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WOMEN @ WORK

Real-Life Balancing-Act Secrets Of Superwomen

By Natalie Canavor

A friend said this to me recently. "We women fought for the right to have it all, but we forgot that we'd have to do it all." With so much opportunity now open to us, we're faced with the realities of how to manage it.

What's a woman to do? Juggle, balance, triple-task ... dash madly between responsibilities and locations ... learn to strategize, prioritize, compartmentalize. This can be lonely work, because we rarely have time to talk to each other.

So I recently asked some of the superwomen I know to share their best practices. The result: some great ideas you may not have thought of yet, and proof that there's much to be gained by sharing.

If you have more ideas, e-mail them to me and I'll include them in a follow-up column.

Hire a personal assistant. For \$10 an hour, hypnotherapist Susan Dowell gets the help she needs. "Placing an online ad with Craig's List gave me 300 candidates in two hours, many of them graduate students or people with professional degrees who want to make a little money," she said. "I use mine for typing up tapes, refiling, personal chores like picking up dry-cleaning."

Make every day different. "You have to give 110 percent, but you can vary how - every day can't be the same," said **Leslie Ann Berkoff, a partner at the law firm of Moritt Hock Hamroff & Horowitz** and the president of Long Island Women's Agenda. "You juggle the percentages every day."

Take partnerships seriously. That's what Gloria Glowacki, business advisor and PR coordinator for the NYS Small Business Development Center at Stony Brook, suggests.

"For the first hour we get home, we never talk about work. We talk about dinner, change our clothes," she said. "From

the beginning, my husband and I set specific nights for cooking and helping with homework, so no one would be a helper, but a partner."

Learn to live in squalor, said a freelancer who works at home. "My kids are great and my career's going beautifully, but something's gotta give and it's the housework," she said. "My kids' friends don't seem to mind. They come over and play, but of course the mothers do. When they're paying a first visit, I'll clean beforehand, but I gradually slack off once they're used to us."

Bring home dinner. Karen Perry, account executive for WLNY-TV55, discovered that mother's little helper can be the deli. "When you buy your lunch, the deli is selling a whole meal - like a complete turkey dinner - for \$5.95," she said. "So when I know I'll be home late or won't be able to cook, I buy a dinner and refrigerate it. I bring it home for my teenage daughter and microwave it."

Go with your values. "Let go of perfection; it only matters to us," said Vi Quintero, co-president of the LI Fund for Women & Girls. "It took practice, but I learned not to dust or vacuum the floor. I'd say to a young parent, do what's important - the things with your children - and don't get caught up in being supermom and superworker."

Another stop-the-housework tip: "I'd always leave the house with my kids on Saturdays and Sundays," said Lois Schlissel, managing partner at Meyer, Suozzi, English & Klein. "Even if it was just to go to the supermarket. That way, you don't end up doing housework."

Make creative arrangements. Video producer Candace Herman said, "When I was a single mother with a home-based business, I arranged with my colleague-collaborator to work out of my house so I'd have backup when I had to go out on

business calls and other things. This was in addition to good childcare help. It freed me to go to the kids' athletic games and events too."

Take "me-time," something Deborah Kendric, director of corporate communications at State Bank of Long Island, knows a little about.

"Even when you have great kids and a great job with some flexibility and great childcare, there's so much to do in such a limited time," she said. "So you need focus, plus mental and physical energy. What makes the biggest difference for me is doing an hour of yoga every Monday night after the kids are in bed. It completely recharges me for the week. And on Tuesday, I work with a trainer at my home gym."

Give up sleep. "I go to bed at 1 [a.m.] and get up at 6," said Susan Tucci, copy editor and assistant to the publisher at Latin Long Island magazine. "I've been doing that for 12 to 15 years and I'm always tired, but I manage to rouse myself whenever the occasion warrants."

Look for resources you can count on. "For me, the YMCA was my godsend," said Tina Panos, who operates her own firm, Panos Graphic Services, and is a single parent of twins. "From kindergarten on, my girls went to the after-school program at the Bayshore Y and I'd pick them up at 6:30 [p.m.]."

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