

————— The Five Biggest —————

LIFE BALANCE MISTAKES

Women Leaders Make

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Keeping life in balance has never been more important. Learn more from life balance expert:

MARY LOVERDE

- Author of *Stop Screaming at the Microwave, I Used to Have a Handle on Life, But it Broke* and *The Invitation: When You're Ready to Take Your Next Step* –

www.maryloverde.com

maryloverde@gmail.com



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INTRODUCTION

The Five Biggest Life Balance Mistakes Women Leaders Make

Keeping life in balance has never been more important for women leaders. The Harvard Business Review devoted an entire issue looking at how happy, well-balanced people drive profits. The issue provided scientific evidence from the meta-analysis of 225 studies that *people who score high in life satisfaction* have, on average:

- ***31% higher productivity***
- ***37% higher sales***
- ***And their creativity is three times higher than their colleagues who report low life satisfaction***

We now have the hard core data to prove that achieving life balance- which I define as simply feeling good about your life- is not just a good idea; it is vital to your success.

If you are ready to keep your life in balance, on the following pages I offer you the five biggest life balance mistakes to avoid.

MISTAKE

1

We believe that the more we get done the more we will be in balance.

Getting it all done really has no positive effect on our life balance- even if that were possible. I am not against the standard efficiency strategies - they are invaluable for getting things done. But if managing, organizing, delegating, prioritizing and simplifying were going to work to keep our lives in balance, they should have worked by now. We are busier than ever. No one ever gets it all done, though many literally kill themselves trying. It is time for a new approach.

MISTAKE 1

Our sense of overwhelm comes not from stressing out over a bottomless to-do list. We feel bad because we have disconnected from what's really important to us. The old life balance motto was, "What do I need to do?" The answer is an overwhelmingly long, impossible-to-complete list.

The new life balance question is, "With whom should I connect?" The answer might be to connect with yourself - go to bed and solve the problem in the morning. The answer might be to connect with your staff or colleagues, who need you to lead them through a sticky situation that will reap big rewards. Or you might grab coffee with your friend or spouse who always give you great business advice and makes you laugh. Maybe you will skip the guilt and leave the office early to connect with your thirteen-year-old who wants you on the sidelines at the soccer championship or any number of other important connections you want to make.

MISTAKE 1

Connection is what creates balance. It helps us make sense of the conundrum of figuring out our priorities- because, let's face it- every part of our life is important and interwoven. Connect with what you believe is disconnected and your sense of wellbeing will soar.

“ Connection is what creates balance. ”

Give this strategy a try. When you feel the stress mounting and your brain is searching frantically for the answer to “What do I need to do now?” switch the question to “With whom should I connect?” The answer will reconnect you to feeling centered again.

MISTAKE

2

We fail to predict and protect our Achilles' heel.

Our Achilles' heel is our weak spot, the one, when poked, knocks us off center. Everyone has one. It's important to identify it precisely because when we are feeling our most vulnerable, our urge to get a handle on life intensifies and we instinctively tighten our grip.

One of mine is being overly sensitive to unkind criticism. I appreciate feedback, especially the kind that makes me say, "Aha! So that's what's wrong with it!"

MISTAKE 2

But vague, malicious zingers (like the one from an audience member who wrote on her evaluation sheet, “Mary seemed very self-impressed. She could have given that canned speech to an empty room!”) shut off the frontal cortex of my brain and with it, all hopes of me being able to make a rational, non-reactive decision.

Understanding my Achilles’ heel allows me to distinguish between useful feedback and unkind criticism. I take the critiques and evaluate their merits. Often, if what someone has to say has a ring of truth to it, I will hear it from more than one person in ways that are frank, but not unkind. I also know that when I feel that familiar pang in my gut, I can say, “Oh, there goes my Achilles’ heel again.” Casting a light on our vulnerabilities make them much less of a threat.

MISTAKE 2

It's not enough to understand just your own weaknesses. Knowing the Achilles' heel of others empowers you to interact more effectively and prevent problems. This principle holds true for everyone who affects your life balance such as your bosses, colleagues, in-laws, partner, parents, children and best friends. Do you know what their weak spots are?

“ The very worst kind of Achilles' heel may be, in fact, not admitting that you have one. ”

It may not be easy for any of us to confess that we are impatient, shy, procrastinating, chronically late or testy when confronted. *The very worst kind of Achilles' heel may be, in fact, not admitting that you have one.*

MISTAKE 2

Sooner or later whatever bugs us will come back and bite us in the backside if we do not take care of it upfront. We never resolve what is hurting us so we never get a chance to heal from it. And that makes for a very unbalanced life. Predicting and protecting your Achilles' heel will keep you from wasting energy better spent being a brilliant woman leader.

MISTAKE

3

We stop doing the basics that keep us grounded and energized.

In a weird irony that only humans could create, when we get stressed and feel our balance slipping away, we stop doing what we know will support us. We give up exercising and eating well. We close our books and anesthetize ourselves channel surfing. We cut back on sleep, scrap our plans with friends, skip breakfast and cancel our dentist appointments or forget to call home as often as we did before.

MISTAKE 3

We yell at our kids, our partners, and the poor girl behind the counter. We stop laughing. We forget our manners. We disconnect from the underlying structure that keeps us in balance.

Research shows there are two “must do” daily basics. The **first** is getting still in meditation or prayer. When the greatest leaders of all time - Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Lord Shiva to name a few - wanted to get centered they spent forty days in the desert, sat on tops of mountains or under trees. Gandhi did not start screaming, “Come on, people, move, move, move! I need world peace and I need it right now!”

No, he got still and changed the world.

There is just no downside to embracing silence and there are dozens of benefits. Meditation lowers levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, improves sleep, and helps us lose weight more easily.

MISTAKE 3

If that weren't enough new research shows that regular meditators develop a better brain than non-meditators. Meditators actually grow more gray matter, have improved neuroplasticity and sharper cognitive function.

“What woman leader wouldn't love a bigger, happier, smarter brain?”

Exercise is the other daily must do. It's also good for the brain, improving our ability to learn, lifting depression and lowering stress by increasing the “soothing” brain chemicals like serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine.

What woman leader wouldn't love a bigger, happier, smarter brain?

There is simply no substitute for stilling the mind and moving the body. Every day.

MISTAKE

4

We believe that a quitter never wins and a winner never quits.

We often get out of balance most when we are taking a step forward. We start a new initiative or accept a promotion or move locations- those thousands of good changes that make the ground under us seem very shaky. Again, the first question to ask is not, “What should I do?” The enormity of that answer has a tendency to paralyze us. A better strategy is to ask a series of quit questions:

MISTAKE 4

What do I need to quit?

Everything that is in the way of what you really want. Make room for the new, literally and figuratively. De-clutter the space, cancel time wasters, and say no to things that are not a good ROI. Getting rid of the things in the way of what we want will make life so much more balanced.

When do I quit?

Many of us know what to quit but balk at deciding when. So we wait to get sick or fired, fed up or emotionally damaged. We procrastinate until it is too late to sell the business or save our liver. Some of us wait until we hear ourselves scream, “I can’t take this anymore!” and we finally hit rock bottom. We stay in toxic situations where we feel under-appreciated, overworked or disrespected because we badly need the health insurance and as a result, we badly need the health insurance.

MISTAKE 4

It's not always true, but often the time to quit is sooner than we're willing to admit.

How do I quit?

Quit as consciously, confidently, and gracefully as you can, in a style that is consistent with your highest values. You might quit in one swoop. My favorite anti-smoking campaign is "Cold turkey is better than dead duck." Or you might quit in stages, in a therapist's office, face to face, in a letter or on Skype. Perhaps you'll need your best friend, career counselor or Jenny Craig. Whatever your plan, see yourself succeeding.

Why am I quitting?

I believe you quit for two reasons. First, you quit because "it" is in the way of what you really want and that causes your life to feel very out of balance. If you are honest with

MISTAKE 4

yourself you can admit that what used to work doesn't anymore, as much as you wish it would.

And secondly you quit because, paradoxically, while the process might be very difficult in the short run it is almost always easier in the long run.

“Knowing what to quit, when to quit, how to quit and why you are quitting are the hallmarks of an authentic, joyful life.”

MISTAKE

5

We adhere to the alleged truism, “If it’s to be, it’s up to me.

Not only is this untrue - and an outrageously inefficient system - *it is impossible.*

We do nothing by ourselves. Nothing is ever up to just us.

Quantum physicists have proven beyond any reasonable doubt that there is a ceaseless exchange of energy between everything. When two particles become connected- what they call entangled - you

MISTAKE 5

can separate the particles on opposite sides of the world- and what the scientist does to one of the particles occurs identically and simultaneously in both of them. It is not scientifically possible to do something in isolation.

I am hardly a spiritual scholar but just a cursory review of the literature makes one thing very clear: despite all their differences the world's religions agree on one thing:

“ Deeply we are one. ”

What happens to you is NEVER up to just you. You will do nothing alone. But even if you could- if you were the sole exception to the No Man Is an Island rule- you'd be missing the secret to the human experience: Humans thrive only when they connect.

MISTAKE 5

Harvard Psychology professor, Daniel Gilbert, an expert on happiness, wrote,

“If I had to summarize all the scientific literature on the causes of human happiness in one word, it would be social. We are by far the most social species on earth. If I wanted to predict your happiness, and I could know only one thing about you, I wouldn’t want to know your gender, religion, health or income. I’d want to know about your social network, about your friends and family and the strength of your bonds with them.”

You cannot be a powerful woman leader with a feel-good, balanced meaningful lifestyle thinking it is all up to you. This doesn’t mean you don’t dream or make plans or persist and throw everything you’ve got into something. It just means the minute you think it is all up to you - you are cooked.

MISTAKE 5

So find partners and allies, teachers and mentors, and advocates and champions of your cause. Stay connected to your family and friends.

“ Because the real truth is: Connection is the solution to just about every challenge you will ever face. ”

CONCLUSION

So there you have it - five mistakes that are actually easy to avoid once you focus on their opposites. I hope these ideas will help you have the best life you could have. Do your important work. The world needs your gifts.

I stand by as your virtual partner. You can reach me at: maryloverde@gmail.com.

Or learn more about me at:

www.maryloverde.com