



HAVING IT ALL?

*The top 5 mistakes women make
when balancing work and family*

A FREE report from WorkLifeBliss

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Before you read this report, take a few minutes to think about how you are living your life...

How does the pace feel?

- **Too slow** – I don't have enough to do
- **Just right, most of the time** – I'm very content
- **Too fast** – I'm mostly coping, but I don't really have time to enjoy things
- **Almost out of control** – I'm so stressed I feel close to burnout much of the time

How do you feel about the commitments you have taken on for the next 6-12 months?

- **In control** – I have a good mix of challenging things to do - I'll accomplish them easily
- **Pressured** – I think I've taken on too much - I'm really not sure if I can pull it all off
- **Drained** – I really don't have the energy or enthusiasm to achieve all the things on my list

How do you feel about the way you divide your time between your work, family and personal interests?

- **I love my life as it is currently structured** – I have plenty of time for everything that matters
- **Part of my life is always suffering** – I experience a fair amount of guilt
- **I'm really worried about how I'm living my life** – It feels like something's going to break

Could you be making things more difficult than they need to be?

Read on and see...

Top Mistake #5 – Comparing yourself to other parents



When my daughters were in Kindergarten, one particular mother really stood out. She was gorgeous, organised and effervescent. In addition to studying full-time and maintaining a *Vogue*-like home, she was the pillar of the school community' – president of the parents' committee, chief convenor of the school fete, stalwart of every fund-raiser from Freddo frogs to Christmas mangoes. There was never a time when she wasn't 100% switched on and performing.

One day, I was sitting beside her at a birthday party, and I asked her how she managed to do so much. How did she have time for it all? How did she have energy? (*How did she have the will?* I also wondered, but didn't ask.)

'I only keep it up,' she admitted, 'because I'm so miserable in my marriage that I have to fill every waking moment...'

Top Mistake #5

Assuming you know what goes on behind other people's closed doors. Some people seem to 'have it all' and make it look easy. Don't be fooled - this is an optical illusion. Nearly always, you are comparing the other person's strengths with your own weaknesses.



Top Mistake #4 – Complicating your routines



Do you always use the good dinner plates when you have guests over, even though you have to hand-wash them afterwards? Do you have a 'thing' about having to iron certain items? Do you insist on baking birthday cakes from scratch? Do you find it hard to throw things out because you 'might need it' later on? If you had a cleaner, would you clean up in advance?

Over the course of our lives, we accumulate habits on the home front. We rarely take the time to re-assess and modify how we're running our household, and to adapt our domestic processes to changing circumstances (having a baby, returning to work, getting a promotion, caring for parents etc). We can end up imprisoning ourselves by the phrase, 'it's just the way I do things...'

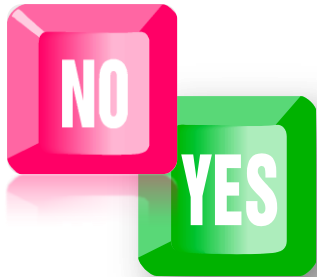
Top Mistake #4

Not adapting routines to changing circumstances.

Quick Exercise:

1. Stick a blank piece of paper on the fridge.
2. As you go through the next week, pay attention to your housework habits and jot down any instances of domestic 'overkill'. Beside each one, write down a simple short-cut that will carve out extra time.
3. Focus on what you might do with this spare time, until it becomes easy to 'let go' of old habits in favour of a fresh, relaxed approach.

Top Mistake #3 – Being a ‘people pleaser’



Are you confident in saying NO assertively when you are asked to take on an extra task or commitment that you don't have time for?

Do you find it easy to say YES when someone offers to help you?

Or...

Do you try not to rock the boat?

Do you find it easier to put others first?

Do you worry about what other people think?

Do you avoid conflict and strive to ‘keep the peace’?

Do you take criticism very personally?

Do you want everyone to like you?

When people are very clear on their priorities, limits and boundaries, they often have a confident and flexible approach to work-life balance. Imagine being in charge of the shape of your lifestyle, instead of feeling like you're being pulled in competing directions all the time.

Top Mistake #3

Regularly putting other people's needs above your own. You're setting yourself up for exhaustion and resentment.

Top Mistake #2 – Thinking the sky will fall if you slow down



One of the most common catch cries from our clients goes something like this:

'I'm afraid that if I stop, or if I even slow down slightly, everything will fall apart!'

Ironically, the opposite is true. If you continue on at a frantic pace – *if you don't allow yourself to slow down from time to time* – things will eventually start caving in on you:

- You may pick up colds and other viruses more frequently.
- You might find yourself snapping at your partner or children more often.
- Work tasks could slip through the cracks.

If the hectic pace continues, serious health, relationship and work performance issues can develop.

Almost always, this can be avoided using simple, straight-forward strategies for better management of stress.

Are you afraid of slowing down?

What do you think will happen if you do? _____

Top Mistake #2

Allowing 'sky-is-falling' fears to take the upper hand. Give yourself - and everyone who depends on you to be at your best - the gift of taking some necessary time out, once in a while. **Enjoy it thoroughly.**

Top Mistake #1 – High expectations and guilt!



The top mistake that women make when trying to have it all is setting unreasonably high expectations of themselves - both at home and at work – then feeling guilty when they fail to meet these expectations.

No matter how successful we are, and how well we manage our lives, **there are times when we inevitably muck things up!**

Intellectually, we know that it's impossible to achieve a state of perfection, yet many women are very tough on themselves when they tumble, especially if they're tripping over the things that matter most to them.

What 'mother guilt' looks like:

- Spoiling the children to make up for spending time at work
- Putting in more hours at work (usually by taking work home) to prove that you can 'do it all'
- Lying awake at night, worrying whether you're doing the right thing, wishing things were easier
 - Sacrificing 'me time', personal interests and activities and putting everyone else first

Take a few moments now to analyse whether these factors are having an impact in your own life...

Which mistakes are you making? What is this costing you?

On the scale below, mark where you sit against each of the top five behaviours:

1 (never) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (most of the time)

Comparing myself to others

Complicating my routines.....

Being a 'people pleaser'

Thinking the sky will fall if I slow down.....

High expectations and guilt.....

Watch out for these early warning signs of an out-of-balance lifestyle:

- Attention-seeking behaviour from children
- Tiredness or exhaustion (physical and/or emotional)
- Stress symptoms (headaches, nausea, reduced interest in sex, crying more frequently, interrupted sleep)
- Ill-health (more frequent colds, flu, headaches/migraines or other more serious illnesses)
- Relationship stress (spending less time together, not talking as much, arguing more frequently)
- Resentment over lack of 'me time'
- Difficulty keeping on top of work (procrastination, disorganisation, difficulty focusing)
- A sense that life shouldn't be this complicated

Recognising any of these factors in your life is the first step to improved wellbeing. There is plenty that you can do to make life easier.

About the author

With two children under five, I was working full-time, studying for a Masters degree and writing my first book. As far as over-committing myself goes, I was having my cake, eating it too, baking it in the first place and washing up afterwards.

Within one year, I was holding a publishing contract in one hand, divorce papers in the other and staring feverishly at my bedroom ceiling trying to ignore the acute Glandular Fever that I was bedridden with and – worse - the fact that this was preventing me from staggering to the pre-school Nativity play, like the good mum that I so desperately wanted to be.

This was not what I called 'work-life balance'.

Wits' End Before Breakfast! Confessions of a Working Mum was reviewed by OK Magazine as 'Hilarious!' Fellow mums 'will sympathise and find comfort,' the review said. 'Those who are yet to breed will consider sterilisation!'

It was a nice review for an author to get, and a bit of a debacle personally. It wasn't until I found myself accidentally and distractedly consuming a Lieutenant-Colonel colleague's salad (because I was so distraught about having left a crying child to go to work that I no longer recognised my own Tupperware), that it finally occurred to me that life didn't have to be this hard.

I began looking for different ways to do things. Better ways to be. Ways of saying 'no'. Eventually the light dawned: life wasn't this hard at all – I'd been *making* it this hard.

Bit by bit, I clawed control back over my family, my career, my identity as a woman – the works. I worked out that I *could* have it all, just not necessarily all at *once*, and certainly not at the cost of my health, sanity or most special relationships. The more I spoke about this at seminars and fund-raising lunches, the more intensely the message seemed to strike a chord with the parents I met, many of whom were plain exhausted from the struggle.

Five years on, the contrast in my life couldn't be more pronounced. I don't juggle any more with the things that matter most to me – it's too precarious and I might drop something.

Instead, I carefully weave my family life, friendships and personal aspirations into a career that I adore: coaching others to make a similar transformation in their lives.



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