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RESILIENCE
By Betty Doo



Current demands placed on today's professional women are extraordinary. The pace, the hours, the work expectations ...it has all gone a bit out of whack. Keeping your work and life in harmony is no small feat. This is particularly true for women in higher executive levels where "being married to the job" is frequently an expectation.

Yet, most women accomplish this balance through hard work, determination and commitment. Juggling your schedule with that of your kids, partner and colleagues is a challenging endeavor but one that an amazing amount of women do successfully, thus achieving great levels of professional and personal satisfaction.

However, what happens when something goes awry, such as a loss, unanticipated health problems, divorce, or an unexpected job crisis? What happens when an already full and complex life is challenged by events that were "not in the plan"? How does one fit this new crisis into an already stretched life? Businesses as well as professionals frequently overlook this critical issue, which can unfortunately lead to dire consequences for all.

Resilience is a psychological concept that explains how people deal with unexpected situations. It helps us understand, for example, how people cope with 9/11 and other traumatic circumstances. It is also useful for understanding day-to-day events. So what exactly is resilience? It is a stress-hardiness, an ability to bounce back, to survive and thrive during times of adversity. It demands physical, mental, emotional and spiritual resources. We are born with predispositions for resiliency, but our life experiences also shape our abilities to bounce back after challenging circumstances.

You may at some time find yourself dealing with unanticipated events that challenge your lifestyle, which is already “stressed to the max”. Here are a few recommendations for strengthening your personal resiliency, enabling you to bounce-back quickly and fully to your former status:

1. Don't go it alone. This is probably the single most important message. Get help from friends, family, colleagues or other professionals. Help can be tangible, concrete resources (like emergency childcare) or less tangible, such as emotional support or advice.

2. Keep your perspective. What is most important to you at the moment? Prioritize; focus on the “Must-dos” and let the other issues slide if necessary.

3. Take time for activities that helped you in the past when managing during adverse circumstances. It might be exercise, meditation, music, writing, socializing or other activities. Even when very busy, you will find taking some time for these activities will give you an enormous payback with increased energy, time and a fresh outlook.

4. Give yourself a break. Women put tremendous pressure on themselves to excel. Not just at work, but in all areas of life. Under usual circumstances, this can be highly adaptive leading to great accomplishments. Major stress can push you over the edge. The main problem with perfection is it is unattainable.

Life is full of surprises. Many are wonderful and exciting, but some are difficult, troubling or even traumatic. Facing these challenges head on can create an enhanced sense of resilience leading to greater satisfaction in your personal and professional life.

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