

3 Focusing on my son helped me to persist in college during difficult times, and there were many. I did not have time to socialize with other students because when I was not in class, I had to rush to take care of the details of life as a mother. Grocery shopping, cooking, arranging for child care, taking my son to the doctor when he was sick, seemed to take every minute. I was exhausted every day, and finding the time and mental energy to study and do homework often seemed an overwhelming challenge. But I stuck with it, determined to finish, to do what my mother had not done. When she had me at nineteen, she quit college and never returned.

4 What helped me finish college, even after my marriage and the birth of my second son, was meeting other students who were also parents. I realized other people were in my situation, too, and probably felt just as stretched. As I met other mothers, we offered to baby-sit for each other or to get together with our children so that they could play, and we could study. All of us wanted more for our children than we had had, and that kept us going.

5 My commitment to finish college has paid off. Now, I have a bachelor's in journalism from Gonzaga University and a master's in information management from Syracuse University. During my years in school, my son kept me focused and ignited my ambition to be a better student. In my experience, there is no better motivation to finish college and to appreciate the full experience than a child whose future depends on your decisions. I had to continue to use my education to give him a better life and to set an example for him to follow.

6 I feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment: I've learned so many intangible lessons about myself; I've decided that I want to help other young parents achieve their educational goals; and I see a better future for my boys (I have two now). And I keep telling my mom that she doesn't have to live vicariously through me: She can return to college any time she wants. Being a student and a parent is challenging, but nothing is more rewarding than providing a bright future for your children.