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Quotes by Mead, Margaret

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Margaret Mead (December 16, 1901 – November 15, 1978) was an American cultural anthropologist.

If you associate enough with older people who do enjoy their lives, who are not stored away in any golden ghettos, you will gain a sense of continuity and of the possibility for a full life.

- Mead, Margaret

We won't have a society if we destroy the environment.

- Mead, Margaret

Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do. With no relatives, no support, we've put it in an impossible situation.

- Mead, Margaret

The suffering of either sex -- of the male who is unable, because of the way in which he was reared, to take the strong initiating or patriarchal role that is still demanded of him, or of the female who has been given too much freedom of movement as a child to stay placidly within the house as an adult -- this suffering, this discrepancy, this sense of failure in an enjoined role, is the point of leverage for social change.

- Mead, Margaret

People in America, of course, live in all sorts of fashions, because they are foreigners, or unlucky, or depraved, or without ambition; people live like that, but Americans live in white detached houses with green shutters. Rigidly, blindly, the dream takes precedence.

- Mead, Margaret

It is an open question whether any behavior based on fear of eternal punishment can be regarded as ethical or should be regarded as merely cowardly.

- Mead, Margaret

If I were to be taken hostage, I would not plead for release nor would I want my government to be blackmailed. I think certain government officials, industrialists and celebrated persons should make it clear they are prepared to be sacrificed if taken hostage. If that were done, what gain would there be for terrorists in taking hostages?

- Mead, Margaret

Each home has been reduced to the bare essentials -- to barer essentials than most primitive people would consider possible. Only one woman's hands to feed the baby, answer the telephone, turn off the gas under the pot that is boiling over, soothe the older child who has broken a toy, and open both doors at once. She is a nutritionist, a child psychologist, an engineer, a production manager, an expert buyer, all in one. Her husband sees her as free to plan her own time, and envies her; she sees him as having regular hours and envies him.

- Mead, Margaret

One of the oldest human needs is having someone wonder where you are when you don't come home at night.

- Mead, Margaret

Our treatment of both older people and children reflects the value we place on independence and autonomy. We do our best to make our children independent from birth. We leave them all alone in rooms with the lights out and tell them, Go to sleep by yourselves. And the old people we respect most are the ones who will fight for their independence, who would sooner starve to death than ask for help.

- Mead, Margaret

I was brought up to believe that the only thing worth doing was to add to the sum of accurate information in the world.

- Mead, Margaret

The liberals have not softened their view of actuality to make themselves live closer to the dream, but instead sharpen their perceptions and fight to make the dream actuality or give up the battle in despair.

- Mead, Margaret

Life in the twentieth century is like a parachute jump; you have to get it right the first time.

- Mead, Margaret

I've been married three times -- and each time I married the right person.

- Mead, Margaret

The institution of marriage in all societies is a pattern within which the strains put by civilization on males and females alike must be resolved, a pattern within which men must learn, in return for a variety of elaborate rewards, new forms in which sexual spontaneity is still possible, and women must learn to discipline their receptivity to a thousand other considerations.

- Mead, Margaret

For the very first time the young are seeing history being made before it is censored by their elders.

- Mead, Margaret

Coming to terms with the rhythms of women's lives means coming to terms with life itself, accepting the imperatives of the body rather than the imperatives of an artificial, man-made, perhaps transcendently beautiful civilization. Emphasis on the male work-rhythm is an emphasis on infinite possibilities; emphasis on the female rhythms is an emphasis on a defined pattern, on limitation.

- Mead, Margaret

The prophet who fails to present a bearable alternative and yet preaches doom is part of the trap that he postulates. Not only does he picture us caught in a tremendous

man-made or God-made trap from which there is no escape, but we must also listen to him day in, day out, describe how the trap is inexorably closing. To such prophecies the human race, as presently bred and educated and situated, is incapable of listening. So some dance and some immolate themselves as human torches; some take drugs and some artists spill their creativity in sets of randomly placed dots on a white ground.

- Mead, Margaret

If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.

- Mead, Margaret

Sooner or later I'm going to die, but I'm not going to retire.

- Mead, Margaret

The negative cautions of science are never popular. If the experimentalist would not commit himself, the social philosopher, the preacher, and the pedagogue tried the harder to give a short-cut answer.

- Mead, Margaret

Much of the ill-tempered railing against women that has characterized the popular writing of the last two years is a half-hearted attempt to find a way back to a more balanced relationship between our biological selves and the world we have built. So women are scolded both for being mothers and for not being mothers, for wanting to eat their cake

and have it too, and for not wanting to eat their cake and have it too.

- Mead, Margaret

Our humility rest upon a series of learned behaviors, woven together into patterns that are infinitely fragile and never directly inherited.

- Mead, Margaret

When human beings have been fascinated by the contemplation of their own hearts, the more intricate biological pattern of the female has become a model for the artist, the mystic, and the saint. When mankind turns instead to what can be done, altered, built, invented, in the outer world, all natural properties of men, animals, or metals become handicaps to be altered rather than clues to be followed.

- Mead, Margaret

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Mead, Margaret

Instead of needing lots of children, we need high-quality children.

- Mead, Margaret

The city as a center where, any day in any year, there may be a fresh encounter with a new talent, a keen mind or a gifted specialist -- this is essential to the life of a country. To play this role in our lives a city must have a soul -- a university, a great art or music

school, a cathedral or a great mosque or temple, a great laboratory or scientific center, as well as the libraries and museums and galleries that bring past and present together. A city must be a place where groups of women and men are seeking and developing the highest things they know.

- Mead, Margaret

A city is a place where there is no need to wait for next week to get the answer to a question, to taste the food of any country, to find new voices to listen to and familiar ones to listen to again.

- Mead, Margaret

Women should be permitted to volunteer for non-combat service, they should not be accepted, voluntarily or through the draft, as combat soldiers. We know of no comparable ways of training women and girls, and we have no real way of knowing whether the kinds of training that teach men both courage and restraint would be adaptable to women or effective in a crisis. But the evidence of history and comparative studies of other species suggest that women as a fighting body might be far less amenable to the rules that prevent warfare from becoming a massacre and, with the use of modern weapons, that protect the survival of all humanity. This is what I meant by saying that women in combat might be too fierce.

- Mead, Margaret



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