. April and Saren talk about their own parents explaining that all the seemingly mundane work turned into raising a large family, whose members are now raising their own families, and brought an abundance of posterity who love them. All this effort is building the next generation who can contribute to society.

Ultimately, we are building individuals. We are helping them learn the things they need to learn, not just soccer and dance, but how to keep up a home and have their own families. Keeping our eyes on the bigger picture turns the mundane into the beautiful, especially when you take the time to listen while your hands are busy.

Think about what we as women are becoming in the process of motherhood. Look over your years of parenthood and see what you have learned. What characteristics have you developed? April cites that she had learned to prioritize, to value relationships, to be patient, to be industrious – all of these skills she can add to her resume of motherhood.

During those particularly tricky moments try to find the time for some quiet thought. Try putting your feelings into a poem. Saren was able to sit down and sort out her feelings in her poem, Motherhood is Movement.

It is always important to remember that though motherhood is full of the hard and repetitive stuff, it is also so important and beautiful.

Other sources:

Motherhood is Movement. Found at: <http://powerofmoms.com/2012/06/motherhood-is-movement/>.

TED Talk, "What Makes you feel good about your work?" Found at:

http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_ariely_what_makes_us_feel_good_about_our_work

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