



MISHPACHAH II

Lessons From Our Sisters

Conversation Pieces

Ellie

What do you do?

An innocent question and one often heard in gatherings. Often though, *the question* doesn't mean how do you spend your time or how do you earn a living, but who are you? Twenty years ago, I had a ready answer: I was a trainer, I worked on a help desk, I wrote curricula for a government contractor. Then I had children. For a year or two, I worked part time, then I left my job to stay home with my kids. Now when someone asks the question, I respond "I'm a stay-at-home-mom." The person usually changes the subject or just stops the conversation.

As a mom, I probably have more roles than before. Much has been written about the uncompensated work that moms do as cook, chauffeur, tutor, financial advisor, nurse, and more. But is that who I am? I have loved being home with my kids and watching them grow up, being able to attend their school performances, picking them up from school and hearing about their day, taking them to the doctor when they are sick. I have been fortunate enough to do things for myself, too. I learned new crafts, I exercise, I volunteer. But I still face the silence after *the question*. If what I do is raise my kids, what happens after they grow up and leave the nest? If raising them is what I do on a day to day basis, then who am I when they leave?

According to salary.com's 2014 survey, a stay-at-home mom works 96.5 hours a week for an annual salary of \$118,905. I know that my husband and I made the right decision and that we were fortunate that we could make that choice. Still, even though I knew I was contributing to the family in other ways, I didn't have that six figure salary to show for it. Money isn't always tied to value, but for me, it started to be an issue, as I began to think about my life after the kids left the house.

There are many things that I could do. It would be a new start though, since I could not go back to what I had done before. I didn't have a profession to return to. What I have is what I learned as a mom so I decided to start a new business while the kids are still at home. I took my passion for fitness and exercise and started a coaching and motivation business. I help others reach their goals while I work to reach mine. As anyone who starts a business knows, it is not easy, but I am committed to this. I have an answer now to *the question*. I am a mom and I am an entrepreneur, and one could not have happened without the other.