 

Work-Life Balance—Is There Such A Thing?

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# Key Insights from the Panel Discussion

* Everyone is in agreement that work life balance isn’t just a struggle for working moms. The struggle crosses, age brackets, whether you’re a mom or not, and career status. But the struggle is prevalent for women given the pressure we put on ourselves through our quest “to have it all”.
* The fact that 54% of women are primary breadwinners and only 736k women (representing 0.55% of working women) earn more than $250k supports the point made above.
* Stop striving for work life balance and instead strive for work life harmony by optimizing rituals, tools, coping mechanisms that work for you and by accepting that there isn’t necessarily balance. It becomes clearer the more years you have in the rear-view mirror.
* Make it a point to build in “Sacred Time” (quiet early morning coffee before the kids get up, exercise, meditation, sewing, reading, walks, etc) – and try to adhere to is as “your prized possession” – remember, this is in your control
* Effective prioritization of tasks and strong use of calendars
* Don’t be afraid to say “No”
* Accept the decisions you made and the paths you choose. Stop feeling guilty
* Develop strategies to “reset” (for yourself, for your family) be it periodic vacations, date night / family night, rituals
* Investigate the tools and resources your employer makes available through voluntary benefits
* Develop strategy for managing technology to ensure you don’t become victim to the 24 / 7 access fever (example: “shutting off after a certain hour or on weekends”)
* Don’t set a precedent that you will be available 24 / 7 by responding to emails or calls after working hours (example: if you need to work in the evening to catch up, consider drafting emails and not sending them until the morning); challenge yourself to rethink what you are doing with tech – make it work for you at your convenience
* Milestone planning strategies to keep life, family, happiness in perspective
* Recognize your value and acknowledge / promote your own accomplishments so you will feel less inclined to waste time trying to overcompensate

# My Personal Challenges

As a woman in today’s professional workforce, what are the biggest challenges you face that prevent you from gaining your idea of work-life balance?

* “Can’t shut it off” given nature of the role
* Impossible span of control / responsibility
* Feelings you’ve taken on too much
* Career shift – demands of new job are a lot more than expected
* Any title with “Junior” in it seems to infer it’s a “catch all role” or dumping ground for less desirable work / duties; takes away from your ability to prioritize duties truly core to your role
* Caregiving responsibilities
* Personal finance responsibilities (bills, house, cars, retirement planning, investing, etc)
* Travel – wreaks havoc in the routine at home
* Having to make a detailed list for all family members in order to keep life on track when traveling
* Pressure to prove yourself in a male dominated industry requiring 120%+ effort
* Fear of the “fraud complex” and feeling the need to overcompensate as a result of an inherent fear of being exposed as a “fraud”
* Allowing yourself to unplug (it’s ok to unplug)
* Some companies lack flexible work arrangements (I struggle to fit in the 9-5 / in the office box)

# Group Brainstorming Recap

Discuss with your table the challenges and ideas for making adjustments or creating a new approach that might help women find more work-life balance.

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| **Ideas for Small Adjustments*** Stop taking on work that really should be someone else’s job
* Be organized / ready
* To optimize family time – strive to be “truly present”
* Don’t set unrealistic expectations for yourself
* Ensure to carve out “Sacred Time” that works best for you (meditation, walks, exercise, book reading, art, social time)
* Pomodoro Technique (“shut off” for 25 minutes)
* Don’t assume every email you receive is a fire drill. Prioritize to keep organized and set expectations
* “Self before Self” – try not to look at emails first thing in the morning
 | **Ideas for Big Changes*** Come to peace with the decisions you’ve made
* Stop striving for balance and instead strive for work life harmony by optimizing rituals, tools and coping mechanisms
* Pivot point career decisions should incorporate “deep inner reflection” regarding trade-offs that might need to be made to support work life balance
* Improve networking, carve out specific time to network
* Look for opportunities to join a Board – increase visibility in a new direction
* Don’t be afraid to tout your accomplishments
* Realize you can self-promote without being shameless about it
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| **Where to Ask for Help*** At home (partner / spouse)
* Seek out infrastructure support
* Physical Trainer, Therapist, Cleaning Lady, Au Pair, Mentor, Professional Coach
* HR / Voluntary Benefits
* Be more bold to have discussions with your manager about the challenges you’re facing, your ideas to address them, and ask for their guidance and willingness to support
 | **Where to Find More Time*** Take intentional breaks from Technology (computer / iphones) – in the evening / weekend. 30 Day Challenge Example
* Optimize time when traveling on business (find ways to be efficient to get work done; build in “Sacred Time” (example: long commutes – audio books; meditation; conducive work-related calls; personal calls; calls with mentor)
* Big, Medium, Small Rock, sand in a glass jar example (spend time wisely on what matters most; don’t get bogged down with low valued items)
* Optimize exercise apps in order to get quick workouts in at home if you can’t seem to carve out time to get to the gym
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My Action Plan [tool for attendees to utilize]

From ideas generated in the brainstorming, clearly identify 2 – 3 tactical actions you could achieve to help move toward more balance. Commit to starting and finishing these actions.

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[**Some ideas:** Update resume | Revised Linked In information | Find a mentor | Hire household help | Schedule weekend away with partner to discuss household job-sharing | Find more childcare options | Find new eldercare support | Carve out time for calendar-building with family | Take a ½ day off each month for you | Find a community service initiative to support | Reconsider your career track]

# Resources for Busy Women

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Work-Related | Family | You |
| **21-Day Linked In Challenge**: Angela Pitter of The Digital Scoop**Alumni Networking** Groups from your UniversityEmployee Resource Groups **(ERGs)**Ask someone to be a **mentor /** become a mentorBook by Kathryn Sollman: ***Ambition Redefined*** | Care.comBullet JournalChore List (with rewards or bribes)Central Calendar (color coded, online, hanging on the wall, etc.) | Book by Brigid Schulte: ***Overwhelmed: Work, Love & Play When No One Has the Time***Book by Arianna Huffington: ***Thrive: 3rd Metric Redefining Success & Creating a Happier Life***Schedule monthly dinners / fun activities with friendsRework your budget to refocus on what you really want to do |