

THE BALANCING ACT

If you are caught between home and work responsibilities and feeling guilty about not being able to devote enough time to both, don't fret, as you are not alone



Many working professionals today are caught between the two extremes of the same pendulum, swinging from end to end, running between demanding workplaces and those 'very important' family gatherings. However, while these challenges are a natural outcome of today's lifestyles, are they overblown when it comes specifically to women?

Many corporate women feel that work-life balance has climbed the priority

ladder for today's working women; hence, they are voicing their concern more than ever before. This gives the impression of the issue being 'overblown'. Explains Elsa Shibu, manager, talent engagement, Ugam Solutions, "Times have changed. Today, the husband is not the sole breadwinner. Both spouses are working and earning. But the wife still cooks and runs the house. Hence, it has become very important for today's women to voice out the need for better work-life balance. As

compared to yesteryears, today's woman has started voicing out her desire for balance. This has made organisations very sensitive towards this need. In a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work-life balance is not overblown; in fact, after being cognizant of the responsibilities of the modern working woman, many employers have decided it is the only way forward to recruit, retain and keep their women employees happy."

For women, work-life balance is critical for multiple reasons. Tanuja Abburi, director HR, Intelligroup, an NTT Data company explains, "If you are a woman, odds are you're proficient at juggling work, children, PTA meetings, elderly relatives and household responsibilities. Our lists are different but the common factor is lots of pulling and tugging. And when it comes to managing competing priorities, there is no single approach that always works. However, the important point to keep in mind is that work-life balance is not necessarily an equal balance between work and life. It is about achieving a sense of 'harmony' among their different roles, at different stages, by enabling them to be more in control of

their working time."

In addition to asking for help, women today also realise that a lot depends on their own priorities and how they make choices. Subhashini Prabhakar, chief technology manager, Dax Networks elaborates, "Work-life balance is a challenge, but there are techniques to easily manage it. Most of the time, it is overblown. How is it possible to not find time for oneself? Often, it is more of an attitude issue. In office, we are being forced to do our work on time because of circumstances and we naturally perform to the best of one's potential. But we take our time at home for granted. We do not do the things we want to, be it for family or oneself. Minor changes in lifestyle can help one take charge."

While it is all too easy to say it, taking actual steps to strike the balance is not a cakewalk. How have successful corporate women done it? Have the men in their lives been supportive? Garima Sinha, head-corporate marketing, Ramco Systems shares her experience, "There are times when I feel that 24 hours are insufficient to finish off all that's piled up on my plate! But I think the fact that my organisation has a supportive work culture definitely helps. My team is based in Chennai, while I work out of Bangalore. With technology keeping us connected, I don't find it difficult to manage my team. Not to forget, men today are a lot more supportive and pitch in when required. I personally ensure that I save the weekend for my family. Also, I guess the support I get, be it my family or team to make things happen for me with right balance at personal and professional front, keeps me winning as an individual."

Are some women victims of the 'superwomanism' syndrome? Are we too harsh on ourselves? Do we set expectations too high? Is it realistic to expect to get it right, always? Why is that script even in our heads? It only leads to the big guilt trip often. Why is it that accomplishing anything 'less than perfect' is seen as a personal failure, asks Abburi.

- Unnati Narang

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