

## Hug the Homemaker™

HugTheHomemaker.com is dedicated to recognizing the art, the science and the efforts of nurturing a 'family' – the fundamental building block of any society.

Whether taking up homemaking responsibilities as a spouse, a single parent, or contributing as a grandparent, a family member, a friend; helping on a full-time, part-time, or as-needed basis, homemaking helps transform a 'house' into a 'home.'

The decision of taking a break or letting go of career advancement opportunities, to (exclusively or simultaneously) focus on nurturing a family, and thereby accepting double duties of work/life balance, is indeed an expression of selfless love.

*Choosing to prioritize the work-of-nurturing (the family) over the work-for-money is heroic labor of love!*

As they say, a house is just a building, a structure made of walls and a roof. When a sense of love, caring and security is added, the house becomes 'a home.' Just like oxygen in the air, the intangible concept of 'home' is essentially a feeling of harmony that lives and thrives within the hearts of the family members. Perhaps that's why we say 'feel at home' to mean to be part of that harmony.

A building can be small or shared; people living there can be an extended family, a joint family, a nuclear family, a single parent, or even a family of one; however, the feeling of being 'at home' is universal and equal – the absence of which renders even a mansion to be just a bunch of inert walls! Probably the term 'House' refers to a real estate property at some street address, whereas feeling at 'Home' develops and lives in the hearts of the people at that address.

Expressed so aptly in a Gujarati proverb that (although the Earth being round, i.e. having no end) “The end of the earth is home,” or in other words, in this world full of exotic destinations and exciting travels, the journey back ‘home’ always feels the most relaxing.

A ‘home’ serves as a fertile ground for the family tree to take roots and flourish. A loving home provides a sanctuary, the source of rejuvenating springs of love, warmth, acceptance and belonging, where one can lower all guards and just be oneself.

The blissful bond of belonging-to-the-home acts as a thread that holds everyone together to create a beautiful garland called family vs. just a bunch of people collocated at a same address. The homemaker and those who contribute in family-nurturing deserve great appreciation for the feelings of warmth and love that we recall when we think of “Home”. Homemaking means selfless giving of yourself for family.

In the past, the spouse/parent who primarily focused on managing the home front and nurturing the family (instead of working for money) was almost always the woman; hence the term ‘HouseWife’ became associated with that role. With changing times, (majority of them still being women) occasionally, men take up the role of ‘homemaking’- hence came the more appropriate, gender-neutral term ‘The HomeMaker’.

As a full time or part-time HomeMaker, many of you make great personal and professional sacrifices so that you can nurture the family, at times at a cost to your own career development.

Giving of yourself selflessly is an act of grace, courage and compassion. Indeed, by doing so, you ensure that the family can have the best possible nurturing environment, and also the primary breadwinner can focus on the ‘work for money’.

## We Need to Learn to Say “Thank You”

Many of us, who have never been in HomeMaker shoes, may never realize the importance of your sacrifices, the skills and patience it requires to do what you do. Still, while doing all that, you do it without making a big deal, many a times without getting any of the due appreciation.

Sometimes those who are in caregiver/nurturer/homemaker roles -despite the miracle-difference they may be making- might face internal debate about self-esteem/self-image within themselves. As beneficiaries of sacrifices made by them, we ought to be more expressive of our gratitude. We must frequently acknowledge, appreciate and make them feel proud of their life choices, helping them prove to themselves that it was all worth it.

In your giving role, you do the job so well that sometimes we forget that once even you were on the other side, in our place. Not realizing that, we may think, how would you know about current trends or teenage stuff, or the business world or school/college/dorm life! When you're taking care of our likings and preferences, how foolish of us to forget that not long ago you were on the other side of the table, you were the pampered one, you were on your path of a professional career, your priorities and preference were highest for your parents, your family and others.

We need to keep in mind that had you decided to focus on different things i.e. career/business then for sure you'd have been equally successful in the 'working for money' world as well. We need to understand that you're 'paying it forward' which is very noble of you to do. Without asserting yourself, by putting our priorities first and cheerfully adjusting yours accordingly. We may not fully understand the importance of your work and its impact. Because as a society we've proven to be slow to recognize the 'right' things, for example, at one time we did not think it was important for women to have equal rights or the Emancipation Proclamation or civil rights and many other issues that (in hindsight) are 'no brainer'!

## **Priceless Gifts**

It is important that we also remember that the things that you do have value beyond monetary; that your contributions act as an anchor, creating the most precious legacy that anyone could ever give. Without the home that you create for us, any success would ring hollow, and without your comfort, the failures would be all the more crushing. Without you and your gift of nurturing love, we would all be drifting with empty hearts longing for that place called home.

These days family and home are more important than ever, and the task of homemaking is often thankless or taken for granted by those who benefit the most. If you are lucky enough to have that special person(s) in your life, we encourage you to take a moment to Hug your HomeMaker and say “Thank You”!

## **The Idea**

Through ‘Hug The Homemaker’, we want everyone to recognize how our lives are enriched and made more joyous because of family-nurturing efforts, day in and day out, everyday. We may not know how to express it most of the time, but we want to let you know that we’ve some idea and we’re grateful.

We hope this serves as a good reminder to thank you – those who dedicate/contribute in homemaking efforts- for all that you do for us, and to increase social awareness about life-changing importance of homemaking & family-nurturing.

## **Share a Story and/or Post a Comment**

If some of the points made here have resonated with you, would you please let us know? We frequently read/watch fictional stories that are full of imagination, but nothing proves to be more inspiring, touching, and relevant than real life stories. We would also appreciate it very much if you can take some time to share true stories – your own or the ones you have firsthand knowledge of. Stories about the homemakers you want to honor, who have made yours or others life easier, who have given others the comforts of home, and made sacrifices to do so. Creating a tribute to the courage and love might take a few minutes of your time,

but the encouragement and hope that your stories may provide to others would make it worthwhile.

### **Would you like to send a token of appreciation to someone?**

We've made it easy to send a thank you note/gift. To let the homemaker know that we (somewhat) understand and totally appreciate their wonderful support, we have created some gift items! Feel free to order some for yourself, and/or as a thoughtful gesture for other homemakers around you.

### **Raising a child, Nurturing the nation, Shaping the future!**

Granted, some may say that this 'selfless' deed you do is for your 'own people' and (hopefully no one, or situation) nobody forces you to make the choices you've made for your life. While it may be true to some extent, but at the same time as a society, as a nation, we have to recognize your efforts, for what you do has a broader impact. The 'working for money' spouse has an impact on our 'present', whereas you, the 'working to raise family' spouse have an impact on our future. You are shaping our future generations.

From birth to high school graduation, typically a kid spends less than 20% of his time in school, i.e. more than 80% time is influenced by those who are raising the child. As a society we appreciate the important role teachers play in grooming young minds; similarly we must also understand the impact of training, nurturing taking place at home – where you (the HomeMaker) handle the great responsibilities of shaping the minds of our future citizens through teaching responsibility, work ethic, developing self-esteem, character building and spiritual grooming. Nurturing the child-Nurturing the nation and the future. Teaching a child take his first step – helping the nation take a leap into future.

As a homemaker your contribution to your family is indirectly a service to the broader community and ultimately to the country.

### **Finding a balance**

As HomeMaker you're a great role model of work life balance, family values and priorities in life. Our think tanks, social scientists, politicians and people in general

talk endlessly about the problems in our society and their root causes- like our education system, opportunities for young people etc.

But why doesn't anyone notice this obvious fact – what has changed in last 50 years or since the greatest generation? One factor may be the sanctity and natural harmony of a secure family. Earlier we used to have respectable wages where an honest day's work indeed resulted in an honest day's pay. Families could afford to have one parent focus on the overall growth and nurturing of family. Full time work used to pay respectable wages so that the natural balance of 'working for wage-earning' and 'working for nurturing' were perfectly symbiotic roles – working as a team making each other stronger and that way families benefited – our society benefited – our nation benefited.

We have now created an economic environment that compels families to be two-income households in order to have a decent standard of living, to give their children (future of our nation) safe, healthy upbringing.

By making both parents work full-time, we have already disrupted the natural balance and added more stress to an otherwise joyful journey of raising a family.

Even in cases where economic considerations may not be a factor and both spouses decide to pursue career and family in parallel without taking any break, detour or a slowdown, as a society it's high time that we come up with innovative, family-friendly models of work/life balance.

Those with greater potential and resources -to be able to raise children who'd have higher probability of becoming successful contributors in the world- have very limited flexibility to do so due to the career demands. That doesn't make sense- the so called 'parenting penalty' is a losing proposition for a society. This could be a reason why some nations are facing the challenge of shrinking population!

These situations make it imperative that we, as a society and as individuals come up with new ideas and compassionate solutions to address the imbalance

between home and career. For example, we could create a social arrangement modeled after the proverb "It takes a village to raise a child", where the grandparents' generation can actively participate in raising children and help with other nurturing tasks. The bridge between the grandparents' generation and future generation will become mutually rewarding experience. The future generation will benefit from the affectionate care, life experiences, wisdom and overall mental leisure of the seniors; while the cute creatures of the future generation can fill grandparents' golden years with giggles, joyful mischiefs and may be some extra meaning too! It could be a 'Win-Win-Win' situation, for all three generations would benefit!

### **Soft Landings and Incentives**

For those that choose to focus on the family, it seems only fair that our society returns the favor by offering soft landings and incentives.

Things like, return to workplace assistance – similar to what we do for Service Men and Women or veterans, homemakers entering/returning to workforce, could use some form of guidance, assistance. Paid time off for the 'working for money' spouse of a full time HomeMaker may be given, so they can relieve the HomeMaker for an afternoon or so.

Credits towards Social Security – HomeMaker work could be made eligible on its own for earning credits towards Social Security and other government retirement benefits.

Incentives – Corporations could provide incentives directly to the spouses of employees or the single parents who are also homemakers.

Policy change – If we get some 'small price tag, huge social good in return' type policy changes in place then some expecting mothers/couples may make different decisions when they are faced with pro-life/pro-choice dilemma.

Pay it forward – As a society, first we need to learn how to pay it forward, by making the homemaker role a little bit easier. Corporations could do much better

by giving longer paid leave to parents who take up the role of homemaking, at least for the first 2 kids, offering flexible work hours and childcare on site for the working homemakers.

Guidance & Support – If we were to ask some of the leading personalities, CEO's, presidents of universities, senators and other high achievers, many would acknowledge that the nurturing and guidance they received as children from homemakers in their life, contributed to making them who they are today. On the same lines, we may learn that the continued support from their spouses, significant others, and other family members allows them to focus their energy to excel in their fields.

### **Inspire with your own stories!**

Writing and sharing a personal story can be a profound experience for the storyteller as well as for those who are reading. You may also have a story or two to tell, a story that recalls your bonds with the family-nurturers of the past or present or your own stories of being a full-time/part-time homemaker yourself. Through those stories, you can connect back with your emotions, take a walk down the memory lane, and remember your unique journey. The stories that can inspire, touch our hearts and awaken us to be grateful.

We invite you to share all those stories!

It is our hope that by sharing these stories, we can inspire readers to understand the importance and value of family nurturing and homemaking efforts. By paying tribute, by telling a story of how your life was enriched by family nurturing or being a family nurturer yourself, you will be helping others to remember and be grateful, or even proud, of their own experiences.

Reading shared stories, often from different cultures and backgrounds, yet having similar experiences, may help us recall how we felt when we were growing up or raising our own families. Shared Stories provide a glimpse into others' lives, help us better understand and treat each other with more empathy overall.



Appreciating what we all have in common rather than how we differ, could be the key to a better future.



### **Contributions**

Contributions in cash or kind are greatly appreciated. Your support will help promote awareness about this important topic, to build this work further and to spread the #HugTheHomeMaker message to more and more people worldwide. Hopefully, the message would strike a chord with many people so the word gets around; starts dinner table conversations and discussions in the media.