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## Why Are Adults Without Children Sometimes Made to Feel

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## Why Are Adults Without Children Sometimes Made to Feel Incomplete?

**By Syretta Spears**  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, January 15, 2020



(Photo by Bruce Mars at Unsplash)

For generations, our society has been led to believe that an individual's life must be comprised of marriage, children, a house with a white picket fence and other "traditional" things.

Today, there are a growing number of adults who do not have children for various reasons, but are productive members of society. Even so, they often seem to be deliberately or unconsciously judged by others.

The objectification and scrutiny that some women are unfortunately subjected to can be unsettling for them. I've observed the way some childless adults are portrayed by society seems to be a reflection of how women are sometimes seen in general, measured against long-standing and insensitive ideology. The long-held conditioning that suggests girls should grow up to marry, bear children and raise families is something that often is carried into adulthood. And for those who don't follow that path, I think society tends to use this ideal to perpetuate disparaging views of those women.

I still detect there is some subconscious energy focused toward how much we define a woman's life and worth based on her maternal – and often marital – status.

Although society's views seem to be becoming more progressive, with an increasing number of childless adults, I still detect there is some subconscious energy focused toward how much we define a woman's life and worth based on her maternal – and often marital – status.

Most people never give a thought before spouting unsolicited and often insensitive comments such as "What are you waiting for?!" or even more demeaning, "What's wrong with you?" – questions that point to the absurd belief that a woman is somehow incomplete, unhappy or unsuccessful if she is without children or not married.

Of all the amazing personal attributes and accomplishments women possess – cultured, athletic prowess, scholarship, humor – it's disheartening to think that women are every so often perceived as less of a woman if they are not mothers. Yet those who so hastily attach labels rarely ponder circumstances that may have led to a woman's status. Yes, some women (and couples) are childless by choice but oftentimes the reasons may be physiological or spiritual or because of traumatic experiences.

As a friend confided: "When asking the No. 1 question, "Do you have kids?" I consider the story behind their answer before my reply. I never wish for my response to imply judgment or pity for their existence or their choices. As I am a 'complete' woman, so are they, and we are so much more than just vessels for children no matter how a woman's story is written and whether they made the choice or the choice was made for them to be without child."

All women should be revered as complete – with or without children, married or not. Despite how the choice was made whether to be a parent, women get to decide what they want and don't want for their lives. We should not feel like second-class citizens for those decisions. We should know that when we make those decisions we should make them for girls and young women that look to us as an example.

It is our responsibility to inspire future generations to create their own narrative without concern of society's outdated views of what is normal and acceptable in our culture.

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