

PUT TIME ON YOUR SIDE



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A local career expert offers a new twist to time management

Death is bad for one's career, but step-by-step many of you are killing yourselves in a quest to balance work and home. And the answer isn't to do more in less time. *Cincy Chic* has a new take on time management, provided by a local career expert, that will help you put a little "you time" on your schedule while leveling the scale on your work-life balance.

You, and millions of other women, are finding it difficult to balance work and home. How did we get in such a pickle? As women, we learned some powerful lessons at our mother's knee about self-care, self-priority and care for others that work against us every day. Plus, we are continually met with a barrage of messages from our society that brainwash us into attempting to do the impossible.



Local career expert, Kay Fittes, says, "Having a successful career and a satisfying home life demands embracing the philosophy that you count as much as everyone else in your life, and that's not selfish." (Photo: Neysa Ruhl, at The Queens Tower)

In 2006, my education, expertise and experience in effectively balancing work and home was put to the test. The test included life-threatening health issues for my daughter, son-in-law and husband, loss of a baby, the death of my mother, responsibility of being the executor of her estate and even the death of our beloved family pet. These life-altering events coincided with some of the greatest opportunities of my career. Yes, it was the big test of life balance and I flunked. Like many of you, I tried to do it all. Ugly life lesson No. 1, it's just not possible. So it was back to the basics for me; maybe for you, too. Let's find out. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you feel exhausted most of the time?
- Is guilt your constant companion?
- Do you struggle to feel completely successful both at work and home because of the constant pull from the other side?

"Yes" to any or all of the above means you are experiencing symptoms of balance burnout. If you are looking for techniques to get more done in less time, stop here. My recommendations are about rejecting some of those lessons learned at mother's knee and embracing a new philosophy. Having a successful career and a satisfying home life demands embracing the philosophy that you count as much as everyone else in your life, and that's not selfish. Try these strategies:

Manage Your Guilt

Survival equals managing your guilt. Guilt is a soul-robbing emotion that adds extra stress to life and can eat you alive. Many of you have taken guilt to an art form. You even begin to feel guilty when you don't feel guilty. There's functional and dysfunctional guilt. Functional guilt is what you feel when you have broken a law, a rule, a moral code or a social norm. You're at networking event and see someone you met six months ago. Out of your mouth come the words "Yikes, what did you do to your hair?" You feel terribly guilty, that's functional guilt. The antidote is an apology. It's

all about something you have done. Dysfunctional guilt is quite the opposite. It's about what you have left undone. With dysfunctional guilt there is the sense that you can never do enough. Try these eight steps to managing guilt:

- Determine the type of guilt (functional or dysfunctional)
- Clarify actions to take (apologize)
- Acknowledge positive actions (I've called my mother everyday this week.)
- Embrace choices and priorities (Family members question your life choices? Get clear on why you have chosen that path and make peace with your decisions)
- Avoid defensiveness and justifications ("Having a career and children is the best decision for our family, I'm sure you only want the best for us.")
- Avoid the comparison game ("I know my sister Susan is a stay-at-home mom; that's great for their family, but this is what is best for us.")
- Accept limitations of personality, time, energy, etc. ("Because of current work obligations I can't take on the association presidency.")
- Release guilt as a norm (Guilt is a learned emotion that can be unlearned)

Carve out Time for Your Self-Care

Psychologists say to be healthy and balanced, you need a minimum of 21 minutes of daily personal time. Showering, sleeping and eating don't count. The goal? 11 hours a week. It Breast Cancer to force my colleague, Kitty, to put herself as a priority. Her rest, nutrition, exercise and self-care had to be priority No. 1. Don't wait until you have a life-threatening illness to put yourself as a priority. You deserve it now! If you are already stretched to the limit, where will you find the time? Follow "Kay's Rule": "When you do for others what they rightly can do for themselves, you rob them of opportunities to raise their self-esteem and sense of competency." Merely by teaching my children to do their own laundry at 9 years of age, I gleaned hours a week for myself. Warning: fight the temptation to fill that "found" time with more obligations. Take that time for you. Delegation at home and work gives others the opportunity to grow.

Now, ask yourself these two pivotal questions daily:

1. What do I need today?
2. What do I want today?

You may be surprised by the answers and get some great insight into how to use that newfound time.

Cultivate Your Female Relationships

Fascinating research out of UCLA by Laura Cousino Klein, PhD, indicates cultivating your friendships with women has a positive physiological effect on stress. When the hormone oxytocin is released as part of the stress response in women it encourages them to tend children and gather with other women. While tending and befriending more oxytocin is released reducing stress even more. Apparently, men's testosterone blocks the effect of the oxytocin, negating the stress reduction. Unfortunately, our outings with female friends often get erased from our schedules when work and home get crazy. Who knew boosting get-togethers with your women friends to a higher priority would actually be good for you? That's an important fact if you need a swift kick in the pants to prompt action. Looking for another excuse to connect with women? We know that networking can be essential for career enhancement and, based on this research, it can have stress-busting benefits as well.

Don't let the stress of balancing home and work rob you of the joy of life. Try these steps to give

yourself a break beginning now.

(This article is a transcription of Fittes' speech, given at the June 27 eWomen Network's networking event)



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