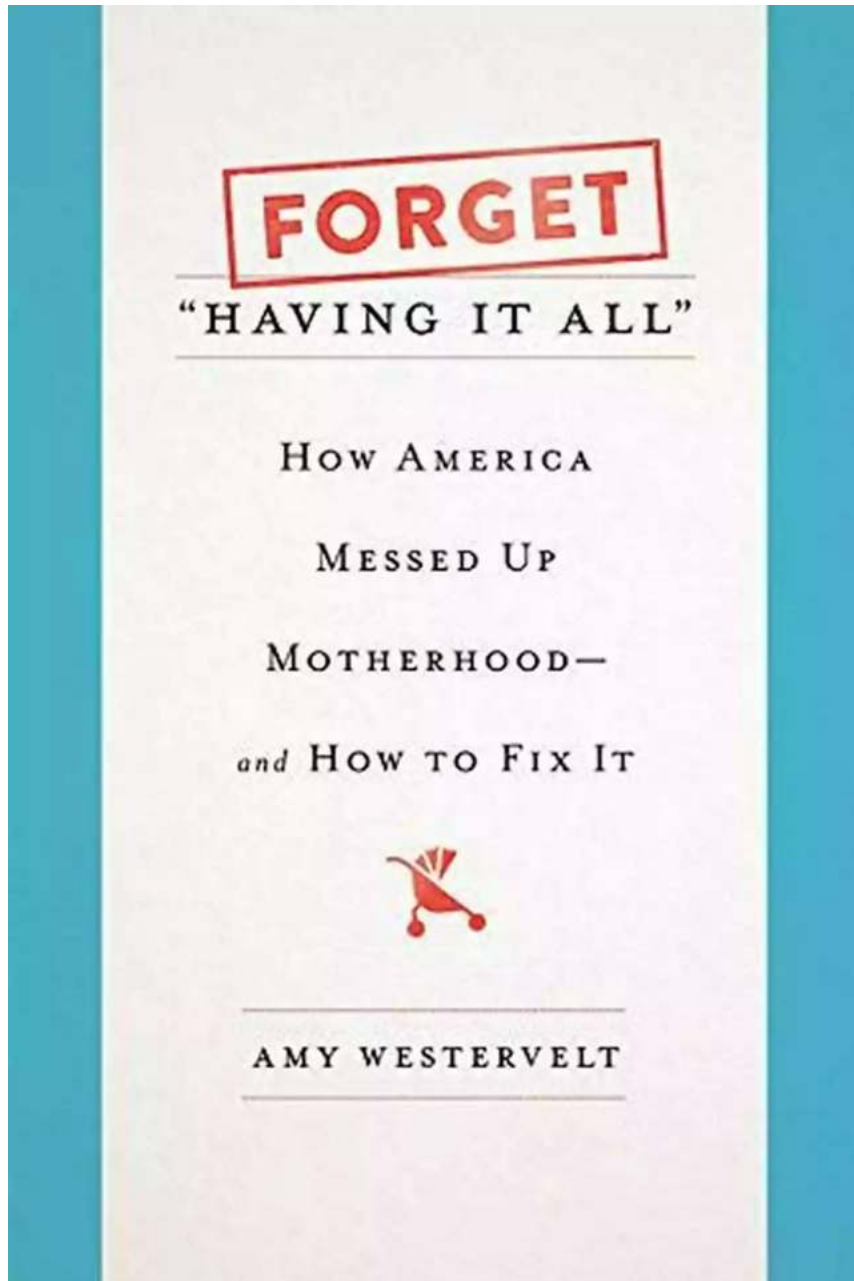


How America Messed Up Motherhood And How To Fix It

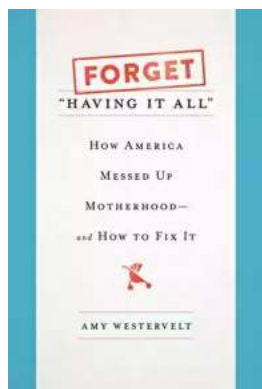


The role of motherhood has always been significant and impactful, shaping the future of generations to come. However, in modern America, this essential role has been greatly undermined and mishandled. With inadequate policies, societal pressures, and the lack of support systems, American mothers face numerous

challenges that prevent them from enjoying a fulfilling experience in their motherhood journey.

The Rise of Unrealistic Expectations

Over the years, American society has built up unrealistic expectations of motherhood, placing immense pressure on new mothers. The media bombards women with images of perfect mothers effortlessly juggling a successful career, a well-maintained household, and happy, thriving children. This idealized image of motherhood sets an unattainable standard, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt among mothers who find it challenging to meet such unrealistic expectations.



Forget "Having It All": How America Messed Up Motherhood--and How to Fix It

by Amy Westervelt(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1587 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
X-Ray : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 313 pages



Inadequate Maternity Leave Policies

One of the significant ways in which America has failed motherhood is through its inadequate maternity leave policies. Unlike many developed countries, the United States does not guarantee paid maternity leave, leaving mothers to face the

challenging choice between returning to work shortly after giving birth and sacrificing crucial bonding time with their newborns, or taking unpaid leave and risking financial instability.

Studies have shown that longer maternity leave periods result in numerous benefits for both the mother and child, including improved maternal mental health, enhanced breastfeeding rates, and reduced postpartum depression. By neglecting the importance of paid maternity leave, America not only compromises the well-being of mothers and infants but also contributes to the cycle of societal pressures on women to quickly "bounce back" after childbirth.

Limited Access to Affordable Childcare

Another detrimental factor that has contributed to America's mishandling of motherhood is the limited access to affordable childcare. Many mothers are forced to make difficult choices when it comes to balancing work and childcare responsibilities. The skyrocketing costs of childcare often lead to women reducing their work hours or leaving their careers entirely to take care of their children.

This lack of accessible and affordable childcare options not only hinders women's career growth and financial independence but also perpetuates the notion that the primary responsibility of childcare falls solely on mothers. This inequality in the division of labor creates an imbalanced society that fails to recognize and value the contributions of mothers in both the workplace and their children's lives.

Addressing the Issues

It is crucial for America to acknowledge and rectify the flaws in its approach to motherhood. Here are some potential solutions to consider:

1. Implementing Paid Maternity Leave Policies

The United States should follow the lead of countries that prioritize the well-being of mothers and infants by implementing comprehensive paid maternity leave policies. By providing adequate time off with financial support, mothers can focus on their recovery, bonding with their children, and navigating the challenges of early motherhood without the added stress of financial instability.

2. Expanding Access to Affordable Childcare

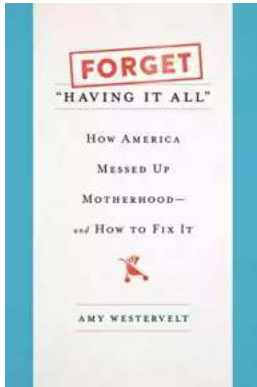
Investing in a comprehensive and affordable childcare system will help alleviate the burdens placed on working mothers. By ensuring that quality childcare is accessible and affordable for all families, mothers can have the flexibility to pursue their careers and personal aspirations without compromising their children's well-being.

3. Promoting Work-Life Balance

America should prioritize work-life balance initiatives that not only support mothers but also encourage fathers and employers to play active roles in parenting. By fostering a culture that values the involvement of both parents in raising children, the burdens on mothers can be reduced, leading to a more equitable and fulfilling motherhood experience.

It is evident that America's approach to motherhood has fallen short in many aspects, negatively impacting the well-being of mothers, children, and society as a whole. By acknowledging these shortcomings and implementing the necessary changes, America can pave the way for a more supportive, inclusive, and empowering motherhood experience. It is time to prioritize the crucial role of motherhood and provide the necessary support systems for mothers to thrive.

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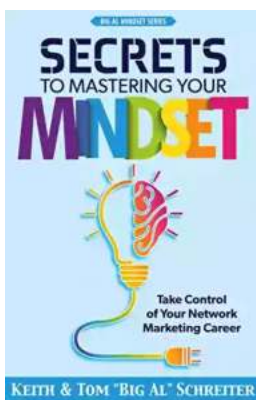
A clear-eyed look at the history of American ideas about motherhood, how those ideas have impacted all women (whether they have kids or not), and how to fix the inequality that exists as a result.

After filing a story only two hours after giving birth, and then getting straight back to full-time work the next morning, journalist Amy Westervelt had a revelation: America might claim to revere motherhood, but it treats women who have children like crap. From inadequate maternity leave to gender-based double standards, emotional labor to the "motherhood penalty" wage gap, racist devaluing of some mothers and overvaluing of others, and our tendency to consider women's value only in terms of their reproductive capacity, Westervelt became determined to understand how we got here and how the promise of "having it all" ever even became a thing when it was so far from reality for American women.

In *Forget "Having It All,"* Westervelt traces the roots of our modern expectations of mothers and motherhood back to extremist ideas held by the first Puritans who attempted to colonize America and examines how those ideals shifted -- or didn't

-- through every generation since. Using this historical backdrop, Westervelt draws out what we should replicate from our past (bringing back home economics, for example, this time with an emphasis on gender-balanced labor in the home), and what we must begin anew as we overhaul American motherhood (including taking a more intersectional view of motherhood, thinking deeply about the ways in which capitalism influences our views on reproduction, and incorporating working fathers into discussions about work-life balance).

In looking for inspiration elsewhere in the world, Westervelt turned not to Scandinavia, where every work-life balance story inevitably ends up, but to Japan where politicians, in an increasingly desperate effort to increase the country's birth rates (sound familiar?), tried to apply Scandinavian-style policies atop a capitalist democracy not unlike America's, only to find that policy can't do much in the absence of cultural shift. Ultimately, Westervelt presents a measured, historically rooted and research-backed call for workplace policies, cultural norms, and personal attitudes about motherhood that will radically improve the lives of not just working moms but all Americans.



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