

## Why You Can't Find Balance – And Why You Won't, Until You Take These Steps

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Lately, I've been asked to coach and speak with hundreds of working women each month around the issue of work-life balance and time management.

Women are more stressed, strained and sick than ever, as these economic times have hit families, workplaces and corporate America so very hard. If women's plates were full before, now they're piled sky-high, and teeter-tottering on the edge of the table, ready to crash onto the floor, breaking into a million pieces.

I have strong viewpoints (founded by years of direct high-level corporate experience, coaching work with thousands, and national research with women) about work-life balance and why women can't have it as their lives are today, unless *they claim it*.

My views aren't easy to hear or take in, but are important for women nonetheless, so here they are:

**You won't ever have work-life balance or come even close to it, unless you power yourself up to get it. Here's what's necessary:**

### 1) **You've got to fight for it.**

Corporate America was built on the foundations of a "white male competitive career model" that simply doesn't fit women. [Jack Welch's recent comments](#) about women and balance are old-fashioned, outmoded, and out of touch – they don't reflect the future, and what's going to be the new frontier for the American workplace. In the not so distant future, there *will* be a new model (hopefully in our lifetimes) – one that makes room for women and for what they uniquely need and want. **But we've got to fight for it.**

If you're in corporate America at a mid to high level, for instance, and are being asked to do the impossible (do the work of three people, work until 3am, produce reports and analyses that are an utter waste of time but take hundreds of collective hours each month to prepare, come in for 8am meetings that are meaningless, and unproductive, etc.), then you **MUST** speak up. You must fight for what's right and sensible and good business practice. If your team is breaking down and so are you, then you simply can't continue this way. You must speak up and fight.

If you can't speak up on your own (because you'll be crushed down by the machine), then find another way to make your voice heard. Build a collective forum of women who can speak together, or find empowered female and male mentors and leaders who can speak for you. Or go outside the company to networking meetings and events (and by the way, continually interview at other companies to keep your options and your mind open), and learn from others how they are making a positive difference, and making it work.

(FYI, for those men and women who wish to be *advocates* for other women in their workplaces, here is a list of [initiatives that employers must take](#) to support women in the workforce today).

Things won't change unless you fight for them to. Fight for what's right and necessary for your health, sanity, and for good business practice, or you'll end up feeling so exhausted, beaten down, and demoralized that you'll drop out of the game. That's fine, if you're doing it *consciously, with awareness and choice*.

Which path do you want to take? Which path do you *consciously* choose? I know you believe you don't have any options right now, but you always have options and choices. Figure out what they are.

## **2) You've got to ask for help at home, and deal with the consequences**

You simply can't feel healthy and balanced when you're working like a dog at your job, and then come home and work like a dog there too. It's not possible.

You must ask your spouse, children and others for support, to do their share, to step up to their responsibilities as fully-functioning members of the household. And/or you need to hire help where it's essential and where you can. Your husband may complain and say he can't do any more. If that's what he says, it's critical to sit down together and analyze at the distribution of labor, and make it fairer. *It's up to you to do this*. He won't volunteer for this.

If you're an overfunctioner (doing more than what's necessary, healthy or appropriate – and the vast majority of women are), then your family and friends are used to you overfunctioning, and they (subconsciously) don't want you to stop.

You have to shift yourself first – internally – and commit to stop doing too much, and decide what you'll scale back on, then do it. Next, you'll have to deal with your family's initial anger and anxiety that suddenly, you're not doing everything. It destabilizes the family dynamic at first, when you shift into doing only what's appropriate -- not more -- and it's not easy. But you'll find a new stability, and they'll get over it, and so will you.

You'll feel better, stronger, happier, less angry, and more like yourself again when you stop doing EVERYTHING. But you must strengthen your boundaries so that you can handle the fear, insecurity, guilt and shame you'll feel initially at not being everything to everyone.

## **3) Stop being angry and start being accountable.**

Finally, it's time to stop feeling angry, disrespected, depressed, resentful, overburdened, victimized, and powerless. If you experience these emotions regularly, your life is asking you to grow, strengthen, and be accountable for how you are living and what you're creating. No more excuses.

I know how hard this is to accomplish. Just this morning, I blew it again, and got really angry for doing more than I should have for my children – I should have asked my husband to step in and help, but I didn't ask. That's a common trait in me that I must be ever vigilant to detect, weed out, and revise. I tend to get angry and yell when I'm overwhelmed and exhausted, but after I calm down, I see clearly how I simply offered (out of feeling like I HAD

to) to do too much that day, and then blamed everyone else for it. This type of behavior is very deeply rooted and dies hard, let me tell you.

**So, my friends, today's the day. Let's all figure out:**

- 1) What specifically and concretely you are angry and exhausted about
- 2) What are you taking on that's *too much* – more than is healthy, appropriate and necessary
- 3) Why are you doing it? What are your deepest fears around not doing everything, and being everything? What consequences are you deeply afraid of, if you say “no”?
- 4) To whom do you need to speak up? What must you let go of?
- 5) If you're in a job that chronically works you to the bone, and no one listens to your pleas and demands for moderation, I'd suggest this:
  - Figure out what you *really want* for your professional and family life
  - Look at the real options at hand – get yourself out of your box and look at what's truly possible
  - Make a plan to get what you want
  - Power Up and Stand Up for yourself - strengthen yourself, your voice and your boundaries
  - Find an empowered outside helper/mentor/coach to help you create the life you really want

***Today's action step – Don't waste another minute blaming someone else. It's your life – claim it. What one person, action, or limiting, negative belief can you say NO to, today?***