

The Millie Arbesfeld
Midreshet Yom Rishon

Sunday Morning Learning Program for Women

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*Having It All?:
Orthodox Women
and the Juggling Act*



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1. Arlie Hochschild, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. Viking Penguin: 1989.

Chapter 1: A Speed-Up in the Family

One reason women take a deeper interest than men in the problem of juggling work with family life is that even when husbands happily shared the hours of work, their wives felt more *responsible* for home and children. More women kept track of doctors' appointments and arranged for playmates to come over. More mothers than fathers worried about the tail on a child's Halloween costume or a birthday present for a school friend. They were more likely to think about their children while at work and to check in by phone with the babysitter....

As masses of women have moved into the economy, families have been hit by a "speed-up" work and family life. There is no more time in the day than there was when wives stayed home, but there is twice as much to get done. It is mainly women who absorb this "speed-up." ...

As a result, women tend to talk more intently about being overtired, sick, and "emotionally drained." Many women I could not tear away from the topic of sleep. They talked about how much they could "get by on" ... They talked about who they knew who needed more or less. Soe apologized for how much sleep they need--"I'm afraid I need eight hours of sleep"-as if eight was "too much." ... These women talked about sleep the way a hungry person talks about food.

All in all, if in this period of American history, the two-job family is suffering from a speed up of work and family life, working mothers are its primary victims. It is ironic, then that often it falls to the women to be the "time and motion expert" of family life. Watching inside homes, I noticed it was often the mother who rushed children, saying, "Hurry up! It's time to go," "Finish your cereal now," "You can do that later," "Let's go!" When a bath is crammed into a slot between 7:45 and 8:00 it was often the mother who called out, "Let's see who can take their bath the quickest!" Often a younger child will rush out, scurrying to be the first in bed, while the older and wiser one stalls, resistant, sometimes resentful: "Mother is always rushing us." Sadly enough, women are more often the lightning rods for family aggressions aroused by the speed-up of work and family life. They are "villains" in a process of which they are the primary victims. More than the longer hours, the sleeplessness, and feeling torn, this is the saddest cost to women of the extra month a year.

Chapter 2: Marriage in the Stalled Revolution

Problems between husbands and wives, problems which seem "individual" and "marital," are often individual experiences of powerful economic and cultural shock waves that are not caused by one person or two.

The exodus of women into the economy has not been accompanied by a cultural understanding of marriage and work that would make this transition smooth. The workforce has changed. Women have changed. But most workplaces have remained inflexible in the face of the family demands of their workers and at home, and most men have yet to really adapt to the changes in women. This strain between the change in women and the absence of change in much else leads me to speak of a "stalled revolution." ...

A woman's gender ideology determines what sphere she *wants* to identify with (home or work) and how much power in the marriage she wants to have (less, more, or the same amount.) I found three types of ideology of marital roles: --traditional, transitional, and egalitarian. Even though she works, the "pure" traditional wants to identify with her activities at home (as a wife, a mother, a neighborhood mom), wants her husband to base his at work and wants less power than he. The traditional man wants the same. The "pure" egalitarian, as the type emerges here, wants to identify with the same spheres her husband does, and to have an equal amount of power in the marriage. Some want the couple to be jointly oriented to the home, others to their careers, or both of them to jointly hold some balance between the two. Between the traditional and the egalitarian is the transition, any one of a variety of types of blending of the two. But, in contrast to the traditional, a transitional woman wants to identify with her role at work as well as at home. Unlike the egalitarian, she believes her husband should base his identity more on work than she does. A typical transitional wants to identify *both* with the caring for the home, and with helping her husband earn money, but wants her husband to focus on earning a living. A typical transitional man is all for his wife working, but expects her to take the main responsibility at home, too. Most men and women I talked with were "transitional." At least, transitional, ideas came out when I asked people directly what they believed. In actuality, I found there were contradictions between what people said they believed about their marital roles and how they seemed to *feel* about those roles. Some men seemed to me egalitarian "on top" but traditional "underneath." Others seemed traditional on top but egalitarian underneath.

2. Jodi Kantor, "Finding Satisfaction in Second Best," *The New York Times*, September 13, 2013

Debora Spar is the president of Barnard College and the mother of three children, and yet in her spare time she wrote a book — about how women are trying to do far too much at once, using herself as a prime case study. In "Wonder Women: Sex, Power, and the Quest for Perfection," which will be published on Tuesday, Ms. Spar argues that at every stage of life, from childhood to old age, women are straining to reach impossible standards. "My generation made a mistake," Ms. Spar writes. "We took the struggles and the victories of feminism and interpreted them somehow as a pathway to personal perfection. We privatized feminism and focused only on our dreams and our own inevitable frustrations."...

Q. In the book, you say that women have to stop trying to be flawless professionals, mothers, homemakers, cooks and athletes, and instead use a technique called "satisficing" to take the pressure off. What is satisficing?

A. Satisficing is this concept in economics that jumped out at me as I was finishing the book. To satisfice is to settle for something that's second best. I use the term warily. You don't want to go out there and say that women should settle for second best. But sometimes second best is really good, and second best is much better than fourth best or worse. Women in particular feel if I didn't become the top C.E.O. or perfect mother, I've somehow blown it.

Do you satisfice?

I do. I'd love to be the perfect mother to my children, but I'm not at every school performance, I'm not making them a hot breakfast every morning. I wasn't there at 8:30 this morning when my daughter left to go on her rafting trip.

Your satisficing sounds like it still takes place at a very high level. Could you have accomplished all that you have while still letting go of things?

I definitely think looking back that there are areas where cutting corners would have helped me be saner. I always remember one moment: I raced home from work, I was putting dinner on the table, and I was racing out the door to go to a PTA meeting. My son, who was all of 8 at the time, said, "Why are you doing this?" I looked at him and said, "It's very important to me that I go to your school." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, I'm part of the community and this is about you and your school." And he said, "I want you home." It was one of those moments. I realized I was trying to be a perfect community member on top of being a professional and a mother, and I couldn't do it all. I stopped going to PTA meetings after that...

Feminists always castigate women's magazines for enforcing ridiculous ideas about beauty. But your book suggests that maybe we should bring the shelter magazines under scrutiny. No one really believes that having better eyebrows will bring true happiness. But we do tend to think, wow, if I had that deck with that view....

It's oppressive. If I could only have pillows like that. ... It's food, it's clothing, it's all the magazines that come under the heading of things looking simple. It's bathrooms that look simple and Zen-like but have to be maintained constantly. And the environmental, sustainable, organic, gluten-free movement once again ratchets everything up. Men's magazines don't seem to do this. They seem to be about things that are fun, not things you have to spend lots of hours on and then fail at.

3. Barbara Bensoussan, "Striking a Balance: Work & Family," *Jewish Action*, Winter 2012

Overwhelmed. Exhausted. Stressed. Somewhat surprisingly, few of the women we interviewed for our cover story on balancing career and family used the words above to describe their very full lives. This is not to say that they are happy and fulfilled all of the time, that they never feel torn or conflicted, and that they don't feel the stress of living harried lives (carpool at 7:45 am, catch an 8:31 train to Manhattan). But the reality is that many from women work full time, for a variety of reasons, and find immense fulfillment and satisfaction in building Torah-true families while contributing to society in other ways as well.

Here are writer Barbara Bensoussan's impressions after interviewing some of these remarkable women:

Meeting so many accomplished, exceptional women, even over the phone, was a humbling and enriching experience. Very few of us, myself included, are able to maintain such high levels of professional productivity while simultaneously assuring that no duty on the home or family front gets neglected. What is their secret? As I conducted the interviews, a few common threads emerged.

For starters, the most high-powered interviewees seemed to possess an extraordinary level of physical vitality. They also appear capable of functioning on a minimal amount of sleep. Lydia Kess was a very athletic teenager, and Jessica Jacob says she learned to forgo sleep in

medical school (and continues to get up at 4:30 in the morning to work out on the StairMaster, even after nighttime baby deliveries).

Some of that vitality appears to derive from something else these women have in common: a passion for their work. These are women who clearly find joy and satisfaction in their chosen professions. Instead of being depleted by their work, they feel energized and fulfilled by it. Dr. Jacob cheerfully says she doesn't take vacations, but she doesn't care; she's very happy just to be living the life she's chosen. Anne Neuberger says her husband sometimes has to remind her to come home. Lydia Kess likened her work in law to doing challenging puzzles.

These women have largely been blessed with low-maintenance husbands who support their wives' careers. Consistent, reliable household and babysitting help is also crucial. Housework is the first thing to be outsourced, being an area where a Jewish mother can most painlessly be replaced. All these women do their own cooking, but they are quick to avow that they make simple recipes and rarely fuss.

Most of them admit that the biggest challenge is finding quality time not with their children, but with spouses. A job makes its demands loudly and clearly, and children always manage to pull their mothers to their sides. But we tend to assume that our independent, adult spouses are fine if left to themselves. This is an assumption, however, that these women are smart enough to recognize as unsound.

They're also quick to admit to the personal sacrifices. If you want to devote many hours to a demanding career, but refuse to stint on family time, what is usually sacrificed is "me" time: making time for friends, going to simchahs in the evening, pursuing hobbies.

Children, work, spouse—there's no time for much else when you take all those roles seriously. But the takeaway is that if you deeply love what you do, you can wear the burden of a career lightly, and come home not drained, but brimming over with enthusiasm.

4. Marina Goodman, "The Work/Life Balance" (Letter to the Editor), *Jewish Action*, Spring 2013

There is a "striking" contrast between the winter cover ("Striking a Balance: Work and Family) showing a woman single-handedly (with four hands) doing it all successfully and the interviews of real-life successful working women. The common themes that emerge from the interviews are the importance of a helpful husband and a reliable babysitter and workplace flexibility. The Orthodox Jewish community is taken to task by many of the women for not making yeshivah schedules more accommodating and for having workplaces that are worse for working mothers than secular places of business. A number of women say they wished they had *frum* female mentors. But the message depicted on the cover, that balancing work and family is entirely a woman's responsibility, is a dangerous myth that undermines working women and their families.

5. Bronwyn Fryer, "Sleep Deficit: The Performance Killer," *Harvard Business Review*, October 2006

...In the past five years, driver fatigue has accounted for more than 1.35 million automobile accidents in the United States alone, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The general effect of sleep deprivation on cognitive performance is well-known: Stay awake longer than 18 consecutive hours, and your reaction speed, short-term and long-term memory, ability to focus, decision-making capacity, math processing, cognitive speed, and spatial orientation all start to suffer. Cut sleep back to five or six hours

a night for several days in a row, and the accumulated sleep deficit magnifies these negative effects. (Sleep deprivation is implicated in all kinds of physical maladies, too, from high blood pressure to obesity.)...

People like this put themselves, their teams, their companies, and the general public in serious jeopardy, says Dr. Charles A. Czeisler, the Baldino Professor of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School.¹ To him, encouraging a culture of *sleepless machismo* is worse than nonsensical; it is downright dangerous, and the antithesis of intelligent management. He notes that while corporations have all kinds of policies designed to prevent employee endangerment—rules against workplace smoking, drinking, drugs, sexual harassment, and so on—they sometimes push employees to the brink of self-destruction. Being “on” pretty much around the clock induces a level of impairment every bit as risky as intoxication. As one of the world’s leading authorities on human sleep cycles and the biology of sleep and wakefulness, Dr. Czeisler understands the physiological bases of the sleep imperative better than almost anyone. His message to corporate leaders is simple: If you want to raise performance—both your own and your organization’s—you need to pay attention to this fundamental biological issue....

What does the most recent research tell us about the physiology of sleep and cognitive performance?

Four major sleep-related factors affect our cognitive performance. ...The first has to do with the homeostatic drive for sleep at night, determined largely by the number of consecutive hours that we’ve been awake. Throughout the waking day, human beings build up a stronger and stronger drive for sleep. Most of us think we’re in control of sleep—that we choose when to go to sleep and when to wake up. The fact is that when we are drowsy, the brain can seize control involuntarily. When the homeostatic pressure to sleep becomes high enough, a couple thousand neurons in the brain’s “sleep switch” ignite, as discovered by Dr. Clif Saper at Harvard Medical School. Once that happens, sleep seizes the brain like a pilot grabbing the controls. If you’re behind the wheel of a car at the time, it takes just three or four seconds to be off the road.

The second major factor that determines our ability to sustain attention and maintain peak cognitive performance has to do with the total amount of sleep you manage to get over several days. If you get at least eight hours of sleep a night, your level of alertness should remain stable throughout the day, but if you have a sleep disorder or get less than that for several days, you start building a sleep deficit that makes it more difficult for the brain to function. Executives I’ve observed tend to burn the candle at both ends, with 7 am breakfast meetings and dinners that run late, for days and days. Most people can’t get to sleep without some wind-down time, even if they are very tired, so these executives may not doze off until 2 in the morning. If they average four hours of sleep a night for four or five days, they develop the same level of cognitive impairment as if they’d been awake for 24 hours—equivalent to legal drunkenness. Within ten days, the level of impairment is the same as you’d have going 48 hours without sleep. This greatly lengthens reaction time, impedes judgment, and interferes with problem solving. In such a state of sleep deprivation, a single beer can have the same impact on our ability to sustain performance as a whole six-pack can have on someone who’s well rested....

The fourth factor affecting performance has to do with what's called "sleep inertia," the grogginess most people experience when they first wake up. Just like a car engine, the brain needs time to "warm up" when you awaken. The part of your brain responsible for memory consolidation doesn't function well for five to 20 minutes after you wake up and doesn't reach its peak efficiency for a couple of hours. But if you sleep on the airplane and the flight attendant wakes you up suddenly upon landing, you may find yourself at the customs station before you realize you've left your laptop and your passport behind. There is a transitional period between the time you wake up and the time your brain becomes fully functional. This is why you never want to make an important decision as soon as you are suddenly awakened—ask any nurse who's had to awaken a physician at night about a patient. ...

So sleep deprivation, in your opinion, is a far more serious issue than most executives think it is.

Yes, indeed. Putting yourself or others at risk while driving or working at an impaired level is bad enough; expecting your employees to do the same is just irresponsible. It amazes me that contemporary work and social culture glorifies sleeplessness in the way we once glorified people who could hold their liquor. We now know that 24 hours without sleep or a week of sleeping four or five hours a night induces an impairment equivalent to a blood alcohol level of .1%. We would never say, "This person is a great worker! He's drunk all the time!" yet we continue to celebrate people who sacrifice sleep. The analogy to drunkenness is real because, like a drunk, a person who is sleep deprived has no idea how functionally impaired he or she truly is. Moreover, their efficiency at work will suffer substantially, contributing to the phenomenon of "presenteeism," which, as HBR has noted, exacts a large economic toll on business. [See Paul Hemp's article "Presenteeism: At Work—But Out of It," HBR October 2004.]

Sleep deprivation is not just an individual health hazard; it's a public one. Consider the risk of occupational injury and driver fatigue. In a study our research team conducted of hospital interns who had been scheduled to work for at least 24 consecutive hours, we found that their odds of stabbing themselves with a needle or scalpel increased 61%, their risk of crashing a motor vehicle increased 168%, and their risk of a near miss increased 460%. In the U.S., drowsy drivers are responsible for a fifth of all motor vehicle accidents and some 8,000 deaths annually. It is estimated that 80,000 drivers fall asleep at the wheel every day, 10% of them run off the road, and every two minutes, one of them crashes. Countless innocent people are hurt. ...

Sleep deprivation among employees poses other kinds of risks to companies as well. ... Otherwise intelligent, well-mannered managers do all kinds of things they'd never do if they were rested—they may get angry at employees, make unsound decisions that affect the future of their companies, and give muddled presentations before their colleagues, customers, the press, or shareholders. ...

People think they're saving time and being more productive by not sleeping, but in fact they are cutting their productivity drastically. Someone who has adequate sleep doesn't nod off in an important meeting with a customer. She can pay attention to her task for longer periods of time and bring her whole intelligence and creativity to bear on the project at hand. ...

Sleep is power.

Your mother was right—to perform at your best, you need sleep. Discoveries about sleep cycles have given researchers new insight into the specific roles sleep plays in overall health and performance. For example, there is growing evidence that sleep aids in immune function, memory consolidation, learning, and organ function. “Some researchers now think sleep may be the missing link when it comes to overall health, safety, and productivity,” says Darrel Droblich, the senior director of government and transportation affairs for the National Sleep Foundation. One new field of study is looking at a specific correlation between sleep and productivity, and the benefits of what sleep researchers call a “power nap”—a 20-minute period of sleep in the afternoon that heads off problems associated with cumulative sleep deficit....

6. Leah Aharoni, “Are Frum Women Depressed?”, *Love Your Biz* (blog)

http://loveyour.biz/en/2013/03/12/frum_women_depressed/

Though it doesn't look that way on the surface, as I talk to more and more of my clients, all *frum* women, I am starting to sense that we are a dejected community.

We are insistently set on soul searching, on perfecting ourselves, our families, our children, and our world. We are in search of perfection: perfect spirituality, perfectly matched kids' clothes, perfect personalities, perfect Shabbos tables, perfectly-themed *mishlochei manot*, and perfect *shidduchim*.

We are obsessed with trying to be good enough, holy enough, productive enough, and caring enough.

We are in a constant search for balance – between home and work, discipline and warmth, community and household, others and ourselves.

And so we are unhappy. We are unhappy because perfection is unattainable. It doesn't exist. In the words of *Yishayahu*, humans are walking beings, forever destined to move forward, to develop, to search. Perfection is a myth because it is antithetical to progress and development, without which life is meaningless.

We are unhappy because we are letting everyone else – our parents and teachers and neighbors and communities – write the books of our lives for us. And we are unhappy because all around us we see the deceptively smooth, gold-embossed leather bindings of everyone else's books, as ours are filled with smudges and half-finished stories and blank pages.

We are unhappy because our plates are overflowing with everything we did not pile on them, or actually did without wanting to. We are so scared of appearing selfish and egoistic, of displeasing anyone and everyone that we push our own meat and potatoes to the side to make room for everyone else's dessert.

And so the magazine which is supposed to bring us joy and pleasure on Shabbos (pleasure rooted in self-sufficiency is the essence of Shabbos) is full of sad stories and *mussar* and problem solving tips and stylized, never-in-your-kitchen food pictures.

7. Post by ora_43 to forum on Frum Response to the Atlantic Article on Work-Life Balance, Sunday, July 8, 2012, imamother.com

<http://www.imamother.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=189060>

I think the Atlantic article was interesting and informative - after getting past the headline and intro. She did go into some of the issues women face. For example, the idea that a man who sacrifices time with his family in favor of a high-powered career may feel that he's making the noble decision to sacrifice his personal life for a public cause, while a woman in the same position might just feel guilty.

But the headline and intro were so annoying. It left me feeling like if she were anyone else, I would have thought she was trying to discredit feminism. Because what feminist philosophy ever told women they could "have it all"? When was that ever a goal? There were attempts to make it possible for women to have high-profile careers, and to change the workplace to make it easier for mothers to integrate work and family, but when was there ever a feminist leader saying that women should be capable of having any career while simultaneously providing an unspecified number of children with their varying emotional needs?