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Life After Baby: From Professional Woman to Beginner Parent

Wynn McClenahan Burkett
Wildcat Canyon Press (Aug 31, 2000)
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Burkett brings the experience of participating in a mom's support group home by interviewing a selection of mothers on topics concerning women switching from the challenges of full-time employment to the unknown world of motherhood. Burkett's research grew out of her personal experience of seeking a support network after leaving the business world to become a mom.

Her method of stringing a thread of quotes together into loosely defined chapters seems awkward and disorganized at first, when one might expect a more narrative approach. In the end, however, the interview method works because this is exactly how conversations would flow in a real mother's group.

The author covers nearly all the common questions and concerns a woman who is moving into the motherhood season of life might ponder: How will I react to my new baby? How will having a child influence my career, my self-image, my relationships, and my role in society?

Clearly the audience is a more educated group of women. This can only explain such statements as "Motherhood can be viewed as a passage in which each of us must perform the associated developmental tasks without the techniques that worked for us in our pre-baby life."

Many of women quoted seem to have translated their career skills into mothering skills. Says one mom, "With children, I'm improving my skills in organization, planning, delegation and organizational behavior. I'm going to put 'Mother' on my resume when I go back to work."

Burkett also covers subjects such as how having children affects the mother's role with the husband and with one's parents. With spouses, her interviewees sometimes reported loss of equality in the marriage due to the mother's decreased financial contribution. With parents, however, some women found validation—that their own parents could now view them as true adults. She concludes her report with mothers discussing a child's influence on the parent's spirituality, the impact of adding more children to the family, or wrestling with the decision to stay home permanently or return to their jobs.

Burkett's work should prove useful to executive women who are now "entry level" moms. Each chapter should provide enough material to fuel a new mom's thoughts or perhaps discussion groups in a fledgling support meeting.
MARY SPIRO (August 16, 2000)

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