

every
woman
WORKBOOK

MANAGING THE
JUGGLE:
RE-THINKING
YOUR WORK-LIFE
BALANCE



About this workbook

At everywoman, we deliver a range of innovative products and resources that unlock the potential and talent of women in business globally. Whether you're just starting out, looking to progress your career, or even to build and develop your own enterprise, the everywomanNetwork provides a wealth of personal development resources, advice and inspiration to address the challenges you face at key stages in business. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to propel you through your life's work, at a time and place that suits you.

Welcome to our workbook, [Managing the Juggle: Re-thinking Your Work-Life Balance](#)

Have you achieved the perfect work-life balance? The fact you're embarking on this workbook suggests that you recognise you have some areas to address on that front. The term work-life balance suggests that work and life are entirely separate entities, and that the ultimate goal is to find the perfect split between the two. The reality is that most of us are simply 'juggling' multiple balls at any one time. Sometimes that juggling act might feel completely doable — all the balls are in the air and we feel pretty good about our present circumstances. But then life happens, more balls get thrown up in the air, and things get frantic, chaotic and we start to drop the balls. Sound familiar?

All of us are juggling. A working mother is going to have her own unique challenges around balancing family life and all that entails alongside the demands of her professional life. But it isn't just mothers, or parents, who desire a healthy work/life balance and can feel compromised in achieving that. You might be juggling a pressured job with the demands of caring for an elderly relative, a time-consuming hobby or exercise regime, extracurricular study, or maybe even a side hustle business. Responsibilities, commitments, relationships, our mental health, finances — they all impact on how many balls we're juggling and how successfully we're keeping them in the air.

The purpose of this workbook is to explore what successful juggling looks like for you, and what might be stopping you from realising that goal. We'll guide you through some exercises that will help you understand what's really important to you and strategies you can employ if they feel right for you and your own unique 'juggle'. We know you'll be pressed for time, so we've made this workbook as succinct as possible. Many of the exercises are designed as reflection pieces you can mull over while taking a walk, or in short 'micro break' bursts at your desk (more on that later).

Work changes, the dynamic of life changes, and the strategies that helped us manage our time when the children were little might need to tweak as they grow; the organisational skills we drew on to manage our inboxes might not hold up so successfully when we reduce our working hours to study for a qualification. It's important then that we remain mindful of what and how successfully we're juggling, so we'll close with some tips for longer-term thinking and planning.

We'd love to know how you get on – email us at karenmax@everywoman.com or tweet us @everywomanuk.

Max & Karen
and the everywoman team

Setting the scene

The idea of a work-life balance as something we should strive to achieve is nothing new. You may have some particular challenges that are unique to you, but there is also a wider societal and economical context that effects many of us. Consider the following:

- In virtually every culture and society in the world, women typically do more housework than men. Of course there will be numerous exceptions, but in the UK, for example, the average heterosexual woman puts in 12 more days of household labour per year than her male partner. (1)
- Reports from various sources suggest that the global pandemic further deepened the global gender gap: a McKinsey report highlights the disproportionate domestic burden on women as a factor in women's employment figures falling faster and disproportionately to those of men. Women's jobs, it reported, are 1.8 times more vulnerable to the crisis than men's. (2)
- The UK's Office for National Statistics has reported that 28.5% of mothers of young children had reduced their working hours to accommodate or limit the expense of children, compared with just 4.8% of fathers. (3)

The daily reality of feeding, caring for and educating children presents specific challenges, particularly when combined with the stress of earning enough money, not to mention growing a fulfilling career. Finding a way to enable your professional, personal and family lives to flourish simultaneously can feel like a daunting, if not impossible challenge. The important thing to remember here is that we are aiming for ongoing progress — never perfection! Over to you for some thinking around this topic...

(1) <https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/BN290-Mothers-and-fathers-balancing-work-and-life-under-lockdown.pdf>

(2) <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>

(3) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/familiesandthelabourmarketengland/2019>



EXERCISE

What does your daily, weekly or monthly to-do list contain? Make a list below of everything you currently have to get done. Your list might get quite long!



EXERCISE

Now put everything onto your list into one of the categories below.

Essential - Quick

(tasks that if you put aside an hour you could get through most if not all of them to get off your list.)

Essential - Time Consuming

(tasks that if you put aside an hour you could get through most if not all of them to get them off your list)

Essential - Could be delegated or outsources

Non-Essential - Could be postponed or removed altogether

Has this exercise given you any thoughts on how you can better manage tasks and/or the time allocated to completing them?

Lists

Not everyone loves lists but they can enhance your productivity by allowing you to be more of a long-term thinker. Lists enable you to take control of your day, rather than letting your day control you. In the previous exercise you started dividing tasks into categorised lists. Here's another idea for how you could divide and conquer by creating categories for your lists.

- The Master List.
- Weekly Project List.
- A Positive Impact List.

The Master List

Lay out the essentials. These are the important items to focus on if you are going to divide and conquer your juggle. Once you find that, the important stuff on your master list starts to play a more active role in your day-to-day.

Weekly Project List

This should contain everything that needs to be done in the next seven days. It might be booking the kids into activity clubs before the deadline closes, finishing that presentation for Friday, booking a delivery slot for your weekly food order, signing up to yoga class, ordering food for an upcoming party, or remembering to collect the dry cleaning.

A Positive Impact List

Things you can do which will make others — and by default, you — feel great. For example:

- Reminding yourself to call a friend or relative on their birthday.
- Sending flowers to someone who really deserves them.
- Booking a future date in the calendar to see friends.

Visualisation

Visualisation is a powerful tool.

It allows you to create a mental picture of an outcome you want to achieve. Consider the current situation you find yourself juggling and visualise how you see that changing or what you want to achieve, improve or change. Although visual imagery happens in your mind, your brain is what controls your muscles. By using visualisation techniques, you're grooming your mind to be more efficient. Strong visual imaging is similar to experiencing the situation in the real world. For example, you may have experienced a dream that was so real you struggled to believe it didn't actually happen.

Find a comfortable place to sit and relax with no distractions. If you'd prefer, you could listen to some calming music. If there is already a song or type of music which you associate with happiness or success, use that as a tool to trigger confidence and clarity.

Create a clear picture of what successful juggling looks like for you.



EXERCISE

Now think about what's stopping you from achieving that image. Ask yourself some probing questions, such as:

How could your work pattern change to better support your juggle?

What elements of your work do you enjoy? Which do you not?

How often do you check work emails/social media on your phone?

How is your physical/mental health?

What reasons have you given yourself, or others, for why certain things have remained on your to-do list for longer than they could have?

Note: if you're having a hard time visualising at first, don't worry. It's common to struggle when you first begin. However, like most tasks, the more you practice, the easier it gets.

What's holding us back?

Women have made remarkable progress accessing positions of power and authority in the last 100 years. We know women have the ambition, the drive, and the capability to reach senior leadership positions, launch their own successful enterprises, and have happy, thriving home lives too. And yet the debate still continues to be had: can women really have it “all”. It is rarely debated whether men can have careers and a family. Little wonder then, that when Harvard Business Review spoke to a global consulting firm about why they had so few female partners, virtually everybody resorted to some version of the work/family narrative to explain the lack of female partners (4). Is this really the reason, or is it unhelpful stereotyping?

When it comes to you and your own unique juggle, you might agree that traditional corporate structures that allow little flexibility are what's stopping you from achieving your goals. But it might be something else entirely, or a combination of factors. Let's dig into that a little deeper.

The American Medical Association reports that stress is the basic cause of more than 60% of all human illness and disease (5). Writing things down can help you to recognise your current thoughts (both positive and negative) and can be a powerful de-stresser.

Sometimes it can be hard to gauge how you're really doing, both at work and at home. On a bad day, it can feel like you're doing horribly but these feelings are valid and normal. On a good day, you feel like the best employee ever. The reality is probably somewhere in between, but how do you know? Let's focus on the things you are doing well. Writing things down can help you to clarify your goals, priorities, and intentions.

(4) <https://hbr.org/2020/03/whats-really-holding-women-back>

(5) <https://www.iup.edu/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=186180#:~:text=The%20American%20Medical%20Association%20has,all%20human%20illness%20and%20disease.&text=College%20can%20be%20the%20best,substance%20abuse%2C%20and%20eating%20disorders.>



EXERCISE

Write down five things, or some short sentences, that reflect what you are doing well in terms of your juggle. Consider the skills you are using that are enabling you to be successful in those areas.

Look back at the lists you've made in the previous exercises. Where are the sticking points? Try to identify three elements of your juggle (they could be specific tasks, or blockers/life situations) which give you the biggest headaches and stop you realising that vision you created in section 1.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now, spend a few minutes thinking about each item you've identified and jot down your thoughts. Think about:

What are the reasons why these particular areas are problematic?

What skills, identified in the previous exercise, can you draw on to help?

What advice would you give to a friend with a similar problem?

“TRYING TO DO IT ALL
AND EXPECTING THAT IT
CAN BE DONE EXACTLY
RIGHT IS A RECIPE FOR
DISAPPOINTMENT.
PERFECTION IS THE ENEMY.”

SHERYL SANDBERG



EXERCISE

Thinking about the problem areas you've identified, what would progress look like in those areas? This might not result in your perfect vision of successful juggling, but would be 'good enough' for now?

Can you turn the thinking you've done in your visualisation exercise and above into a statement that succinctly summarises what successful juggling looks like for you?

Strategies to help

While working through the exercises in previous sections, you may have identified some strategies that can support you in your juggle and help you achieve your goals more effectively. In this section, we'll explore some other approaches that you can draw on if they feel right for you.

1. The art of delegation

In an earlier exercise, we asked you to sort some items in your to-do list into things you could delegate to others. How did that task feel to you? If you're someone who feels you have to get everything done yourself, perhaps it was a challenge? Look back over your lists again and think about who could — and may even want — to help out. Is there someone on your team who could take something off you as a stretch assignment? Is there a family member who can take some things off your plate? What are the biggest home-life time-drains that could be shared out more equally with others?

2. Recognise - and deal with - guilt feelings

Working mothers across the globe are chasing the balance of working and being the parent they envisioned. Sometimes guilt creeps in when you're working or practising self-care rather than spending time with family, and vice versa.

From the *Guilty Mother* blog:

"I know it's wrong but sometimes I compare myself to other mums and then feel guilty for not doing as much as they do."

"If my kids are watching Netflix because I have to put the washing on, I'm either guilty because they're watching Netflix or guilty because I haven't done the washing – you have to choose which guilt you're going for!"

"Guilt slips in when I feel I have unmanageable levels of work coming in due to the pressure caused by a job and then I'm not doing a great job taking care of children."

Research has found that just by being a working mother, women are 28% more likely to experience burnout than fathers. And in the UK, research by lifestyledaily.co.uk uncovered that working parents are feeling more guilt than ever before. In many ways, guilt has become a hallmark of modern parenting. Goodto.com reports that 'mum guilt' can be a powerful emotion, experienced by 68% of mums on a daily basis.

In *Ask The Children: What America's Children Really Think About Their Working Parents*, Ellen Galinsky reports on research that involved more than 1,000 children aged eight through 18 who were asked: If you were granted one wish to change the way your parents' work involvement affects your life, what would that wish be? Surprisingly, spending more time with their parents was not on the top of the list for most children. Instead, many children wished their parents would be less stressed and tired from their work. Significantly, the study also found that parents who are energised by their work interact better with their children and have a positive impact on their children's development. Done right, it's a win/win situation.



EXERCISE

Do you experience guilt? Are there specific things you feel guilty about? Note them down below.

Now, consider how you could reframe that emotion:

- Are you doing the best that you can?
- Are you asking others for help when you need it?



EXERCISE

Take a moment to consider what you might say to a friend who came to you and said they were struggling with feelings of parenting guilt? What positive words of encouragement would you give them?

3. Organise your workspace

Have you ever taken a moment to reflect on how your workspace makes you feel? We often sit in the same spot for hours on end, yet we forget to question how that space is working for us.

You might be lucky enough to have a space in your home you can keep as a semi-permanent work environment, or you might have to share the space with family members or housemates. Either way, if you're working from home, it's crucial that you designate an area specifically for work. This way you can limit external interruptions and ensure you're in a work mindset. You may be short of space, so if you don't have a separate room to take over entirely, choose the spot in your home where you're least likely to be disturbed.

Ask yourself the following questions when picking a spot in the home as your designated workspace:

- What else is this space used for?
- Who else uses this space?
- Does this space get plenty of natural light?
- How will I feel after working in this environment every day?
- How will my using this space affect the rest of the household?
- What tweaks could I make so that my work space supports me better?

4. Creating a 'done' list

How about flipping the 'to-do' list idea on its head, and creating a 'done' list instead — only committing to paper those task you've ticked off can give a satisfying sense of achievement and completion. Whether you're a 'to-do' or a 'done' lister, it's important that self-care items are given as much priority over the mundane or the essential tasks. Consider whether you:

- Drink enough water and re-fuel between tasks.
- Schedule enough time for exercise/walks in nature.
- Regularly get away from your screen.

5. Scheduling 'micro breaks'

Times have changed and the tradition of the one-hour lunch break seem to be disappearing in the new hybrid working world.

Research published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* suggests that employees are more engaged and less fatigued when given the freedom to take brief, impromptu 'micro breaks' whenever they feel the need throughout a workday (as opposed to saving it all up for a one hour lunch break). Researchers examined the behaviours of two cohorts of office workers and tracked their movements across a given workday, looking at sleep quality and general levels of fatigue. Findings showed that those who took more frequent micro breaks reported better work engagement and higher energy throughout the day.

You can make time for micro breaks by:

- Setting your watch to take regular screen breaks for a glass of water, or to just go and be in another space.
- Scheduling meetings for 25/55 minutes rather than always defaulting to the full half or full hour.
- Diarising five minutes breaks throughout the day and using the time to read a few pages of a book, switching on the radio, or having a chat with someone about something non-work related.

6. Setting boundaries

Whether you're working from home, the office, or a hybrid of the two, boundaries are essential — they protect both your focus time, and your personal time, and without them we can end up unproductive, unrested and resentful.



EXERCISE

Do you?	Highlight your answer			
Do you have agreed limits on your working hours that you stick to?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never
Do you delegate work or household chores?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never
Do you pause before taking on more work, so you can consider if it can be achieved?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never
Do you have a structured system for working through a task list?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never
Do you ever push back if something feels too much?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never
Do you feel comfortable saying 'no'?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never
Do you take regular breaks for eating, drinking, exercising, reading etc?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never
Do you take your days off seriously?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Never

Setting clearer boundaries

1. Pause and take time to respond

One trick that may keep you from saying 'yes' to that next project is the art of pausing. For example, the next time your boss asks you to take a last-minute business trip, hit the pause button before responding. This technique will give you a chance to check-in with yourself to determine whether you have a conflict. If needed, buy yourself time and say: 'That might work, let me just check my schedule and get back to you.'

2. Open the lines of communication

Work with your boss to go through your work schedule and together, prioritise what things you need to focus on and what items are not so critical. This exercise is eye-opening because there are almost always significant discrepancies between the two lists. Next, prioritise the items you think you should be focusing on and negotiate agreed-upon priorities if you need more time.

3. Practice saying 'no'

Peter Bregman, author of *18 Minutes: Find Your Focus, Master Distraction, and Get the Right Things Done* suggests choosing some easy, low-risk situations in which to practice saying 'no'. Say 'no' when the waitress offers you dessert (if you don't want any!). Say 'no' to the street vendor offering to sell you something. Go into a room by yourself, shut the door and say 'no' out loud ten times. It may sound strange, but it helps to build your 'no' muscle.

4. Set your working hours

We know that flexibility is key and there are benefits of working in a home environment, but doing so can mean you're 'always on'. Consider and agree what hours work for you and do your best to stick to them. Otherwise it's simply too easy to have your work bleed into your home life. Work with your team to keep a spreadsheet of everyone's hours, so everyone is on board and they know not to bother someone when they're off the clock.

5. Take your days off seriously

Cut yourself some slack. We all need a break, and it is important your colleagues and clients know when you are on annual leave. If your current situation is that your home doubles as your office, it's easy to sit down on a weekend to just do one quick thing and suddenly your day off has disappeared. Yes, we know working at weekends is sometimes unavoidable but do take the time to recharge. That rest time is vital for your mental health and wellbeing - not to mention productivity and energy levels.

6. Prioritise self-care

We have all faced challenges in our lives, and how we choose to deal with these set-backs or challenges is key. Looking after ourselves needs to become a high priority. None of us are superhuman and often asking for help can feel like we are failing. However, we must remind ourselves that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things don't go to plan. But the good news is that there are things we can do that can ease the mental load. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear.

Your mental health matters. If you can't do it, you can't do it. Your mental, and physical, health is worth more than pleasing someone else. You can't do everything for everybody all of the time.

Even if you already feel like you take good care of yourself, perhaps you could put more structure around this — keeping a wellness journal where you spend five minutes a day jotting down how you're feeling and recording your daily intentions. Or just using one of your micro breaks to sit quietly alone and ask yourself these questions:

- How am I feeling today?
- What could I do to feel better right now?
- How could I practice more self-care in the time available to me today?

Try this timed management exercise during your working day for setting boundaries

- Set a timer for 25 minutes.
- Work on a single task for those 25 minutes.
- Stop the task when the timer rings.
- Take a short break of around 10 minutes.
- Repeat the process.
- Take note of how many 25-minute chunks of time common tasks take.

“YOUR MOST VALUABLE PARENTING SKILL IS LEARNING TO MANAGE YOURSELF FIRST.”

DR. LAURA MARKHAM

Final thoughts

Throughout this workbook, we've talked about progress over perfection. One way to ensure you don't slip into unhelpful lines of thought about being the perfect everything to everyone is to set small, achievable goals and schedule regular times to review your progress. Of course, we all want to achieve big goals in our lives and careers, but those smaller steps we take are often just as important. Think about some goals you want to set relating to your juggle. For example:

- Whatever else is going on in my life, I want to walk 10,000 steps each day.
- On days off, I want to only check emails once.
- It's important I read one book each week and use my work breaks to achieve this — I can do this by outsourcing X, X and X.

My daily/weekly/monthly goals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



EXERCISE

Now ask yourself:

How will I track progress?

What resources will I draw on for help?

How will I celebrate the small wins?

Managing the Juggle: Re-thinking Your Work-Life Balance

Further resources

Off Balance: Getting Beyond the Work-Life Balance Myth to Personal and Professional Satisfaction
- Matthew Kelly

Fair Play: A Game-Changing Solution for When You Have Too Much to Do (and More Life to Live) -
Eve Rodsky

[6 tips for better work-life balance](#)

[Work-life balance is a cycle, not an achievement](#)

everywomanNetwork Resources

[Webinar: The Juggle](#)

[Need more 'life' in your work-life balance? 6 simple ways to create more 'you' time](#)

[everywomanClub voices of experience: Work-life balance](#)

[Work-life balance: How this works in practice for these global women](#)

[Work-life balance: Integrating the things that matter](#)

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