



back to
LIFE
back to
REALITY



BY SUE EDWARDS

This song title by Soul 11 Soul rings in my head when I think of both the workplace and family dynamic that accompanies Fall. After a summer of relaxed schedules and “lazy, hazy days”... this season conjures a sense of “buckling down and getting back at it.”

For me, this “buckling down” is not at all a heavy feeling. There’s a freshness that I’ve never quite associated with the New Year in January.


September is a time of thinking about new learning, new goals, new routines (and new shoes!).

I especially find this to be the case for women with school-bound children – whether they are attending their first preschool program or their final year of university. The rhythm of the school year seems to impact the rhythm of our lives more than most factors.

When I was brainstorming ideas for this column, my husband suggested writing about separation anxiety. He wasn’t talking about children leaving Mommy to go to school. No, it was a play on words to address the theme of separating work life from family life. His notion was that if you can learn the art of focusing and dealing with one discrete thing at a time, you will be optimally efficient. In separating work from home, you will be less distracted and achieve more gains.

As a leadership coach who has worked with hundreds of executives on topics such as the value of focus, I understand the message. And yet... it has also been my experience that completely separating and compartmentalizing important parts of our lives is simply not how most women are wired. Rather, our work lives inform our family lives and vice versa.

So, as we move through this season, I encourage all of you as women, and as leaders, to bring your awareness of the integration of work and real life to your relationships with others at work. Here are a few ideas:

Check in with your staff and co-workers who are starting back to night school. Show recognition of 

their efforts to invest in their learning and growth.

Show understanding to your assistant whose son is off to pre-school for the first time. She may need some extra time for a few mornings in the early weeks to linger at the two-way glass thinking about how he was a babe in arms just yesterday.

Acknowledge the empty-nest syndrome for your colleague whose third child has gone off to university. Lend an ear.

Encourage your staff to set up their work schedules to commit to attend some of their children's recreational activities. You know that this will help them to be more focused and productive while they are at work.

Demonstrate your awareness that occasional volunteer days at school can bring great peace of mind to your employees and is an important community contribution. Encourage your team to plan lieu days or vacation days for these initiatives, knowing that this will pay off at work.

Check to see if work schedules need to be adjusted for the changing daycare arrangements of the work group.

Inquire as to how you can support your boss, whose spouse is starting a new job now that their children are in school full-time.

It is because you have *integrated*, not separated, all of your selves as woman, mother, daughter, sister, friend, manager, colleague, mentor, that you are the powerful and compassionate leader that you are. It is truly when you are at your best! And as distracting and sometimes

inefficient as this can be in the near-term, you know that the relationships around you are strengthened, employees are more committed and, most importantly, you simply wouldn't have it any other way!

And nor would your admirers! ●

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September 26.07 Toronto
Telling Your Story with Liz Radzick

October 3.07 Oakville
Living Well with Libby Znaimer, plus Women's Health Show (see page 6)

October 24.07 Toronto
Doing Well by Doing Good, Peggie Pelosi, author of *Corporate Karma*

November 20.07 Oakville
Annual Christmas Show – make a dent in your holiday shopping – support women-owned businesses

November 28.07 Toronto
Re-inventing Motherhood – Kathy Buckworth, author of *Secrets of Supermom*

Oakville Oakville Conference and Banquet Centre, 2515 Wycroft Road
Toronto Verity Club, 111d Queen St. E.

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