

BY LORRI ECONOMY

Your Everyday **Balancing Act**



BALANCING WORK, FAMILY, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY is a challenge many women face in today's complicated world. Balance can seem unachievable when you're tugged in so many directions. When at work, you feel you should be at home, and vice versa. Inevitably, one of the kids will become very ill on the due date of an important paper, test or community event for which you volunteered. Guaranteed, if you are trying to balance all of these roles, you have experienced this type of stress more than once.

How many times have you caught yourself asking, "How do I balance it all?" Below are some valuable tools to help determine which role to place on the top of the list:

Prioritize

Ask yourself, does this task/goal need to be accomplished within the next five minutes, five days, five weeks, five months or five years? Asking this question helps determine tasks that need to be addressed right away, or those that can wait a day or two. A great saying to live by is "first things first." Whenever you feel overwhelmed by the tasks ahead, saying this reminds yourself to prioritize what needs to be completed first. Another helpful question to ask is, how important is this to me today? Will it matter in 10 years?

Looking back over the years, there are many situations that seemed extremely important to me at the time. However, when reflecting I realize that I could have let them go because, in the end, it did not matter.

What brings happiness to your life? Is it getting an A on a paper/ test or showing superior performance at work? Maybe it is playing with the children at the park or cooking a tasty family meal. Flexibility and balance in your life, or being healthy—physically, emotionally and spiritually, may top your list. Make time for whatever it is that brings you joy. In order to prioritize your life this way, you must know who you are and what you value. This can take some time to figure out because most of the time pleasing others takes priority without you even being aware that is what is happening.

Modify your expectations of yourself

Perfect does not exist. Most women have unrealistic expectations based on watching women on TV and in movies. In reality, it is not possible to have a spotless house, perfect hair, perfect clothes, perfect children and a perfect career. Remembering this will allow you to prioritize

Create a world that works well for you—a world in which you know what you value because it will help you prioritize each task ahead of you.





your time. Place tasks which are most important at the top of the list while letting some drop to the bottom, for at least a day or two.

Some simple ways to deal with the stress

Ask yourself, is there anything I can do to change the situation—do I have the power to change anything? If the answer is no, let it go! If the answer is yes, take the action to complete what you can, and *then* let it go. You can plan the plan, but often you have no control of the outcome.

Acceptance of the situation has the power to relieve stress. Reflecting on my most hectic times, usually lack of acceptance of something that I do not have the power to change caused undue stress. A simple example: I had papers due for college; I was working full time in emergency services and had an incident that forced overtime to a sixteen-hour day. I thought my day was over and I could work on my paper. However, my son forgot his backpack at football practice and needed it to complete his homework. I was so overwhelmed with all that had happened that day that, when my son came to me and asked me to take him back to the

ball field, I was very impatient with him. My son said, “Mom how important is it? Jeez! That is just the way it is today.” These words stopped me in my tracks. He was right. The words that came out of his mouth were words I used to calm him down through the years. He reminded me that acceptance is usually the answer to the dilemma.

Another tool when emotional upheaval captures the day is to ask, am I afraid of losing something I have, or of not gaining something I believe I need? This simple question will train the mind to reassess the situation and help determine if it is just something that you want but do not really need.

Of course, I’ve listed just a few of the tools available to relieve frustration and stress on a day-to-day basis. Be patient with yourself and those closest to you. Enjoy your children because they will grow up too fast and you cannot regain time lost. Enjoy each moment and learn from your experiences. Most importantly, create a world that works well for you—a world in which you know what you value because it will help you prioritize each task ahead of you. ☪



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