

A MOTHER'S TRUE ROLE

Words: Tanya Curtis
(behaviour specialist and counsellor)

MOTHERHOOD, MUM, MOTHER AND ALL THE ASSOCIATED WORDS COME WITH MANY IMAGES. IMAGES OF WHO IS A MOTHER, WHAT A MOTHER SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO, WHAT MAKES A 'GOOD' MUM AND HOW A MOTHER SHOULD BE. UNFORTUNATELY, THESE IMAGES ARE CAUSING GREAT ANGST AND DISTRESS TO MANY PEOPLE AS THEY TRY TO LIVE UP TO AN IMAGE AND THUS REDUCE THEIR CAPACITY TO BE A TRUE MOTHER.

Images of motherhood can start from a very early age. A young girl playing with her dolls may receive the words from an onlooker of "You will make a good mum one day" or as children play 'mums and dad's in home corner', the images of what a 'good mum' looks like grow. Already these movements are planting the seed that 'because you are a female you will be a mum' – a cause of angst for many as they attempt to live up to an image that may not truly be for them.

Those who become mothers have their own images of what a 'good mum' looks like and what their children should be like to concrete the image that they are a good mum. How their children behave and what they say, what clothes they wear, what their child looks like, what goes in their lunch box... The list of images of what a 'good mum' looks like is endless. It's also a list that is different for each mother and a list that is all but impossible to meet. Everyone has a different image of what a 'good mum' looks like.



As seen in
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Then, there is the image of 'who is a mother'. Many think mothering is limited to those who give birth to a child, however if we understand a mother's true role we will understand that the activity of mothering exceeds the boundaries of one who gives birth.

So what is a mother's true role? Is it to live up to the images, or is it something else?

I've always shared that a mother's true role is to make their role redundant – noting that redundancy does not mean not wanted, rather, no longer needed. Thus a mother's true role is to be their child's life teacher.

In the clinic, I see young people not so much as children, rather short people who are about to become tall people. A 4-year-old child is only

14 years off becoming a legal adult. Thus our question is what quality adult are we going to support this 4-year-old to become as every movement made from now will impact on the quality of that person's life moving forward. As every moment in life is a learning lesson we can embrace that what we allow as a 4-year-old, we are saying is OK as an adult. The question is what quality of life skills are we teaching?

The activity of mothering is something that can be done by many – whether you have given birth to a child or not. Remember, we all are in a position to support any young person to grow into the most independent, responsible and connected person they are capable of being.

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