



CAREER MASTERY™ KICKSTART 2019

VIRGINIA HERLIHY

*May*BUSCH
CREATING LEADERS

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Virginia Herlihy is a respected leader and innovator in executive coaching and corporate training. Founding How Do You Do It in 2006, she used her professional expertise and personal experience as a working parent to create a new type of specialist corporate training, designed to make a real difference to the lives and careers of working parents and positively impact the culture and success of the organisations employing them. Virginia's aim then and now is not to just help working parents manage competing home and work responsibilities but equip them to excel at both. Her passion and expertise have delivered impressive results for a range of clients including; Deloitte, Microsoft and The BBC.

How to Share the Mental Load to Boost Career Success for You and Your Partner

IDEA

The Fatherhood Institute in the UK has done research showing that when partners become parents, they have 5 times the number of arguments with their partner than they had before they had children.

When I share this statistic with clients the typical response is, “Is that all?”. So, it’s clear that the additional responsibilities and extra unpaid work that accompany having children, can take energy away from your career.

So, if you want to perform in your best in your career you really need to be looking at how you manage your unpaid responsibilities at home.

EXAMPLE

In over 12 years of talking to parents about sharing care and career responsibilities, some key themes have emerged of what gets in the way of you performing your best at home and in your career. Two of the biggest themes that go hand in hand are:

1. Lack of clarity about who is doing what
2. Assumptions

A common example is, when your child is sick and you and your partner both have an important meeting that day. And you both think your meeting is more important than the other person’s. You’re probably both already stressed and now you’re now arguing over this point as well.

The data shows that women generally do more of the unpaid work associated with parenting than men. And for men, as they move into sharing care more their roles are changing. One of the things they complain about the most is that they try to help in their own way and then they get criticized by their partners for not doing it the “right” way. It’s easy for tensions to arise, so it’s so important for parties to get clear about who is doing what.

ACTION

Have a conversation with the people that you share caring responsibilities with and do the following:

1. **Create a home life job description**

List out all of the unpaid tasks and responsibilities that you have to do to run a household alongside your work responsibilities.

2. **Allocate who is going to do what**

Allocate according to individual skills and motivations. Who is best placed to do what? What home tasks do each of you prefer or not mind doing?

3. **Capacity**

Consider how much time you each have to do household work. If neither of you wants to do a particular job, you either take turns or you outsource. If you outsource then you must decide be okay with the fact that you're choosing to spend money to make that work.

4. **Check in with your partner**

Check in with your partner about what's working, what's not working, and what adjustments you may need to make based on changes in your work lives.

If you do this, you'll have a lot less stress and a lot more energy to devote to being your best at work.

Interview with Virginia Herlihy

May Busch:

Hi, it's May here and I'm with Virginia Herlihy, who is going to share more with us about how we can be a great working parent and also share in the care. All that unpaid work that we do as working parents. Now Virginia is a leader and innovator in executive coaching, corporate training and facilitation. She founded How Do You Do It, that's her company name, soon after becoming a working mother. That's when she realized that there are very few support programs for parents who are managing responsibilities at work and also at home, and that these programs are really needed. So she provides these on an international basis.

She established a flexible set of courses designed to make a real difference to the lives and careers of working parents, as well as the organizations that employ them. So I want to say welcome Virginia. So glad you're here to help us out with this big, big opportunity, let's say.

Virginia Herlihy:

Thank you May. Thanks. Great to be here.

May Busch:

Okay, awesome. So let's start by talking about why is this such a big issue and increasingly important right now.

Virginia Herlihy:

Okay, so it's becoming even more of an issue I think. This is happening really from a number of levels. If you look at sharing caring career, men's roles are changing. Working fathers roles are changing. Them moving more into the world of caring. I'm generalizing here, but that's what's happening. Women, they've been moving for a while into the role of career. As they move that way and they have greater expectations of their partners at home and they have greater expectations for their own career. That in itself is having an impact on the men, the working fathers, in terms of how they are actually going to manage and navigate that. So there's more tension, if you like, between couples because of the expectations both parties have of each other.

Then if you layer on top of that that we're all ... and this is, I thought, beautifully expressed by a person I saw talking about unconscious fires, we're marinating in a culture. The culture we're intending to marinate in is one that has quite specific ideas about what different people are supposed to do, especially gendered roles. So what makes a working mother a good mother? What makes a father a good father? I think that often couples are trying to navigate their way

through societal expectations, their own networks expectations of what they do, as well as what their own personal situation is. That makes it quite difficult sometimes to navigate what do you think in the midst of all those influences.

May Busch:

Wow.

Virginia Herlihy:

So I think those are just some of the things in the mix here. It's largely due to the changing roles that we have because now people are wanting to have career and family. They're sharing both, and the majority of partnerships are doing that.

May Busch:

Yes. It's so interesting. You're talking about the fact that society has changed. We're no longer in the 1950s where the man worked and made the living and the woman stayed at home and cared for the family. We're now ... we all want more. Men, women, partners. So you raise an interesting point which is about the societal expectations of us.

Virginia Herlihy:

Yes.

May Busch:

I know you work in different cultures. You do work in Australia, the UK, Europe and also Denmark, which is one of the most forward looking countries in this whole regard. So are there differences, or are we all facing the same exact set of issues?

Virginia Herlihy:

I think we're still on a spectrum of facing very similar issues. It's just that certain societies and certain organizations are more progressed in that and some are not. If you like, there are three levels at which this is effecting people. There is the societal level, is what does your own society and culture reflect. Then there's what does your individual organization reflect. Sometimes the organizations we're working with, even in a country like Denmark which is very progressed as a society, within that society you have organizations. Some of which are international and they're not ... they might have an office in Denmark but that's not where that company is established. So they bring some of their culture into that society. Still people are being challenged by whether or not the views of the society are translating in to the corporate world and they're not always translating.

Then there's what's happening at the individual level. So what has been the individual's own experience of the people around them and what they say is the right way for them to

approach this. So it is complicated, but I was recently at a conference in Denmark and it was called Womenomics, a very useful conference. The Norwegian minister for gender equality and children was speaking. She said they were about to copy the Swedish model and they're about to copy the Swedish model because it works, but they're about to copy it because she says, for example, in Norway if you're a girl or a young woman, you look up and you can see you can do anything that you want to do when you look at people in government. But if you look in the corporate world, it's still not translating into the corporate world.

So they're deliberately increasing the parental support for both parties. The Swedish model is you get 480 paid days of leave per child, which can be taken over an extended period. But here's the thing. The mother and the father have to take 90 days each, or the father loses those 90 days. That's a way of giving fathers some ammunition to negotiate with their organizations about why they need to take that financially, otherwise they'll lose that. That enables them into the sharing of care and it enables the women in that society to progress into work sooner than they might otherwise have done. So society has got a big role to play here, but then, as I say, it's what the organizations are doing within those societies and then what the individual's expectations and judgments are from their own point of view.

May Busch:

Fantastic. So let's talk about some specific ways, strategies, tools, taxes, ways that we as parents, working parents, can make this work to share the care.

Virginia Herlihy:

Yeah. So I think one of the first things is actually to tune into what you really think about this because often, based on what I've said, people come to this with predetermined expectations about what their role is supposed to be. So let me give you an example of this. When we are working with a group of working mothers, they will often say things like, my partner is very good, is very helpful, and I'm lucky that he's very helpful. What we point out when they're using that language is what they're thinking is about what their role is and actually therefore what his role is. So if you like, they're assuming that they are the majority person and their partner is helping and they're lucky that he's good at that helping, versus stepping back and saying, actually how are we going to manage that in our household rather than going into a predetermined expectation I have with myself because of maybe my background or the society I'm currently living in or the organization that I'm living in.

So we actually had to call people on this. It's the same the other way around. For men, what we're hearing with many of the men we work with is, they actually are a little bit tired of being overlooked in the caring air. They want to have more time with their families, but they're rather concerned about the fact that that might be seen as a career limiting move. Why? Because they look at what's happened to the women. They also therefore have

predetermined expectations that they can't do then. So we have to challenge that and say, well how do you know that you can't do that? How do you know that you can't be one of the first people to actually make that work within your organization. Somebody has to start, but they've gone in with their predetermined expectation about that.

So there's quite a lot of set predetermined thinking that we need to challenge, and I suggest to people they need to challenge their own and say what do I think about how are we going to make care and career work in our family unit. Never mind what anybody else makes. Let's just focus on what we think and how we're going to make that work.

May Busch:

Wow.

Virginia Herlihy:

That's a really important piece versus just be going along blindly doing what you think is expected of you based on what other people have said to you.

May Busch:

Okay, so point number one is get in touch with what you, as in you and your partner and your family unit, think.

Virginia Herlihy:

Yeah.

May Busch:

I love that. Within that, what I'm hearing you say is that we each have us a narrative in our own minds about what it means to be a good whatever it is, wife, husband, partner, or parent. I also heard you saying that language really matters.

Virginia Herlihy:

Yeah.

May Busch:

Because if we're telling ourselves the story about, oh yeah, well the woman is supposed to do X or the man is supposed to do Y. Then that just perpetuates everything. So I love that you're asking us to use maybe conscious language and have a conscious narrative that works for us.

Virginia Herlihy:

That's the important word you say there, is conscious. The starting point is being conscious of what you're thinking. So you might have some limited beliefs about what you think your

role is supposed to be, when actually you really look at it, you don't really believe that, but you're doing that because you've kind of gone ... it's happening subconsciously. I think that sometimes, certainly for the women we work with, they can be sometimes their own worst enemies in this because they're taking a lot of that on. That's what the data says because that's what I'm supposed to do, isn't it. For men, they're supposed to be the main bread winner, aren't they? So they have the pressure that way. Then that's still there to a degree. Fortunately it's lessening, but we do need to challenge that thinking, that voice inside your head that's telling you, going hang on a minute, is that actually true?

Then I think the other thing obviously is there's so much judgment in this space. People are judging you because you're doing it differently to them essentially. So anybody around you, who's doing it differently to you, is going to say well why are you doing it like that, because that's not the way I do it. I think that can absolutely get people quite stuck, that judgment piece. So it's important to actually try really hard to tune out other peoples judgment because they're not you and they're not you in your family unit and your work situation, and they can't get it right for you. You're the only people who can get it right for you. So stop worrying about what other people think and start focusing on what you guys think. That way you'll actually be able to create something that's workable for your family unit.

May Busch:

Okay. I totally agree with this and I'm now fast forwarding and imagining that, okay we've got our plan, me and my partner. I now have two places that I can envision needing to have some scripts of what to say. One is with my other family members, let's say grandparents who might have very entrenched views about what I'm supposed to do or not and what it means to be a good parent. Then the other situation is what do I say when my boss or my colleagues start judging me or I'm concerned I'm being judged and I don't want my career to suffer, whether I'm the ... whichever partner I am. So what have you found works best to say to other people in these situations?

Virginia Herlihy:

So before I go to that there's one step before that which is, first of all, they need to get clear on what their absolute bottom lines are, especially if you're talking about the situation from a work perspective.

May Busch:

Okay.

Virginia Herlihy:

What I mean by bottom lines is, in this given week I have or seven days, one of my bottom lines in terms of how much time I want to have with my family at home, and getting some

kind of sense of that. So for some people we work with it really is, I'm going to come in late two mornings a week and stay late so that I can have breakfast with my kids. Or on the Friday I'm doing pick up, so I need to go at that time. There are certain boundaries that people need to get clear of in order to be able to facilitate having that kind of conversation. Then it's also about understanding what are your work colleagues bottom lines or boundaries around the flexibility they need from you. So this works both ways, if you like.

So it's focusing, from the work perspective, on outcomes. I'm going to get my outcomes done. What I'm asking for is some flexibility on the way I get that outcome to happen, which for me will mean this in terms of my days and communicating that clearly to those people, and communicating that you're continuing to get your outcomes while those things are happening. As I say, about looking at it from the other person's perspective and saying what's really important for you in terms of when you need me to be available. So it's really a two-way conversation but if you don't communicate to your colleagues at work about what those boundaries are they'll think that anything is up for grabs.

May Busch:

Okay.

Virginia Herlihy:

So let's take the example of a new father who has just come back to work. They're often asked, and they've had two weeks parental leave. They're often asked, how was your holiday, because they haven't been pregnant. They haven't gone off and this quite clear that they're having a baby. They come back and people think well it's business as usual for them but it isn't. They aren't getting any sleep. They want to be supporting their partner. They are tired out. They're quite stressed because here's this new child where I don't really know what I'm doing.

May Busch:

Yeah, the baby's not sleeping. Nobody else is-

Virginia Herlihy:

All of that. Yeah, so it's about, let's have a conversation to explain, I'm going to get my work done and what I'm asking for is some flexibility. So what's the bottom line you need from me? What I'm asking for is this. So that's a work perspective. From a home perspective, the really important thing to do here is not do back what I've been saying that you don't want other people to do to you, which is judge. So you're going to get a comment. I had one myself from an extended family member. It went like this. So you're actually... and you know when somebody says "actually" to you like that it's a bit worrying. You're "actually" quite, not very, you're actually quite a good mother considering you work.

May Busch:

Leading it with judgment.

Virginia Herlihy:

Laced with judgment. This happens all the time to people that we work with. So the first thing to recognize is they're judging because I'm doing it differently to them. That might be hard, but the key thing that you don't want to do is justify the reason you're doing it the way you're doing it because that makes you look at lot weaker and it makes you look like you're not sure about your choice. So instead you say yes, that's great. So that's what you did. That worked for you. I'm doing it differently, or I'm choosing a different way. This is what works for me. You don't have to do anything else. Where we go wrong is always ... you see, the reason I do that is because of la la la and then you look precisely the opposite of what you're trying to look. So stop justifying. Don't judge anybody else. That's the way they do it. Don't justify what you're doing and don't feel the need to talk about it more than to say, oh, well I do it like this.

May Busch:

I love it.

Virginia Herlihy:

Get back in your box.

May Busch:

I love that. By the way, did you say don't feel like you need to justify, or don't testify?

Virginia Herlihy:

Justify.

May Busch:

Okay.

Virginia Herlihy:

Don't justify. Don't over explain the reason you're making the choices you're making because it will make you look unsure.

May Busch:

Yep. I even think the word testify might sound right because you're in the witness box and you're testifying.

Virginia Herlihy:

Exactly.

May Busch:

It automatically puts you on the back foot.

Virginia Herlihy:

That's right. That's so true.

May Busch:

Love it. Alright, well that's great. That's great. I love this idea of first getting clear on what we think as a family unit. Then second, identifying what the bottom line is and then communicating in a way that first starts with reassuring, yep I'm going to deliver the outcomes obviously and here's what I need and what do you need from me?

Virginia Herlihy:

Yes, exactly.

May Busch:

Right? That's what you said. Okay, so what other strategies have you seen work well?

Virginia Herlihy:

So the other really important thing to do here is to stop making assumptions at home about who is doing what and to get really clear about that. Now this can sound like you're being over planned in a situation, but if you don't do this you will have more arguments, and there will be more tension because that's what we've learned over many years now working with working parents. We give them out surveys saying, how clear are you about who's doing what in your household really.

May Busch:

Yep.

Virginia Herlihy:

And what's very clear is that they're not clear, versus making assumptions about who's doing it. Well I thought you were doing that. Well I thought you were doing that. Then they get into a little bit of competition and one-up-man-ship with one another. Well I've done more than you this week. Yeah, but I've done that. That doesn't help either because they your kind of point scoring about each other. So instead of doing that, it really is important to sit down and make sure you are clear about what has to happen in his house for children and domestics work, alongside our work responsibilities which haven't changed necessarily. They're as demanding as ever, but we've got this additional piece. That's really how you manage that.

May Busch:

Yep, and this is really what you shared with us in your tip, which was so helpful. Are you finding that having these conversations is easy to do, or do people need to have-

Virginia Herlihy:

I don't think it's necessarily easy to do but if you focus on your objective, which is for us to be running this to get working as a team and running this smoothly so that we actually are efficient there just like we are at work, that's what we trying. We both like a win-win. That's what we're both trying to achieve. We've had many partners who've gone away. They write - the tip that I gave - write it all down and have the conversation. They have the conversation and they say they're much clearer and it's just been really helpful to get that all out there because often people don't really understand what everybody else is doing. So a lot of it's hidden.

So it's useful to do that, recognizing that what you're trying to get to is making it easier, reducing the stress of both of you. You're both interested in that and having a nice tension in your own relationship, which takes your eye off the ball with your career. It just does. If you're stressed at home, you're going to carry that into work. We don't want to have that, so how can we smooth things out a home? By having conversations. So even if you have a slightly awkward conversation to start with because you haven't really done this before, it's better than not having one and making assumptions.

May Busch:

Okay, so-

Virginia Herlihy:

Done is better than perfect.

May Busch:

Yep. Right. Done is better than perfect. So what is a little script for, let's say you're watching this great advice from Virginia Herlihy and then you want to go home and talk to your partner about it. How do you introduce that concept? What are some lines that people can use?

Virginia Herlihy:

You might say something like, "look I'd love to talk to you about how we're managing integrating work and home. We've got stuff that we both have to do at work but we've both got stuff that we need to do here. I think it would be great if we could talk that through and talk about who's going to do what so we're both clear about that and we're both sharing that." That will take the stress off of both of us because we're already very busy. We can't

really be doing that spontaneously. We don't really have time to do that, so let's just do what we might do at work and have a bit of planning around this.

It's interesting. I always say to people, if you're doing a big project at work, you don't just start it do you? You actually go, okay, how am I going to make this happen? How am I going to resource it? Who's going to do what? You automatically do that. Well we need to take some of those skills, as I said in my tip, and use them at home, and use it in a new way.

May Busch:

Yeah, and what I liked about the tip is it's not a set and forget. You've got to come back to it. Another question that pops into my mind is, people talk about getting to 50/50. So in either bracket of the work load, the non-paid home front work. Is that the right goal to have? In your tip you said, the way you split things is based partly on motivation, partly about availability. So is 50/50 the right way to think about it?

Virginia Herlihy:

I don't think ... there isn't really a right answer to that May because one of the things that really I'm very passionate about is that there are different versions of success. There is not a one size fits all approach, but there is a size that's going to fit for you and your family and your work situation. Have the conversation about that, and tune into whether or not you feel comfortable with what you're taking on and what your partner is taking on as well. That's the key thing here. So for different people, and certainly in my own relationship, it's looked very different at different times. I think we've probably done everything. I've worked full time. My partner's worked full time. We've both done it all ways. That's what's worked for us. As long as you work out what's going to work for you and you're okay with it, that's the key that you've got things on track for you.

May Busch:

Yep.

Virginia Herlihy:

The check in clock is important, so I think at least doing a monthly check in, preferably over a nice glass of wine or something, to say how are we going with who's doing what. Is there anything we need to shift? It's also a useful thing to do. But there isn't an ideal, except the ideal in your own dynamic.

May Busch:

Okay. That's what I really love about what you're saying, because I could see people slavishly trying to get to, well it has to be even, otherwise an even split and that can cause stress too.

Virginia Herlihy:

Yeah.

May Busch:

Just what works for you. Okay.

Virginia Herlihy:

Absolutely.

May Busch:

Love it. Love it. Okay, are there any things that don't work? Like the common mistakes, things not to do?

Virginia Herlihy:

Well the common mistakes in this space are certainly in the area of emergency planning. People don't do it. So I used an example I think, on the tip about when you get up that morning. This is a big thing for people with young children. You're child is sick. They haven't had a previous conversation about if that happens what are we going to do? Who's going to stay at home today? So what you're doing there, already in a tense situation and now you're having an argument about whose job is more important.

May Busch:

Okay, so that's mistake number one.

Virginia Herlihy:

So you've got to look after your emergency planning.

May Busch:

So what's mistake number two?

Virginia Herlihy:

So mistake number two is stop assuming. Stop assuming that you think you know what the other person is doing unless you're really, really clear about that. I'd say particularly for the men, stop assuming that everything is going to go to your partner unless it's previously negotiated, because that's one of the things they get very upset about, if you're in that kind of relationship that I'm supposed to do all the thinking. The other thing here is, this is an important point, the thinking. A mistake that is made here is that women take on and men don't necessarily take on the thinking about what needs to happen on the unpaid side of things. So what happens instead is, and I'm generalizing again here, that the women will tend to do the thinking and then delegate the doing. That also creates tension and it's meaning

things are already unequal because thinking you're doing all the time aren't you.

May Busch:

Okay.

Virginia Herlihy:

There's a few areas to look at there.

May Busch:

Excellent. So those are three mistakes.

Virginia Herlihy:

Yeah.

May Busch:

Make them at your peril.

Virginia Herlihy:

That's right. If you want to have an easier time or streamline time at home it requires looking at things that there's likely to be tension about ahead of time so you can see if you can prevent those things.

May Busch:

Okay. Then finally, what if you're the manager of someone who's a working parent? You just had the baby or is there anything that we can do as the manager that would ...

Virginia Herlihy:

Absolutely there is. I think even before that person comes back to have a conversation with them about what's going on for you, what, if anything, do you need in this period of time that's going to make things easy for you to transition back, because you want to retain that person. This is about retention. They're valuable to you so what can you be doing to assist them to make the transition back? Have they got a mini induction if they've been off for a while, in terms of what's new or what's changed in the business. Are they welcomed back? Are they assisted with the work to get them up to speed with that.

If it's somebody whose been off for a shorter period of time, same thing. It's still how are things at home? How is the baby sleeping, etcetera? What are the essentials that you need, and knowing yourself about what are the essentials you as the manager need in terms of communication in particular and flexibility in particular. But it really has been about having conversations and people sometimes don't have them. They don't have them. The managers

don't have them sometimes because they're a bit worried about discriminating or asking a question that's too personal. So they go, oh, I better not do that at all. So they don't have the conversation. So the conversation doesn't happen. Then assumptions appear, so it's back to assumptions again.

May Busch:

Yes. This is such great advice. Okay, so just quickly, what are, both for the manager and for the parent, how do you initiate the conversation? What would be a starting line that you could use?

Virginia Herlihy:

So if you're a manager, you go back and you say, I want to make the transition back to work process for you as smooth as possible for you and for us, so let's talk about how we can make that happen.

May Busch:

Okay, that's pretty easy.

Virginia Herlihy:

You could do it the other way around. So if you're the person coming back, I'd really like to talk to you. I'm coming back to work about how do make sure I get up to speed and get as effective or productive as quickly as I can at work, and also look after the key things I need to look after at home to facilitate that. Can we have a conversation about it?

May Busch:

Wonderful. That is super easy. Thank you so much. That is going to help so many working parents.

Virginia Herlihy:

Yeah.

May Busch:

Okay, so you shared so much with us and I'd like to ask you the following, which is what is the single most important thing we need to do to me more successful in our careers?

Virginia Herlihy:

Okay. First of all, stop worrying about what everybody else's career is doing and focus on your own. Focus on your own version of success and there are many different versions of success at work and at home. Look at what the priorities are for you so that you look after both priorities and you're clear about who's doing what in those priorities. Then having the

relevant conversations with the key stakeholders in your life about all of that, and you know who those are. Those would be my tips.

May Busch:

Love it. That is great. We do know who they are. You're right. We're just afraid to have the conversations.

Virginia Herlihy:

Exactly.

May Busch:

Such wonderful advice Virginia. I know you have so much more to share. If people want to learn more from you, work with you, go deeper, how do we do that?

Virginia Herlihy:

Okay, so best place to look is initially on our website, which is www.howdoyoudoit.com.

May Busch:

Excellent. That link will be right below and I just think this is such an important field that you are working in. I think this is so crucial to making life work better for individuals and organizations. So thank you for doing your important work, Virginia.

Virginia Herlihy:

It's a pleasure.

May Busch:

Yep, it's been so great having you here. So thank you Virginia. Also, I want to thank you for joining us here at Career Mastery™ Kickstart. If you enjoyed this conversation, if you have questions for Virginia, leave us a comment below. We would love to hear from you. Now, I want you to go out there, take action, and let's get your career off to a great start this year.

Summary Takeaways

When you and your partner both have careers, how can you be great working parents and also share in the care? There's more tension between couples because of the expectations both parties have of each other. This is largely due to the changing roles that we have now because people want to have career and family.

There are three levels at which this is affecting people: the societal level, the organizational level, the individual level. Society has a big role to play, but then it's about what organizations are doing within those societies and what an individual's expectations and judgments are from their own point of view.

Having the relevant conversations with stakeholders.

If you're doing a big project at work, you don't just start it. Instead, you begin by asking: How am I going to make this happen? How am I going to resource it? Who's going to do what? You automatically do that. We need to take those skills and use them at home too. The most effective way we can reduce stress and tension is to have conversations.

Get clear on what you think as a family unit.

- Use conscious language and have a conscious narrative that works for both people.
- There isn't an ideal, except the ideal in your own dynamic – so tune out the judgment coming from others.

Identify your bottom line.

- Get clear on the bottom line outcomes you care about. Whether it is to spend two mornings having breakfast with your family, an afternoon picking the kids up from school or something else, define your boundaries.
- Also understand what your colleagues' bottom lines are and the flexibility they need from you.

Initiate a conversation at work.

From a work perspective, focus on outcomes. You're asking work for some flexibility in the way you get an outcome to happen. Realize that it's a two-way conversation and you will gain more potential to achieve your bottom line goal.

- As the boss or manager, initiate the conversation at work by saying, "I want to make the transition back to work process for you as smooth as possible for you and for us, so let's talk about how we can make that happen."
- As the employee, initiate the conversation at work by saying, "I'd really like to talk to

you. I'm coming back to work about how do make sure I get up to speed and get as effective or productive as quickly as I can at work, and also look after the key things I need to look after at home to facilitate that. Can we have a conversation about it?"

What are the most important things we need to do to be more successful in our balancing act of home and career?

1. Have the relevant conversations with the key stakeholders in your life.
2. Identify each person's priorities and make their responsibilities clear.
3. Focus on your own version of success.