

# Note to Working Women: You Can Have it All!

*By Corey L. Jamison*

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Sunday morning. I'm flipping pancakes for seven kids, catching up on work e-mail and trying to figure out a way to cut some of my upcoming travel plans so I can have more time with my family, all while pulling in my abs and waiting for the dryer to ding. It is frantic and fun and surely, to many, a clear slap in the face of work-life balance.

The truth is, for many of today's women in leadership positions, work-life balance is a vague notion. It's code for: "I just wish I had more time." Yet more free time is not something many working women are making large sacrifices for. Not professionally, and certainly not on a personal level. From career to family to self-determination, women want it all, and why not? Work, a fulfilling family life, a strong sense of self and community involvement are all things that enrich our lives. So the real question becomes not how do we "segment" our lives to create more time but rather how can we integrate all of the core aspects of who we are and what we want to accomplish into our lives-then surround ourselves with people who can help get us there?

First, women need to look inward. We need to define the terms of our own happiness as opposed to letting others do it for us. Second, women need to selectively establish the frameworks of what we value-whether it is the activities we commit ourselves to or the relationships we keep. This is important, because understanding and respecting what you value makes it easier to walk away from relationships and obligations that do not contribute to your overall well being.

In terms of work-life balance, another popular notion is that people need to set clear boundaries. While they are important, clear boundaries are not as critical as understanding that boundaries are permeable and, like doors, can open and/or close depending on current needs. Not only is this an important concept to grasp on an individual level, for women in leadership positions it is a concept that needs to drive the way they manage their people. Circumstances, like the needs of children, are always changing, and just as mothers adjust to the needs of their children as they grow older, women leaders need to adjust their expectations of their people in order to keep them feeling satisfied and happy in their work.

In the end, after all, happiness is what we strive for. We want to enjoy our work and soak in the warmth of our families-without having to segment and separate the two. We want to feel good about who we are and the communities we live in. These are not unrealistic expectations, nor too much to ask for. What is too much to ask for is perfection, overlooking the 150 things you do accomplish in a day while focusing on the 2 or 3 things you do not, because sometimes our best is enough. It is certainly the most we can ask for-even when it comes to flipping pancakes. But in no way does this mean that we can't have it all, because, as women integrating our personal and professional lives, we can have it all, and we deserve to.

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