Editorial:

Supermom Syndrome: Challenges Faced by Working Women

Manushi Srivastava1, Vineeta Singh2

In India, today women are educated, they are already famed as being the best homemakers but they are now spreading their wings and their horizons out of the four walls of the house. They are also aspiring to become independent; they are also getting established like any other male entrepreneur and professional. Women want to become self-reliant and also want to contribute to their families and children not only in terms of physical and mental support but also in terms of financial support. The changing status of women in India involves a transition from homemaker to professional. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung used the term “Second Shift” to refer to the responsibilities of childcare and housework borne disproportionately by women, in addition to their paid labour. The status of women in society is mostly that of a “home manager” while men are expected to be the sole bread-winners in the family.1

The role of women in India is primarily to get an education with the aim of tutoring her children and managing the household. Even if women want to earn money to share expenses, their partners still expect them to first look after the family and their members. No matter how high their position or designation in the office, women in India are still viewed as the family manager back home. According to the Oxfam study, women’s ability to undertake paid work is not merely determined by economic considerations but also by social norms. Women are expected to return home at a certain time, cook, clean and take care of family affairs. This creates a huge burden, one that even top leaders or managers, were unable to escape from.2

Supermom Syndrome

Women, who juggle careers and family or single-handedly manage a handful of kids, inevitably become vulnerable to the Supermom Syndrome. Nearly all working mothers are victims of “Supermom Syndrome” to some extent, a psychological condition that induces physical and emotional suffering.4

1. Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, IMS, BHU
2. Lecturer (Social Work), District Institute of Education & Training (DIET), Etawah, UP.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Manushi Shrivastava, Associate Professor, Dept. of Community Medicine IMS, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi- 221 005
Supermom syndrome refers to a woman’s constant need to accomplish everything possible in a perfect manner, while striving to be a perfect worker, mother, wife and friend. Supermom syndrome is the delusional belief held by a mother that she is capable of doing all things for all the people in her life at all times while perfectly managing herself. She sets high, unrealistic goals for herself, which are usually unattainable, and when she cannot excel in every area she feels like a failure.

**Symptoms associated with Supermom Syndrome**

This syndrome induces high amounts of stress, which is the leading cause of many serious health issues on the part of women. Women often suffer from the psychological symptoms of stress, which include irritability, memory problems, mood swings and emotional outbursts, indecisiveness and depression. Physical symptoms include weight gain, abdominal pain, muscle tension, skin rashes, shortness of breath, anxiety and a weakened immune system.

The current constructions of motherhood, conveyed by powerful ideologies, result in very real and destructive consequences for women. These consequences include depression, increased feelings of time pressure, decreased work-life balance, lack of perceived agency, and negative feelings towards motherhood.²

As a supermom you may just find yourself experiencing the ABCDEF’s of depression³:

- Anger and aggression
- Blame and betrayal
- Criticism and conflict
• Depression and feeling down
• Exhaustion and “exit-strategies”
• Frustrated and fatigued

Is it possible to treat the Supermom Syndrome?

Yes! But instead of labelling this so-called syndrome a medical treatable disease, it might be wiser to consider it as a result of unrealistic expectations and non-prioritized lifestyle decisions. Before seeking sympathy from loved ones, consider changing your daily lifestyle choices by setting realistic expectations on yourself as a working mother and learn the art of delegating.

The good news is that treating “Supermom Syndrome” doesn’t require a professional diagnosis or medication; it can be treated simply by changing your lifestyle.

You can transform this supermom syndrome into growing and life mastering opportunities, as follow:

• Prioritize your daily household and work activities
• Add “me” time to your “to-do list”
• You do not have to be perfect, Just do things your own way
• Target higher, more meaningful and inspired actions
• Ask for help or delegate lower priority activities to those capable and inspired to do them

“There’s no such thing as the supermom who does it all and it’s all perfect. You only have 100% to give, and you can’t give 100% to both your work and your children. So you have to make choices that feel right for you and your family, and no one can tell you that but yourself.” - Mira Sorvino

We are not perfect creatures nor were we meant to be. So why are we trying to be??? Wouldn’t Motherhood be a lot more fun if it didn’t have to be perfect?

References

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