

The Working Mother's Bill of Rights

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It's time for a "Working Mother's Bill of Rights" to serve as a reminder to working moms everywhere they have the right to feel all the feelings they experience and to set healthy boundaries.

Partner Content



Last Mother's Day, I wrote a blog encouraging moms to love themselves the way their children love them. We were a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic, and I was already starting to see signs of the emotional toll from the challenges of being a mom, wife, substitute teacher, chef, cleaning crew and agency team member.

Before the pandemic, many of us had some sort of separation between work and home life. Since the pandemic, this has largely been lost. There is now almost no separation between the two, and we rarely get that momentary opportunity to shut off one to start the other.

Women's labor-force participation reached a 33-year low in January 2021, putting us in what economists have dubbed a "Shecession." In addition to the millions of women who left the workforce, millions more barely hold on and find their mental health at a tipping point. The idea of not giving your family the attention they deserve, never fully being able to step away from work, not doing enough and not being a competent employee have created increased feelings of guilt and neglect. The pressures from every direction have built extreme levels of anxiety and stress, which has led to a complete mental overload and left working mothers feeling overburdened and under-supported.

Those stresses also manifest in real, physical ways – from migraines and exhaustion to increased levels of anxiety and depression. The pandemic's emotional, physical and mental toil has led me to want to do something to impact real change and inspire women to stay in and return to the workforce.

Flexible workdays, unlimited PTO and generous work from home policies are all part of the solution. I feel incredibly grateful to work for an agency that has had these policies in place for decades. These policies allow us working moms to keep all our balls in the air. But it's time to do more. It's time to recognize the juggling act is not sustainable. Women need companies that actively engage in creating work-life integration vs. giving women the burden of creating a work-life balance between two equally demanding jobs.

Add to that the unconscious bias toward women when they choose to, or are forced to, leave the workforce. Motherhood is a job that takes real skill. It is not a gap in a resume, and it is certainly not time off. Still, you hear concerns about a woman's ability to stay up-to-speed on critical skills, disciplines and trends. The industry creates real, often insurmountable challenges for mothers when they do want to return to their professions.

For the woman herself, the self-doubt starts to creep in and that ugly little voice in her head makes her second guess herself and wonder if she can go back. Will someone hire her or think less of her because she took the time off? Can she still handle the work? That inner voice starts to get to her and make her feel like she can't. This mindset robs women of their ability to see their value.

To stop this shecession, things must change – and radically. When we don't have mothers in the workforce, we miss an incredibly valuable and powerful presence in our organizations. So, how do we keep them from leaving? How do we bring them back?

I am incredibly lucky to be part of a company that embraces bold new ideas. Allison+Partners has always created a supportive environment for me, especially as I started having children. As a leader within the organization, I was able to have a voice and put policies in place to support working mothers. I want to respond to the call for action and do something to help women feel valued, heard and empowered to not have to decide between their careers or their families.

They have a right to do both.

It's time for a "Working Mother's Bill of Rights" to serve as a reminder to working moms everywhere they have the right to feel all the feelings they experience and to set healthy boundaries.

I am a working mother. These are my rights:

1. I have the right to prioritize my mental health and the emotional and mental health of my children.
2. I have the right to a career that allows me to have work-life integration, not the burden of creating work-life balance between two equally demanding jobs.
3. I have the right to openly say my family and my children are more important to me than my career without the misconception I am any less dedicated to or successful in the workplace.
4. I have the right to create healthy boundaries.
5. I have the right to embrace the skills I've developed as a parent and apply them to my career because motherhood has made me a better professional.
6. I have the right for Motherhood to be recognized as a job. Motherhood is not a "gap" in my resume and certainly not "time off."
7. I have the right to take time away from work to focus solely on my children.
8. I have the right to take care of myself as an individual beyond my roles as mother and professional.
9. I have the right to thrive in my career and enjoy my time at work away from my children focused on my job performance without guilt.
10. I have the right to say no to unrealistic expectations and to my children.

I urge each of you to commit to giving yourself (and your employees) grace, inspiration and tangible support.

To all working mothers, we see you; we hear you; we value you; and most importantly, we need you.

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