

“How do you do it?” people ask me all the time. I just shrug my shoulders while smiling, and say, “I just do.” Because you see, if you really want to get to the bottom of what drives me, you need to ask me the right questions. It is not “How do you do it?” but “Why do you do it?” It’s difficult to explain my hectic life to someone without sounding completely insane. But here goes...

I am a single mom just trying to get by with my 10-year-old son, Jr. Making sure that all of his needs are met is my highest priority. I am his mother, his father, his friend, I am his everything. This understanding weighs heavily on the type of environment I try to create for him. It’s hard not to question myself about the decisions I make for his future, but I am the only one responsible for him. Everything I do significantly impacts the person that he is to become, and it’s terrifying to know that I have that kind of influence in his life. However, when the time comes to make those hard decisions, I know with extreme certainty that I am and always will be ready for it.

I am an employee. I work to fulfill the mandatory requirements necessary to maintain assistance from the state services I receive. The decision to seek assistance from the state was a difficult one. But with all my other options dwindling, I swallowed my pride and sought the help I needed from the state. There are many obstacles I navigate through between the 1st and 7th of every month. The paperwork, envelopes, stamps, and the urgent calls with requests for this thing and that thing from my caseworker is just the tip of the iceberg. Even with all the paperwork required, the options that are given to my son and me far outweigh the difficulties and for that I’m grateful. I’ve adopted the mantra: “First To Work is my friend.”

I am a fulltime college student. I usually carry anywhere from 15 to 19 credit hours per semester. Call me crazy, everyone does. Just like any other student, I have to deal with showing up to class on time, reaching deadlines, taking exams, managing group projects, scheduling study time, and appeasing cranky professors. Most school days I am up studying past 3am and I get up by 5:30am. I sit in class sometimes and I have to ask the person sitting next to me, “What day is it?” I’ll be graduating very soon, with a double major, no less. I’ve been called an “over achiever,” but I think of it as validating my belief in the importance of a good education. Single parent or not, being a college student is a difficult task for anyone. I work hard at being the best student I can be, but it’s the idea of improving my son’s chances at a better life that guides me.

My son grew up attending college. I would watch him watching me as I took notes in class. He would sit quietly pretending to take notes in his notebook, and patiently wait for class to be over. He would beam with pride as he heard me answer questions, and whisper after, “Good job Mom.” We would walk the hallowed halls of this prestigious institute of higher learning and he would ask me, “Can we eat at Taco Bell for lunch?” I sometimes feel as if I’m not giving him enough of a childhood, however at a young age he has gained a profound understanding of how important an education is.

Aside from all of the things I’ve mentioned, I deal with all the little everyday matters of life. There are a million things that are running through my consciousness at any given time within a hour 24-hour period. I go through the day as best I can just so I can get up the next morning and do it all over again. Unless you know me, or are living through or have lived through a similar situation, this must sound like sheer insanity. It is!

There are times when I question my life and the direction I’m going in. Some days I feel as if I’m fighting a losing battle. The fear encircles me slowly and begins to squeeze until I realize that I’m paralyzed and I start gasping for breath. Pictures of my life flash before my

eyes; my son, my family, my friends, then the darkness of the future. Why go through all the trouble? Is it worth it?

I tuck my little boy into bed and listen to him say his prayers; I know that I am doing the right thing. As his eyes get heavy, I hear the soft sounds of sleep stealing him away to dreamland. Suddenly he pops his eyes open and looks at me and whispers, "Oh mommy, I love you." My life is filled with insanity and it's just a small part of the grander scheme of how the world works. But as I watch my son sleep, I have a moment of genuine clarity. This is my epiphany revealed. The exact reason of why I do the things I do, is to be here in this moment.