

SELF PORTRAIT

THE INNER-LIFE INTERVIEW
BY MICHELE SHAPIRO



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Why is this woman loving life?

SUPERMODEL TURNED SUPERMOM **VENDELA** ON THE PAYOFFS OF HARD WORK

You went from the cover of *Sports Illustrated's* swimsuit issue to modeling maternity wear. Was that a difficult transition?

Not really. It's the nature of the business to evolve. When I did a campaign for H&M's maternity line in Europe, I was nervous that people would always associate me with pregnancy, but that didn't happen. I'm still trying new things; I just shot my first music video—with Paul McCartney.

What trait of your mom's are you glad to have inherited?

She's a graphic designer and very artistic. I can't draw the way she can, but I think I inherited her sense of beauty and creativity. When my daughters [Julia, 4, and Hannah, 2] have birthdays, I make invitations and decorate special tables.

What traits do you hope to pass on to your daughters?

I'm a hard worker. I want them to know that nothing comes free. You have to work for everything.

In your book, *Model Mommy* (Contemporary Books), you discuss how even friends don't talk about the nitty-gritty details of motherhood. What do you wish you'd known?

Until very recently, I tried to be the mom who does everything because I love to be in control. For instance, if I

had to work, I'd cook for the kids before I left, even though my husband is perfectly capable of doing it. I got bogged down and felt sad and irritated. I've finally accepted that it's OK if I can't do it all myself. We just hired an au pair, which frees me up. Now I don't have to worry about canceling jobs every time one of my daughters has a cold.

What tips can you give new moms for keeping calm during those first crazy months?

Set aside one hour a week to talk with your husband.

Don't even bother making plans to go out, because if the baby-sitter cancels, you're stuck. You also need to find a little time for yourself. I'll take a newspaper and sit at a café or go grocery shopping alone. It's great to be able to stroll through the aisles and just browse.

You travel the world as a UNICEF spokeswoman. What's the most important thing you've learned?

Education is so crucial. In Bangladesh, a mother brought her 2-year-old son into the hospital. He was severely dehydrated and ended up dying.

If she'd known to give him liquids, he would have lived. But other women came up to me, showed me their children and told me they were only having two so they could provide for them. It was really uplifting; UNICEF has done an amazing job of educating those women on how to care for themselves and their children.



What "self" word best describes your current mood?

Self-sufficient
Vendela

