

# introduction

**a**s a life coach who specializes in coaching mothers, and a busy, sometimes crazed mother of three, I've listened to a lot of mommy voices over the years. On the playgrounds, with my clients, with my friends, in current research and the media, at my workshops, and even in myself, I've listened to the voices of discontent. The struggle to be happy, to feel whole, to feel okay about taking care of ourselves as *individuals*—outside of mommyhood. Mothers who wonder, “Why do I feel selfish because I want to work? Or exercise? Or go somewhere, alone?” Mothers who will join a book group or recipe group, but rarely make it on time, or at all, because their children seemingly need them constantly. And mothers who put off their dreams until their children are raised, only to realize, once the kids are gone, that they don't know who they are anymore.

As a group, we've become trapped in micro-mommying, feeling guilty for taking “too much” time for ourselves. The problem is, the minute amount of time you allow for your own development and self-fulfillment has been crammed into the twelve minutes in between car pools every other Wednesday! Many moms have lost touch with the dynamic, capable, amazing women they are. We've perfected modern motherhood with its intense child-focus but have lost pieces of ourselves in the process.

I understand because I've been there myself. I've experienced the same confusion about how to juggle my own needs with the seemingly relentless mommy duties of our generation. And the conclusion I've reached, after much research, work, and observation, is that we need to continue, rather than deny, the development of ourselves to be fulfilled. We need to stop micromanaging our children and let them live their lives and learn their own life lessons. We need to share the load, put our guilt in the graveyard, and rediscover our true passions and interests. We need to take a step back, take a breath, and ensure that our lives reflect our fundamental values. The term “values” has been thrown around a lot lately. What does it really mean? Our values are our deepest beliefs and convictions about what is really important. That is, if you were to imagine yourself in five years observing your own funeral, what would you hope your family and friends would be saying about you? How would you like to be described as a mother? As an individual? What would you like them to say about what you offered to the world around you? Your answers to these questions reflect your deepest values. If you feel a little out of touch with the answers, you aren't alone. Many of our personal and parenting choices today are driven by the culture we live in, the outside world, rather than by our true values and beliefs, the inside world. This book will help you

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rediscover your center and allow your life decisions to flow from this authentic place.

There are books that analyze the complexities behind how we

have developed our overidentification with the mommy role, but what's lacking is helpful advice about what to do about it. That's what this book provides. It's comprised of little bits of guidance to help center you. My aim is to help you prioritize and learn to say no, to stop caring what those elusive "other people" think, and to make conscious choices based on your own values. I want you to enhance your life by helping you reconnect with your authentic self, your true self, and feel good about it. Ultimately, I want you to discover your happiness and to absolutely love your life.

On your path toward fulfilling yourself, my intention is that you will maintain strong relationships with your children and parent them in ways that promote their own independence, thereby allowing them to grow and giving you the space and security you need to feel good about developing yourself. As you try so fervently to help your children develop into their best selves, I encourage you to refocus some of that energy into living *your* best life. If your children are your greatest priority, as mine are, know that they benefit from seeing you as a whole person. By following the tips in this book, you are not abandoning your children. On the contrary, you are giving them the tools they need to develop fully and value themselves as you continue to develop and value yourself along with them.

I recommend that you begin with the first three chapters, as they are the heart and soul of the book. Beyond that, I encourage

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you to skip around to explore whatever topic suits your needs at the time. The tips are short and easy to follow, so you can pick up the book at your convenience and immediately put them to use. And keep in mind that what you find helpful now may be different from what you will find helpful a few years from now.

As you work through the book and demonstrate to your children that you matter too, they, in turn, will learn to respect you as a separate individual. By observing you value yourself, they will learn to respect themselves too. And your family will benefit from the joy that can't help but blossom within you, because you are no longer losing your self. You are finding it, nurturing it, and loving it.

I send you my warmest wishes as you discover which tips in this book will help you be *both* a loving mother *and* a dynamic individual. To your well-deserved success and happiness,

—Bria

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