

"working mother" (Continued)



just as upset after six months as he did the first day—not every morning, but often enough to show that he still didn't accept the situation happily.

The times Glen *didn't* make a fuss were almost as bad as when he did. Then he'd assume a cool adult air of ignoring us, ignoring what we did and said. That attitude often carried over the week end.

Every Saturday Glen became hard to manage. I tried to make up for the week's absence by devoting as much time to him as possible between household chores. He in turn would stick doggedly at my side, refusing to eat his lunch, hating to take a nap for fear he'd wake up and find me gone, balking at every request.

On Sunday, a miraculous change took place. There were no objections to nap time, Glen would eat without a murmur, he smiled and "talked" and was as agreeable as he'd been disagreeable the day before. In short, he seemed to be rebelling against the week's absence on Saturday, but felt things were back to normal by Sunday. Monday the cycle began again.

IT MIGHT be argued that Glen would have been happier in a nursery with children his own age. We tried that, too. When our regular baby sitter's husband took sick, she had to stay home, so we made arrangements to leave Glen with a neighbor who had three children all close to his age. They had a fenced yard with playthings and the mother's older sister was staying at the house to help out.

It seemed like a fine arrangement, even though it meant taking Glen away from home. Glen took to his new friends immediately, and they all played well together. However, he was still upset when we left him, and clung to me when I picked him up at night.

Even now, 10 months later, he loves going to play with those children; but if he thinks I'm going to leave him there, he starts to cry. How can I doubt that he preferred his own home, when he still recalls those days with such misgiving?

All the time I worked, I suffered a feeling of guilt about Glen. This was at its worst when he took sick. No mother can do justice to a job when her child is ill—not if she wants to do justice to the child.

There were also the problems which should never have arisen, such as his slowness in toilet training and the trouble we had with his eating habits. Rebellions which started when he was suffering the confusion of being left every day carried over even after I had quit my job.

It was a great relief when I finally decided to stop being a secretary and start being a mother again, this time with the determination that nothing short of catastrophe would get me back behind a desk!

Now that I'm with Glen every day, I can see how much of his growing I missed, how many "firsts" there were in his young life that are forever lost to me. There are so many milestones a child reaches only once—the first intelligible sentence, the look of triumph over mastering a new skill, the first awareness of music, the delight at learning new words and sharing new experiences, the wonder at seeing and becoming acquainted with animals.

It seems a shame to bring children into the world and then let someone else raise them, causing you to miss the most precious years of their lives! How many mothers of grown children live to lament: "If I had it to do over again, I'd never work while he was young?"

How many working mothers have children who are ill-behaved or just plain bewildered?

What will these children remember best when they are grown—the extra things mother was able to buy with the money she earned, or the hours they spent alone, without the companionship and guidance of the person who means most to them?

WE HAYWARDS are a happy family now. I'll never know how many precious minutes with Glen I missed, or how much my absence affected him, but I'm looking forward to the next few years. I know there will be discouragements, the bills will pile up, and the housework will get monotonous, but I'll have the satisfaction of being with my son, of knowing that he'll get the best start in life that I'm capable of giving him!

I'll be there when he ties his own shoelaces, when he discovers the pleasure of paper and crayons, when he builds his first model airplane. I'll be there to comfort him when he falls and skins his knee, when he climbs his first tree, when he reads his first words out of a book.

I may not be able to buy him the most expensive toys, the biggest wardrobe, or the shiniest bicycle, but he will have a home where he can feel secure, the companionship of unhurried meals, and a sympathetic ear whenever he needs it.

When I see children being hustled off to nurseries in the dark hours of the morning, I'll know that, God granting us all good health, my son need never know that unhappiness again!

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