Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom

A Simple Guide to Personal Growth

by Shannon Rinckey

SAHMconsulting.com
Disclaimer:

While I have a Master of Arts degree in counseling individuals, couples, and families, this information is not therapy.

I approach *Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom* as one SAHM talking with another. I do acknowledge that many past family issues can come up for a woman when she is a SAHM – responding to how she was raised. To one degree or another, this happens to all of us. We all come from somewhere.

If you are having personal issues beyond the scope of *Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom*, that seem to interfere with your ability to be the kind of overall person you want to be, please resolve them with a licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (find one at [http://www.AAMFT.org](http://www.AAMFT.org)) or a Personal Coach (find them at [http://www.coachu.com](http://www.coachu.com)).
Contents

1 Who am I?
2 You & Yourself
3 Role Playing
4 Identity Loss
5 Self-Doubt
6 Boring Yourself
7 Feeling Ashamed
8 A Healthy Relationship
Who Am I?

& How Can I Help You?
Being a Stay At Home Mom (SAHM) requires more personal strength than most people realize. Were you surprised when you became a SAHM, too? The sheer amount of time devoted to your loved ones, never having a day off, giving even when you don’t feel like it, and nurturing is baffling. It’s sort of like being a dairy farmer – except the cows don’t need to be sleep trained. Why would any woman choose to be a SAHM, then, if in the end she’ll only lose her sense of self?

I’ll tell you why – because every bone in her body tells her what she’s doing is right for her, and every brain cell is telling her how she’s doing it is wrong for her.

Are you doing the right thing the wrong way – or at least the hard, difficult, disturbing way?

I deeply believe that if you want to be home to raise your children and you are totally committed to doing it, it is completely within your power to create ways to have time to yourself, grow personally, be creative, and enjoy life.

Other women have been where you are today, are there now, and will be there tomorrow. You are not alone. What is so unique about today’s SAHM-situation is that most SAHMs are educated women that want to be home. Never before in history has EDUCATION, CHOICE, & SAHMs come together at once. It’s exciting, but also frustrating. How do we just turn off that ambition? How do we handle jealousy of our husbands? How do we focus on our families the way we want to without losing ourselves in the process?

These are real concerns and SAHMs today need help working through them. It can be figured out. I’m proof. Read on.

This next section is probably going to feel pretty heavy. The reason is that I get into what a bad relationship with yourself feels like …and it doesn’t feel good. Hang with me, though, because while it’s difficult to look at the ugly side of what being a SAHM can do to a woman, it’s important to know where we can grow from.
You & Yourself

Identifying a Bad Relationship
If we are incapable of finding peace in ourselves, it is pointless to search elsewhere. - Francois de la Rochefoucauld

It’s surprising how many persons go through life without ever recognizing that their feelings toward other people are largely determined by their feelings toward themselves, and if you’re not comfortable within yourself, you can’t be comfortable with others. - Sydney J. Harris

You & Yourself

Strange as it may seem, your relationship with yourself is a huge part of SAHMing. It also indirectly (and sometimes directly) determines how you treat others. For example, SAHMs that are hard on themselves tend to be hard on their husbands and children as well. SAHMs that let themselves get away with too much, tend to let others get away with too much as well. SAHMs that don’t take care of themselves tend to cut corners on taking care of others. Of course, that’s not always the case.

In Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom, I’m going to talk about Role playing, Losing your Identity, Doubting yourself, Letting yourself get bored, and Feeling ashamed of your job as a SAHM. I will candidly describe how these things affected my relationship with myself. I’ve also added challenges to you, as the reader, to gauge where you are in your journey as a SAHM. In this section, I will outline self-issues that many of us SAHMs encounter, beginning with the red flags of an unhealthy relationship with yourself.
How to Identify a Bad Relationship (With Yourself)

I know that I can’t break up with myself or excommunicate myself ... from myself. (Huh?) If I’m really blowing my relationship with myself, I can’t just up and leave. For me, back in 2005, I wasn’t aware of how miserable I was. I went through each day with a chip on my shoulder. How can you tell if you have an unhealthy relationship with yourself, when you don’t even notice that you haven’t showered in three days? When it comes to tagging your inner world as healthy or unhealthy, how will you know? (Hint: it’s a Pass/Fail sort of thing.)

General aspects of a bad relationship with yourself. Here’s the list I came up with:

- **Cheating/unfaithful.** Are you unfaithful to yourself (your body, time, energy levels, morals, standards)? Do you purposely do things that are bad for you? Do you consistently put yourself in situations that aren’t good for you?

- **Avoid being with yourself (alone).** You can’t stand being alone because it forces you to look at yourself instead of picking others apart.

- **Second-guess yourself constantly.** You’re never sure of a decision because you fear what others think ... and you fear thinking for yourself. Maybe you don’t want to be responsible for the outcomes.

- **Lying.** Being dishonest with yourself. One quick check-in to see if you’re honest with yourself is to question how honest you’re being with others. (The two go hand-in-hand, I think.)

- **Judgment.** Never let yourself off the hook. Holding yourself to unrealistic standards, like being angry with yourself for not fitting in to your size 8 jeans six weeks after the birth of your fourth child. (*Insider Tip:* We tend to be judgmental of others in the specific areas we struggle in ourselves. Tend to be stingy? I wonder if you instantly notice that in others, too.)
• **Feeling ashamed of who you are.** (Similar to being ashamed of the person you’re with.) You may avoid going out in public or talking to strangers. Which leads to the next item on our list.

• **Isolation.** Some people are naturally introverts, and that’s great. Avoiding contact with others, is a whole nother issue. For me, being isolated tended to make me self-centered, because I was the center of my universe.

• **Neglect.** In terms of a relationship with yourself, one way to neglect yourself is letting yourself go. Not putting time or energy into yourself easily comes out as dressing like a slob, having a negative, sarcastic attitude, and not caring for your home. Also, not brushing your teeth or showering. The basics are let go.

• **Self-sabotage.** Doing things that practically guarantee failure, repeatedly. Such as taking off with the kids at noon to go to Target. You know that kids without lunch and naps are highly difficult to keep happy. You’re setting yourself up to be frustrated and yell at kids and then resent being a SAHM because “I never get to do anything I want. Being a SAHM is like being in prison.” Yikes! That scene could have been avoided.

• **Putting yourself down.** There’s being humble, which shows good character, and there’s being a bully to yourself. I’ve thrown the occasional pity party for myself, who hasn’t? It’s not easy to get out of, though. Especially if it becomes a habit.

• **Cruelty.** Being unmerciful and hateful towards yourself. The tape going in my head would tell me what a failure I was. How I was a joke. How unimportant I was. I was fool enough to believe it for a long time.

• **Disrespect.** Letting others walk all over you. Not speaking up for yourself when something is genuinely important to you.

• **Self-centered.** Failing in relationships usually involve at least one selfish person or action (looking out for their own needs and wants first). Honestly, during the time when I was my lowest, I have to admit that I was being really selfish.

• **Rejection.** Trying to be someone else (Martha Stewart) because I didn’t accept (or like) who I was.
- **Abuse of any kind.** Alcoholism, drug abuse, anorexia, bulimia, abusive words or thoughts about yourself, knowingly putting yourself in precarious situations, physical violence, cutting, etc. Anything to avoid your life and your reality.

If you could identify with more than half of these items, you may very well have an unhealthy relationship with yourself. Don’t be ashamed of it, though. Look, you’re in the right place. Keep reading. You’re not alone! I’ve been there, too, and have climbed out. Here’s my story.
Role Playing

"The demon images of perfect motherhood that haunt us are very largely of our own creation."

-Judith Warner in Perfect Madness
When I became a SAHM, my universe changed. I went from happy, independent college girl to critical, perfectionistic wife to bleary-eyed, cooped-up SAHM. It was a down-hill slope for me. And the slope dead-ended in a pile of slop at SAHMhood.

During the time I transitioned into my new roles in life, I was sinking. I felt like I had more demands placed on me and had less freedom. My sleep and wake times were determined by the baby. I was “on” 24/7. I also had the housework to keep up with – which seemed like it took so much more effort and there was never an end to it. I procrastinated on most housework because I resented being the one that had to do it. So the house was a wreck – which I learned does not inspire greatness.

On top of it all, I was always home (read: isolated) and never felt like I could relax because my “work” was constantly staring me in the face. I really didn’t like my life as a SAHM, but was terrified to ever admit it. I thought I was doing the right thing by staying home to raise our child. But I wasn’t happy at all; I felt trapped. Not knowing how to be happy and a SAHM at the same time, I tried Roles. Roles filled the void - temporarily.

The three roles that I tried on that ended up being detrimental to me are: The Martyr, The People Pleaser, and The Perfect SAHM. Of course there are other roles out there that SAHMs can try, but I am not as familiar with them, so I didn’t even want to try to act like I knew. I’ll let some other brave soul out there share her story of other roles she played.
The Martyr

A good mother gives of herself to her children, but she has a self to give. A good mother nurtures herself, develops her own interests, even if in small ways, and grows as a person along with her children. Children don't need us to be their martyrs; they need us to be their mothers. –Aviva Jill Romm

A SAHM playing the Martyr role is an intelligent woman, in terms of strategy and positioning. She seems like the ideal SAHM to everyone, including herself. But wait … it's not as good as it sounds. The Martyr continually puts herself in the position of suffering, by her own choice. This may be a way of getting attention or sympathy from others, or to be in control of the impression others have of her. It's a strategy (conscious or unconscious) to put oneself in a good light. **SAHMs that have a lost sense of identity are especially prone to the Martyr role because this role is a good option for seeming like a very good mother and wife when she’s truly over it.**

I tried on the Martyr role and got stuck for 3 years. In terms of playing The Martyr and control, I’d let myself get so stressed out over all that I had to do as a SAHM, that I’d end up **demanding** time away to “relax.” I had a very predictable cycle of running myself into the ground and then having a tantrum about it. I used these fits to force my husband to think 1) that I was sacrificing a lot to raise our child and take care of our home; 2) he was not appreciating me enough; and 3) if he didn't take the kid now and let me leave the house for a break, there was going to be hell to pay. Who’s going to argue with a frantic, sleep-deprived woman? As it turns out, my husband and kids always paid the price for this role I played. I really regret it. But, I finally got my head out of my butt after a few years of that.

I put myself into a corner by thinking that I had to do all of the housework and child rearing, while forgetting to take care of myself little by little along the way. **I took on more than I could handle and with a real sour attitude.** (So, was I doing it on purpose!?) I would do things like stay in my pjs all day or not shower for two days in a row, claiming that I didn’t have time to take care of myself. (I was looking for pity.) I conjured up an image of the kind of SAHM that gave everything to her family, and strove to be her. But did
this saintly-SAHM look disheveled, think irrationally, and feel maxed-out every day? Truth be told, I was wearing myself down and I was taking everyone down with me.

Be careful with the Martyr role. It's blinding and addictive. There is more to this game than meets the eye, in my experience. "Playing the Martyr" has a lot more to do with controlling others than it does being super giving. I was clinging to my stacks of dishes, sleepless nights, and loneliness to give myself a boost of self-confidence and piety. (Pretty sad.)

You may think being self-indulgent is the worst kind of SAHM there is. It’s not good, that’s for sure. But a SAHM that neglects herself on purpose in some sort of holier-than-thou fashion is just as harmful to herself and her family as the indulgent SAHM that goes shopping for herself every day, ignores her kids to go get her hair done, and never tucks her kids into bed because she’s busy going out and “being seen.”

Benefits of Martyrdom: There are kick-backs to every behavior, otherwise we wouldn’t do it. Feeling very important is probably the biggest benefit of playing the Martyr. Others are impressed with your unending well of self-sacrifice. You get a sense of control as a result of organizing situations to advance your role as a Martyr. Feeling as though you look very good in front of others (which is what counts most to you) is an added bonus. Like I said, real addictive stuff.

Downside of Martyrdom: Emotional fatigue. Feeling disgruntled. Exhaustion from doing everything for everyone while resenting it the whole time. It grows into ugly pride - which is a real turn-off. People will not want you to do things for them anymore because you rub your effort into their faces. Doing a bunch of stuff that you resent doesn’t make you noble, it makes you numb. Numb to your family. Numb to yourself. You fail to see who you really are and what motivates you to do what you do. Unfortunately, you can live a long time like this. Maybe even a lifetime.
**How to tell if you're playing the Martyr:** You feel like everyone in your life needs you - hands-on, 24/7/365. Deep seeded resentment. You complain about being a SAHM and how hard it is in at least 80% of your conversations with others - and your monologue hasn't changed for years. No real satisfaction over all that you endure in life. You feel like you must stay in your role permanently because many others rely on your sacrifices. The idea of giving up this role scares you. You frequently ask others for advice on what to do to improve your plight as a SAHM, but never do anything with the advice. (You ask advice as a way to tell others how hard your life is, not to find ways to stop your “suffering”.)

**What to do if you don't want to play the Martyr anymore:** Begin outside of the home and move inwards. Decline to do any more than you already are. Say that you’re “booked.” Then, start cutting the obligations you have outside of the home. It’s going to hurt, but you need to cut things out of your life that feed your Martyr role.

Next, decide to do things for your family because you choose to, not because you feel obligated or a duty to. I suggest doing this exercise for 30 days. Delegate tasks that you absolutely hate and offer to do ones that you don’t mind doing. Try making a list of tasks you like doing and don’t like doing. (You may not be sure, so do the task and then decide how you feel while doing it.) These ideas reduce the chance that resentment will follow your “giving” to others. I created this chart for you to get real, right now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>How it looks when I do this task</th>
<th>How I (really) feel about doing it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I like these tasks, and want to keep doing them... | Because
---|---
|  
|  
|  
|  

I hate doing these tasks, and want to delegate them... | Because
---|---
|  
|  
|  
|  

Last, figure out if the Martyr role really gave you what you were seeking – a place, attention, importance, etc. “Thank” the role for helping you during a time of weakness, but decide that it was a crutch. The nature of a crutch is to help us for a short time, not permanently. We eventually have to do the work to walk on our own. Let the crutch know you don’t need it anymore. This is a funeral of sorts, as strange as that may sound.

**People Pleaser**

This happy-looking little role runs very deep for me. I began my People Pleasing, like I imagine most girls do, with my parents. I then moved on to teachers and little friends at school. From there, it was classmates, employers, and complete strangers. (Isn’t it so organized of me to compartmentalize my damaging roles?)

People pleasing ruined my relationships with others and set me up for failure in those relationships. The reason is because **acting in a way that is not truly genuine eventually caught up with me.** Like, if your new boyfriend says his favorite singer is Bob Segar, don’t immediately say, “Oh, Bob is my favorite, too!” when you really don’t even know who he is. Because eventually you’re going to be making out with that very same boyfriend in the backseat of his car and **Night Moves** will come on the radio and you’re going to
stupidly say, “Oooh! I love this song! Who sings it?” And that boyfriend will wonder what else you’ve been lying to him about. (Umm ... because Bob Segar sings Night Moves.)

**Perks of People Pleasing:** Everyone wants you around (even if it’s only when they want something). Overemphasizing what other people think about you keeps you busy and allows you to avoid deeper personal issues. The "high" of pleasing someone lasts quite a while and makes you feel really good about yourself. You appear to have it all together - friendly, helpful, and responsive to others. People may look up to you.

**Downside of Pleasing:** People pleasing usually ends up with you giving the silent treatment, wishing that people "understood" you, or feeling taken advantage of. Disappointment and regret take over, and you wonder what is wrong with everyone. You feel like your rights and feelings aren't respected, but you haven't the faintest idea how to change it. You never take the time to think of what you genuinely want - you may not even know how you really like your eggs prepared. (Remember Julia Roberts in *Runaway Bride*?) You are dependent on others for your sense of competency, and this can fluctuate. There is a false impression that you’re doing a lot for other people, when in fact you need to do things for them to please yourself. You are not genuine.

**Diagnosing the Pleaser in you:** The quickest test to see if you’re a people pleaser is to ask yourself if you are consistently giving more in all of your relationships than you get back. People pleasers never win - they are never satisfied. You strive for approval from others on a continual basis. You lack personal boundaries (for example, you regularly allow people to talk down to you or tell complete strangers personal information about yourself). You can't seem to relax. You feel like everyone has to like you. You go crazy if someone you don’t really care about doesn't like you.

**What to do if you don’t want to play People Pleaser anymore:** Question: What you are really afraid of? Is it fear of rejection for being who you truly are? Do you lack personal strength to be true to yourself? Are you ashamed of something? Test this idea: say "no" to something for no good reason. A simple, polite, and firm, "No thanks" can go a long way. How do you feel afterwards?
Here’s another crazy idea: **Teach others how to please you.** It isn't as narcissistic as it sounds. This is actually about being more honest with people. I want you to let people know what you like, what you want, and what you really need from them – politely and with class. People aren't going to have to guess with you anymore. (Won't your husband be thrilled!?) Teaching others how to please you will eliminate the "games" that you play with people. It's a waste of time and energy and distracts from the relationship. This has nothing to do with manipulating people or suddenly becoming demanding of others. It's about being direct with your needs and being gracious enough to give people time and space to respond to you. If people in your life are like, “No way, I'm not coming to your birthday party; I've got to wash my toenails!” well, you've just learned that that person was never really there for you. (Sorry.)

**The Perfect SAHM**

"Striving for excellence motivates you; striving for perfection is demoralizing." - Harriet Braiker

*Once you accept the fact that you're not perfect, then you develop some confidence.* - Rosalynn Carter

Like each of the roles described so far, I tried out this old girl, too. I'm actually still coming out of playing The Perfect SAHM. Prime example: It's taken me three years to get up the guts to create *Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom*. I've been scared of putting myself out there. What if it fails? What if other SAHMs think it's way off base? What if no one buys it? What do I do with myself then? Can I handle it? If it's not perfect, I don't think I can stand it. In my experience, perfectionism equals pessimism and procrastination.

I think it's fine to have high personal standards. But there's a big difference between high personal standards and perfectionism. I've always been an over-achiever of sorts, so I guess I kind of had this coming. **It's when I became compulsively perfectionistic that this role overtook my personality and it became a problem.** This happened when I became a SAHM.
I learned the hard way that my husband doesn’t expect me to be “perfect,” so why was I placing this unreachable standard on myself? What was I trying to prove? And who was I trying to prove it to? He consistently told me he’d rather come home to a happy wife than a spotless home. I thought he was ridiculous. Who can be happy in a messy home? (Ugh! Somebody slap me!)

To continue on my road to ridiculous-ness, I liked to think that I was “The Responsible One” and my husband was “The Slacker.” Sure, I did all of the housework and did the lion’s share of the child rearing, but I gave him no credit for working 40 hours a week, picking up groceries for me on the way home, giving the kids baths every night, always having time for me when I needed him, and being very conservative with spending money. I had this delusion that whoever is doing the dishes was somehow superior. YIKES! If I were on The Dr. Phil show, he would ask me, “Shannon, how much fun are you to live with?” And I’d cry and sob and say I’m a total Debbie Downer to live with, “Phil! Help me! Where’s Gayle? I need her to hold me hand.”

**What's so good about being Perfect:** A sense of superiority. You are intrinsically motivated to accomplish a lot in life - like losing the baby weight or being an excellent cook. Your house is probably pretty clean. I’d be safe eating food off of your floor. There is a big focus on the "doing" side of life, so you are fairly productive, even as a SAHM.

**Pitfalls of Perfection:** You lack the "being" side of life - including close relationships, leisure time, hobbies, and laughter. It's lonely because you are the only "responsible one" around your place. (It's because you’ve got it covered and everyone else can kick back and relax.) Being a really happy SAHM and having lots of things checked off your 500 Item To Do List may not mix very well.

The SAHMLifestyle may feel very empty for Perfect SAHMs. Trying to meet unrealistic expectations is a never-ending battle. Fixating on trivial things keeps you super busy, but drives you crazy. Others are intimidated by you and rarely divulge personal or vulnerable information to you. You avoid trying new things - even things like life goals that you know will eventually be very good for you. You are terrified of failing. You miss out on your marriage and your child and your life. You hide your mistakes and imperfections like the
CIA would hide an undercover agent (I just watched *Salt* last night). You give up easily and lack the fortitude to push through difficult situations. PS- Your husband might think you’re uptight and cold.

**How to tell if you’re playing The Perfect SAHM:** You’re likely a Type A personality - maybe even an oldest daughter. You oftentimes think in terms of if things are "good enough." (Instead of the real question, “Am I good enough? Do I really matter?”) You are vigilant about how you, others, and life in general "should be." You correct your husband and children more often than not. You assume the position of "Judge" over many people. Strict adherence to rules and authority is highly important to you. You are most comfortable being in control of every situation you find yourself in. You rarely finish tasks because they might not turn out perfectly. It's very hard for you to change plans because you are not very flexible. You may have secret, compulsive behaviors to feel in control (alcoholism, anorexia, shopping, sex, etc.). Still unsure? Here’s a [perfectionism self quiz](#) to keep you busy.

What to do if you want to give up your reign as The Perfect SAHM

- **Make a few mistakes, on purpose.** Don't fill a form out completely. Honk your horn at someone and yell, “Hey good lookin’!” as you drive by. Mismatch your shoes and laugh about it in public. Did the world crumble under your feet? Can people deal with you being human? Do people around you honestly expect perfection from you? Experiment and see for yourself, because you won't believe me unless you try.

- **Be gentle with yourself:** Perfect is not the goal in life, because you will always fall short. Understand that no one requires you to be perfect. Maybe as a child you were expected to be perfect. You are no longer a child. One good thing about adulthood is that you have the chance to bring people and experiences and thoughts into your life to heal past hurts. Let go of trying to be perfect, and you will be a better SAHM for it. You may need to write “I am enough” (or another phrase like this that scares you and bring tears to your eyes the first few times) on a 3x5 index card and carry it around with you.
• **Relax:** Could I afford to give myself some slack? I decided to relax my stringent standards and enjoy my life more. As a result, my children were more affectionate, my husband talked to me more, and even I drew funny things on the chalkboard to announce the dinner menu. In turn, I was more “me.” A relaxed me (not a too-tight-French-braid, clenched-butt-cheek me) is a happy me.

• **Journal.** I have kept a journal since I first learned to write (in 3rd grade, in a Precious Moments diary with a lock on it!). It’s just been my natural way of expressing my thoughts. Journals feel "safe" to me because I can write anything and not feel judged. Also, after pouring out all of my thoughts and emotions, I usually figure out my problems on my own. Here a few of my favorite models: Moleskine, Sunblooms Journal, Smock Koi Notebook, and Tree-Free Greetings.

In my experience, Role Playing is just a way to fill the unknown when transitioning into a new phase of SAHMhood. As a temporary crutch, it works. As a long-term solution for self-definition, it’s dangerous. If you see yourself in parts of my story, do something about it! I gave examples of how to stop, so pick one and go for it. You have nothing to lose but yourself. Speaking (writing) of yourself … Next, I’ll talk about Losing Your Identity, which is a natural progression in the relationship problems a SAHM can have with herself if she lets the Role Playing go too far.

When it comes right down to it, role playing is evidence of an unhealthy relationship with yourself.

**Challenge:** Can you identify at least one role you lean on too heavily as a SAHM? If you can, it’s ok. Re-read the section if you have the same struggles I had on how to get out of it. If you’re experiencing another role, Google search the role or shoot me an email for more help: shannon@sahmconsulting.com.
Identity Loss

Who, me?

“A self-actualized mother sets an example to her own daughters that becoming a mother expands identity, not limits it.”

—Aviva Jill Romm
Losing Your Identity

The biggest lie I fell for that ended with me losing my sense of identity was that somehow, there wasn't time for me in my life. First and foremost and completely, I was the Stay at Home Mom. Children can be very demanding in terms of the time and attention they require to feel secure, fed, stimulated, and even to sleep. Rightfully so. That’s a big reason I decided to be a SAHM. Then, there’s the husband. He still needs love, respect, and friendship. And last, there’s me. Yes. Dead last. What I need … what I want to do in my “spare” time … what I’m hungry for tonight. It felt like I was last in my own life (and everyone else’s, too).

To be honest, I didn’t handle the transition into SAHMhood very well. I used roles as crutches to define myself. It only left me bewildered, bitter, and frustrated. Quickly, I lost my sense of self.

It seems like after my first two children were born, I went through periods of wondering who I was now that I was a mother. How do I be? To my detriment, I honed in on being someone’s mother and tossed out who I was as a total person. This ended up affecting every relationship I had. There’s a little theory out there in the family therapy world called Systems Theory. It states that one change, in this case, my sense of identity, ripples into every corner of my life. It’s so true! This includes changes for the good, and changes for the bad.
**Here's the bad changes:** I pushed away extended family members and old friends. I didn’t even let my husband hold our oldest all that much! I insisted that I was the only one who knew anything. I was home with a baby that seriously didn’t care if I was having an identity crisis or not. He just wanted to be nurtured by me. It wasn’t his problem, and the sooner I figured that out, the better.

Despite rational thought, I kept trying to be someone I was not, and I struggled. I put so much time and energy into trying to be the perfect wife and mother (the Perfect SAHM role) that I lost myself. No longer was I funny and spontaneous. Instead, I tried being over-controlling and critical. No longer was I creative and gregarious. I became resentful and closed-off. To tell you the truth, I was totally biting the dust. Not knowing who I was “supposed” to be was having a direct effect on my everyday life as a SAHM. I disappointed a lot of people during this dark time in my life because I really didn’t know who I was anymore.

Identity is always changing. It’s developed and redeveloped through interaction. You may feel trapped, invisible, and helpless to change since even the idea of not being a SAHM sends waves of guilt through your body. It’s easy to get lost in the responsibilities and day-to-day activities of being a Stay At Home Mom. **Warning:** Over-identifying as someone else’s ideal wife or mother is a rookie mistake. Pros know that being a SAHM is only part of you who are, not the whole story. If this is you, welcome to the club. Here’s what you can do.

**Four Strategies for Regaining Your Sense of Identity**

*Give thanks for what you are now, and keep fighting for what you want to be tomorrow.* -Fernanda Miramontes-Landeros

1. **Check-in with Yourself:** Do you know who you are and what you’re about? Do you have a strong sense of self, or does it sway with the wind? Do you strive to be who you think your husband and/or children want you to be? If you answered yes, please don’t be overwhelmed. It took many years for you to develop your sense of self, and it will take some time to figure that
out again. Be patient with yourself. The best way to regain your identity is to simply begin where you are and have the courage to really look at yourself. As Tag Team would say, “Check it, direct it, let’s begin.”

2. **Quit Setting Yourself Up:** When I realized that I had set myself up for a lost self-identity by Role Playing, I stopped right in my tracks. I knew I had a history of being incredibly hard on myself, but what I was expecting of myself was really absurd. Worst of all, I was the one doing it to myself, and I kept failing. Once I let go of the Roles (usually it was pesky old Perfect SAHM), I started seeing progress in knowing who I really was.

3. **Change it Up:** If you are serious about changing your identity, strive to change the interactions you have with key people in your life. You can easily do this. It can simply be that you change the way you greet your husband when you wake up. Sing a sweet, loving song to yourself before you go to bed each night. Or smile and strike up a conversation with the librarian when you check out your next novel. This goes back to Systems Theory that I mentioned before (make one small change to create ripple effects in your whole life).

4. **Put up reminders:** How many pictures of you are on your walls at home? Now don’t get all conceited on me and commission a bunch of oversized portraits painted of yourself. In my case, I’m usually the one taking the pictures, so there are very few pictures of me in existence. I don’t want my kids to think they had some absentee mother, or feel like I’ve been on the sidelines of my own life, so I am more conscious about asking my husband to take pictures of me and getting over feeling self-conscious about seeing myself on video or in pictures.

Put up that picture of you riding a bowling ball return like a cowgirl. Why not display the day you dressed up like The Cat in the Hat for toddler story time at your local library? It’s okay to have little reminders around the house (since that’s where you are 24/7) to show how much fun, creative, intelligent, or compassionate you are. Having quotes, sayings, or paintings that gently remind you of who you are will let your surroundings reflect you and support your identity in a subtle way.
**Challenge:** Do you think you’ve lost your sense of personal identity since becoming a SAHM? It’s an important question to take time to consider. If so, pick one of my ideas for regaining your sense of identity and begin redefining your fantastic self.

Remember that you are in there somewhere. You are still you. You’ve added to your life, not erased it. Continuing the progression down the rabbit hole of SAHM relationship pitfalls, role playing leads to loss of identity. Loss of identity leads to doubting yourself. Let’s dig into that next.
Self Doubt
& How to Pull Yourself Out of It
Self-Doubt

So I was trying to fit into someone else’s shoes and feeling lost. Naturally, I then struggled with feeling like I wasn’t a capable, interesting person anymore. Because I’m lazy, I blamed it on being a SAHM. For sure, I had a constant, inner dialogue doing with myself that I wasn’t good enough and that all of my talents were being wasted at home. Blah, blah, blah.

I’ve come to learn that self-doubt is normal for many SAHMs. As you can tell, I had a serious case of it. Henry Ford once said, “Whether you think you can or can’t, you’re right.” By not having a sense of who you are anymore, it leaves a lot of room for imagination. If you make up your mind that you are crappy at everything, for example, then that’s exactly what will start to happen. In my case, all that I could see were my weaknesses. My kitchen was never clean. I was always tired. I was impatient with the children. I looked frumpy. I was boring and had no friends.

When I continually focused on what was “wrong” with me (a classic Perfect SAHM sign), I bought right in to this negative mindset, it became a self-fulfilling prophesy. It ran me into the ground. I avoided going out, even to the grocery store, because I wasn’t sure what to say to other people. I avoided family relationships because I felt too fragile to handle criticism for being home. Self-doubt was probably the biggest hurdle for me to overcome in order to feel successful as a SAHM.
The Three Keys to Unlock Self-Doubt

Being a SAHM isn’t a prison sentence. And it isn’t a dead end in life, either. There is (at least) one thing we can do to regain the self-confidence we once had (or never had at all!). This is to categorize the Obligations, Choices, and Priorities in our lives. For me, I kept thinking that every detail of my life as a SAHM was my obligation, when really, it wasn’t. I had lots of room for negotiation and choice when it came to childcare, chores, free time, how I dressed, etc. I’ll elaborate:

1. **Obligations.** These are tasks or attention that needs to be given by me (or you). I cannot delegate this to anyone else. By tagging your obligations, you’re telling yourself, “Okay, these are the things that are my responsibility as the SAHM of the family.” Note that at different stages of you and your family’s growth, these obligations will change. (Like, you won’t be in charge of potty training little Aiden when he’s 18.)

I think the trick to obligations is to figure out what they are, and then how to do them on a consistent basis, with a good attitude, and the easiest way possible. Does the obligation need to be done every Tuesday or every day after lunch? Find out when the best time is, and get ‘er done. Dig down deep to find a way to have a good attitude and make it fun if the obligation is a pain in the butt. Smile like the Joker. Listen to your favorite music. Something. And to find out the easiest way to actually carry out the obligation, you may need to do some research, ask other SAHMs for tips, or do some deliberate trial-and-error to figure out how to become an expert, or at least a speed racer.

Let me spell out some of my personal obligations for you.

- It’s my obligation to give my children attention when I am home, and not neglect them. Attention in the form of listening to them when they talk to me, hold them when they get hurt, and interact with them for playtime at least once a day. They also need to learn how to play without me, so I have to balance this out.
- It’s my obligation to feed them and change their diapers when I am the only adult at home.
- It’s my obligation to eat well, exercise, and relax so that I can continue to be healthy. Also, this is within reason, and not obsessive compulsive.
- I have made it my obligation to be kind to my children since that’s the only way to teach them to be kind to others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are your Obligations?</th>
<th>When/How often does it need to be done?</th>
<th>What’s your attitude like during this obligation?</th>
<th>Where can you learn to become really good at this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Choices.** Figuring out what aspects of my life that I have choice over gave me a sense of self-determination. I’m not as trapped as I used to think I was. When carrying out my choices, it’s like doing little exercises for self-confidence. When I consciously say to myself, “Hey, I chose this, and it turned out great!” I made steps towards silencing self-doubt. I like her (Doubt) to shut up a little bit.

Even if every day you decide to put on mascara because you have great eyes and it makes you feel better about yourself, it is one less thing that you have room to criticize yourself about. You can choose these things for yourself. These little gems didn’t dawn on me until much later in the game, but now you’ve got it, and you can make the changes you are able to. SAHMs have more choices that we give ourselves credit for.
• I can choose to dress like a frump or like a normal, hygienic adult woman.
• I can choose to be negative about my job as a SAHM, or to be positive about it.
• I can choose to eat junk food and drink coffee all day when the kids aren’t looking to console myself for being a SAHM, or I can eat healthful salads, lean meats, and plenty of water throughout the day. I have both options available on any given day.
• I can choose to sleep in until the kids are up, or I can get up early and get dressed before I make breakfast.
• I can sing to my kids while I do the dishes, or I can complain about it and make a scowl face.
• I decided to breastfeed all of my children. Because of this choice, it’s my obligation to be around to nurse the babies when they need to be fed for the first year of their lives. Sometimes this really bogs me down, but I have to remember that it is a choice I’ve made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What choices do you have a SAHM, that you might not have realized before?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Priorities.** Within my obligations and choices, I can prioritize what is most important to me. I have the ability to manage my life with priorities. This is where I can have a greater sense of control in my life than I had before, when I thought everything was an obligation.
- I had planned on leaving the house to have an hour of free time today, but since the baby is teething and only wants me, do I wait until I get him to bed later, or go now anyway?
- I am exhausted at the end of the day. Would I rather crash on the couch and wake up to a dirty kitchen in the morning, or go finish the dishes now and wake up to a clean kitchen?
- I really want to fit back into my pre-pregnancy jeans. Is this medium Mocha Frappe with whipped cream worth the setback?

**Challenge: Bust Self-Doubt for the Ugly Liar that it is.** Divide up your Priorities, Obligations & Choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Top 5 Obligations</th>
<th>My Top 5 Choices</th>
<th>My Top 5 Priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I hope I’ve convinced you that self-doubt can be kicked out. (That rhymed, I know. I read a lot of Dr. Seuss.) It’s all a head game. And we are smart, so we can figure it out. However, if you want to see what happens if you don’t stop self-doubt, I’ll introduce you. Her name is Boredom.
Boring Yourself

Not cool

“Boredom is a matter of choice not circumstance.”

– Elbert Hubbard
Boring Yourself

My So-Called (Boring) Life

The last place in the world you should be boring is at home. Mommy-brain has a lot to do with an unstimulated mind. I remember the day I realized I was totally bored being a SAHM. I was nursing the baby on the couch on a snowy northern Michigan day while watching soap operas. The dishes were piled up, I was still wearing pajamas, and I was seriously more interested in Theresa and Ethan's relationship problems than my own life. (Note: I would have never admitted to anyone at the time that I was watching Passions compulsively.) It's like I was so caught up in diaper changing and nap schedules that I was losing perspective. I was bored.

You are more likely to lose a piece of yourself if you let yourself be bored at home.

How can you spice up your mental life?

Remember what excites you and makes you happy. Look at those old pictures that I suggest you put up of yourself if you need ideas. Figure out ways to spend some time doing something that you really enjoy and are good at (considering the amount of time and money you have available). This may be the change in momentum you need to realize that you are the same girl you've always...
been. Get those neurons firing, SAHMs. If it’s safe, legal, and appropriate, let’s list them. I’ll go first. You can jump down to the end of this chapter to write your super-cool list.

Not taking care of your intellectual needs is a symptom of being out-of-touch with yourself. An interesting and well-educated SAHM is one that can think well. Invest your time in people, experiences, and resources that cultivate your mind. Read books that really make you consider things you haven’t before. Subscribe to magazines, journals, blogs, or forums that zero-in on new ideas. These are brain fireworks that will improve your mental power and proficiency.

**Shannon’s Boredom Busters**

- Reading novels like Amy Green’s *Bloodroot*. I love to read – and it’s a great escape from the everyday.
- Learning to garden. I’m terrible at it, and I’d really like to be a *plant-helper* rather than a *plant-killer*.
- Writing and journaling.
- Making stuff to decorate my home. I’m working on making a big “R” out of cardboard and covering it in cool scrapbook paper. We’ll see how that turns out. I go to [YoungHouseLove.com](http://YoungHouseLove.com) often to get ideas.
- Teaching my children something I really love, like painting, bird-watching, roller skating, or about Craftsman style houses.
- Planning one or two ways for my family to help those that are struggling.
- Investing time in my spiritual life so I can have peace, be humble, and a blogger with perspective on life.

**Challenge:** What are 3 things you can do to spice up your mental life within the next 2 weeks?

- ____________________________________________
- ____________________________________________
- ____________________________________________

I was role playing, losing my sense of self, and bored. Oy, what a life! These negative things led me to feeling ashamed of being a SAHM. We’re almost done with this ugly self-analysis. Let’s finish this.
Shame

How to turn it on its You-Know-What
Feeling Ashamed

"Hi, my name is Shannon, and I’m a Stay at Home Mom."

Is being a SAHM something to “come to terms with” or admit? I have gone through periods of being embarrassed to tell people that I’m a SAHM. It used to flare-up the most when I was around my husband’s co-workers. If I knew I’d be in these situations ahead of time, I’d worry about what to wear, how tone my triceps were, how to do my hair - as if my physical appearance would make up for my lack of paid employment. I tensed up just thinking that I might be judged as boring, lazy, or frumpy.

On my own, I'd feel ashamed, too. I carried home what I thought others thought of me. It certainly affected my SAHMing. When I allowed myself to think of SAHMing as a second-rate job, it ate away at my confidence and affected day-to-day performance. I let housework go, let my appearance go, and didn't pay as much attention to the kids, for starters.

Think back to the day your child entered your world. The attachment, the love, and the protectiveness you felt for your child was amazing. Your body was made to house, feed, and comfort your baby. Wanting to be home to raise your child is a loving thing and a natural reaction. You are forever irreplaceable in your child’s life. Whoa. Just writing that put a lump in my throat. Considering all of that awesome-ness, what is there to feel ashamed about?
Turning Shame Around

1. **Why Did You Decide to Stay Home?** Revisit your reasons. I’m sure they were good! Ask your husband if you’ve forgotten, or look through pictures and home videos of those first months as a SAHM.

Here’s my most compelling reasons for being a SAHM:

- **The relationship.** I wanted my kids to know they were wanted and loved and to show them by being there for them.
- **Assurance of care.** I wanted to be sure my son had enough attention and affection, was changed and fed when he needed to be, and was in a loving environment, by the same loving person every day.
- **Development.** Knowing that the early years of life are the most important for social, cognitive, and physical development, I chose to be the one to share this vital stage with them.
- **Simple Lifestyle.** I liked the idea of being in one place in the comfort of our family home. I didn’t want to live my life by a daycare’s or workplace’s timetable. I wanted to avoid any situation that would require me to choose between my family and anything else.
- **Informed decisions.** Nutrition, sleep schedules, baby wearing, breastfeeding, and diapering were all up to me and guided by my intuition, not an institution.

What are your reasons?

- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
• **Face Facts.** Is there *really* something wrong with being a SAHM? If you have any *valid* reasons, please list them.
  
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________

3. **What’s Working?** What do you do as a SAHM that you are really good at?
  
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________
  • ____________________________________________________________

4. **Appreciate:** Look in on your children when they are asleep and see how precious they are. Look around your home and reflect on how much influence you have on how everything runs, looks, and even smells. Think about moms who don’t get to stay
home with their children and desperately want to. Think of your husband and how hard he works to take care of you, and how rarely he asks for a thank you. The regular habit of gratitude goes a long way in life, no matter what you do.

5. **Give yourself credit.** Honestly, you do support the family in unique and valuable ways. You’d have to hire a housekeeper, gardener, cook, and day care worker (at least) to do everything you do for your husband and children. Don’t believe me? Simply call a few Daycare Centers and ask what they’d charge for watching your children full time (per hour, per week, per month, per year). I called around, and here’s what the numbers came out to in my area for four children ages 7, 5, 3, and 1:

- Daycare 1: $350/week = $1,400/mo = $16,800/yr
- Daycare 2: $920/week = $3,680/mo = $44,160/yr
- Nanny: $400/week (including room & board for nanny) = $1,600/mo = $19,200/yr

Would you agree that your time is at least worth what a daycare provider would get? (By the way, Daycare 1 didn’t know what price to quote me because she has never before, in 22 years, had four children from the same family come to her daycare.) Obviously, child care is only one part of your job as a SAHM. Put it all in perspective, though. What you do has a monetary price tag!

**Challenge:** Looking back on your reasons for being a SAHM (and not an adult woman that wants to be home), and revisiting those first few months being home, do you regret your decision now? Once you get rid of the shame, you will see that you think and act more confidently regarding your position as a SAHM.

It seems like the deeper you go in closing yourself off as an individual and defining yourself as a SAHM, the more pervasive the problems become. The issues become part of your personality if left unchecked. Moving out of a place where you are having an unhealthy relationship with yourself, there is a wonderful place where you are healthy and accepting (maybe even a bit proud of) yourself. Let’s see what that looks and feels like.
A Healthy Relationship with Yourself

Aaahh, that’s more like it
A Healthy Relationship with Yourself

Working my way out of the role playing, losing my self-identity, self-doubt, boring myself, and feeling ashamed was a tough hill to climb. I wasn’t even quite sure what I was going to cling to, but it had to be better than all of the self-sabotage I did in the past. I soon discovered that the “peak” of this hill was a healthy relationship with myself. What does that look like for me?

- **Kindness:** I still work hard at this. I tend to be demanding of myself. The tricks that work for me are writing ‘Kindness’ on the chalkboard in my kitchen, reading or watching something about kindness, or thinking of how I’d treat someone else if they just did what I did. For me, being kind to myself was to turn away from perfectionism.

- **Respect:** It’s important that I do things that are good for me, even if I don’t feel like it. That includes avoiding things that set me up for failure, like drinking too much coffee when I’m stressed, being lazy about doing what I know works, and letting myself spin out of control with worry.

- **Acceptance:** This is who I am, and that has to be enough. I try not to be someone I’m not. I’ve accepted, for example, that I’m not going to be stopped on the street for my graceful walking since I’m pigeon-toed and likely to trip over my own feet. I also have unusually large big toes and so peep-toe pumps are not going to work for me as much as I’d like them to. I have feet issues … and I’ve accepted them.

- **Forgiveness:** I have a tough time with this because I have been deeply hurt in the past. However, I’ve gotten over most of those things that held me back from living without regret in the present. I tend to be a better SAHM when I don’t have the past weighing on my shoulders. This takes time.

- **Time:** Just like any relationship, I had to learn to invest time with myself to learn what I like/dislike and form my own opinions about things. Work in some time doing something you enjoy. You may need to get up a bit earlier or rework the nap schedule, but it *is* possible. **Warning:** Don’t go overboard – you still have obligations to your family. Remember
your obligations, choices, and priorities. **Caution:** Don’t do dishes or fold laundry during time with yourself. Doing chores defeats the purpose of enjoyable time with yourself.

- **Generosity:** Giving myself time and space to grow. Not having unrealistic expectations of myself. Letting myself off the hook sometimes.

- **Honesty:** If I’m not good at something or need help, I admit it now. And if I did a great job, I admit that, too. Roles are good for avoiding exposing my true self. So, I try to be honest with myself. I am the first to laugh at how ridiculous I can be, nowadays.

- **Self-confidence:** Don’t be a mope or overly-focus on things I’ve done wrong. But also, don’t be prideful or a jerk over my accomplishments.

- **Comfort.** Sometimes I need to do (healthy) things for myself to get through a tough patch. Build-in comforting, nurturing foods, naps, places, and activities that give me what I need. As mothers, we need to have this plan in place for ourselves, since others might not notice us being run down or in a rut. You can specifically direct them to help you, or you can simply do it on your own.

- **Predictability.** Not only is this good for the emotions, but also for your body. Being extreme is fun for once in a while, but as SAHMs, being steady and reliable will put us ahead of the game in the long run. Slow and steady always wins the race. Go read *The Tortoise and The Hare*.

I still slip back occasionally to trying to be perfect or doubting myself. More often than not, though, I feel like I’ve developed a healthy relationship with myself. Being a SAHM has been the vehicle for losing, and then regaining inner strength. It has taken time, but it’s worth it. I can see a difference in myself and how I respond to those closest to me. It’s not easy to “give up” all of those crutches, but well worth knowing I can count on myself. When I have setbacks, I just continue to walk forward. I’ve come too far to ever go back. I sincerely hope you will be able to say the same.
You are an adult woman that has chosen a path in life that isn’t easy. Never doubt - you can do this.

*Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom* is the first product created by SAHMconsulting.com. I’ve got so much to share with you, and I have many projects lined up to create for SAHMs that want to be happy and fantastic at home, but feel a little stuck. If you’d like to be the first to hear about these projects, please sign up for my newsletter at [SAHMconsulting.com](http://SAHMconsulting.com). In the meantime, come back and visit me on the [Blog](http://Blog) and get tips on dealing with other emotional and psychological aspects of being a SAHM.

I would love to hear your feedback on *Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom*. What really resonated with you? What seemed totally off-base? I want to hear from you! Email me at: shannon@sahmconsulting.com

All My Best, and thanks for reading!

*Shannon*

P.S. On the next page, I’ve added my hand-picked Extra Credit, Tools & Tricks, and Resources for you to dig deeper. Enjoy.
BONUS

Extra Credit

Tools & Tricks

Resources
Extra Credit

SAHMEmotions. You may have begun this journey with *Becoming a Happy Stay at Home Mom* feeling stressed and trapped as a SAHM. Emotions can be a very sensitive topic for SAHMs. Sometimes we don’t realize how heavily we rely on our emotions to make decisions or determine our mood, thoughts, and actions. They’re powerful. They can be an ally. But they can also be a silent enemy when they run the show. To begin getting a handle on emotions gone wild, start to live in the present. There’s a great video for learning to actually do this [here](http://committedimpulse.com/) and a website here: [http://committedimpulse.com/](http://committedimpulse.com/).

Tools & Tricks

**Excellent quote to remember when tempted to Role play:**
“You may get lots of satisfaction from playing your roles well. There’s nothing wrong with that at all. But you can’t let that satisfaction turn into your reason for living. Your roles are bound to change – sometimes gradually, sometimes abruptly. And no matter how good you are, your roles are dependent on things beyond your control. Like other people.” –Thomas J. Leonard

Resources

Learn more about roles. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role)


Books on People Pleasing *The Disease to Please* by Harriet B. Braiker, Ph.D.

**Perfectionism sites:**
[http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/?page_id=113](http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/?page_id=113)

[http://cmhc.utexas.edu/booklets/perfection/perfect.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/booklets/perfection/perfect.html)

[http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200802/pitfalls-perfectionism](http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200802/pitfalls-perfectionism)

**Identity crisis** as a SAHM: [http://www.sahmthestword.com/](http://www.sahmthestword.com/)

Book for avoiding **boredom** at home: *The Hidden Art of Homemaking* by Edith Schaeffer (Note: This book comes from a Christian worldview, but does have applicable tips for everyone, such as food, environment, and gardening.)

Blog Post on **Keeping Sharp**: Be a Lifelong Learner [http://simplemom.net/13-resources-for-giving-you-smarts/](http://simplemom.net/13-resources-for-giving-you-smarts/)