My Immigrant Parents Sacrificed So Much For My Success That I Felt Guilty When I Decided To Be A Stay-At-Home Mom

Being a stay-at-home mom is a title I never thought would apply to me. I didn't grow up dreaming about a wedding or life with my future husband. Having kids and getting married were life events that I thought *could* happen *someday*, but I wasn't too concerned about when or if that "happily ever after" that society feeds us would arrive.

Fast forward to this moment, when I'm watching the sun go down in the window of my five-month-old son's room as he masters the fine art of rolling over. It's not where I imagined I'd be, but I know it's exactly where I need to be, because right now, I'm meant to be a stay-at-home mom.

@quetzal_photography_ / Instagram

My parents escaped war-stricken El Salvador in the 1980s to come to Los Angeles, where they have worked hard to achieve their piece of the American dream. My dad worked long arduous days at multiple jobs while my mom was the quintessential ama de casa. As a first-generation americana, it was ingrained in me to take advantage of my birth-given opportunities: go to school, get a career and lead a "better," or more conventionally successful, life than my parents.

Accepting that, however, hasn't been easy.

This was the plan. After graduating from high school, I was off to college in San Francisco. While there, my parents were

still working hard to ensure I was able to complete my degree, helping me pay for my tuition, textbooks, inflated rent — everything.

I eventually graduated from college with a degree in journalism and began a career in marketing, working as a copywriter. My success was the happy ending my parents sacrificed their lives for. I saw the pride in their faces when they talked about my education and professional achievements, and it felt good.

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After working in San Francisco for several years, I returned home to LA with my boyfriend-turned-husband. Two years past, and I was 30 and pregnant. A trabajadora, I worked throughout my pregnancy, learning to juggle assignments and meetings with the effects of never-ending morning sickness. I worked up until three weeks before my due date, the first decision I made that prioritized myself, as a mother, and my son.

(Courtesy of Sandra Ventura Razo)
My little guy arrived five days past my due date and after more than 14 hours of labor. I spent those first three months acclimating to mom life. It was tough, rewarding, draining and empowering.

As time passed, the day I would return to work was looming. I thought I would feel excited to get back to my career, but to my surprise, all I felt was dread. Then that was followed by guilt. I didn't want my maternity leave to end, and I felt ashamed that I was doubting whether I wanted to go back to work.

My parents had given up everything to get me through college, so what would their sacrifices be for if I decided to stop putting my degree to use — if I became a stay-at-home mom?

While filled with guilt, I decided to postpone my return to work outside of the home indefinitely. Now, instead of eight-hour shifts at my desk, my day consists of never-ending pumping and breastfeeding. Rather than meetings, I am comforting and reading to my son. Instead of afterwork dinners or drinks, I am giving my little one a bath and trying to coax him to bed by 7 p.m. so I can get two hours to myself to eat and sit before I sleep and do it all over again the next day.

@pamsoprani / Instagram
This may not look like success by dominant societal standards, but I've learned that it is to me. I listened to my heart and trusted my instincts, and, for me, that has been a greater personal triumph than any promotion or job title.

My parents' hard work has helped me become the person I am today, someone they remain proud of. Their sacrifices, and their strength, wasn't to give me material success but rather to provide me with choices.

And in this moment, being a stay-at-home is the only choice for me.

(Source: fierce.wearemitu.com)