



# Living successfully

Success shouldn't be measured by the number of steps you've climbed to get to the top. It's how you manage the balancing act that really counts

## have a friend who is constantly

Tweeting and Facebooking about how incredibly busy she is. It's always "Another late night at the office," or "Saturday afternoon spent working on projects"... I often feel a tinge of guilt when I read her updates while sprawled across my couch sipping my glass of red. Maybe I'm not busy enough? Maybe I'm not driven enough? Should I be at the office until 7pm every evening if I want to go anywhere with my career? Society seems to demand a lot from women. Never before have we been busier, more competitive, more successful... and more tired. We rarely recognise our own worth, and often waste time comparing ourselves to everyone else, say the experts.

## Making it personal

"We should be aiming for our own personal top," says Cape Town executive coach and lecturer Dale Williams. "To focus on an external goal which is judged by other people can be extremely destructive. I've met people who have reached the top and are now wondering whether it is worth it. Even if you win in the rat race, you are still

a rat." Working mothers are under even more pressure – often with very little help, acknowledgment and respect from family or colleagues. "Mastering having children and the life balancing act that is required to make it all work is probably one of the greatest achievements," says Williams. "Life as a mother is a career in itself and those who chose to balance both work and family are doing something extraordinary that few men, even in the most senior positions, have to deal with."

## Getting over overtime

So does a successful career plus kids equal overtime? New media manager and mother of two small children, Lieze Langford says no. "Late nights at the office means that you are probably not working efficiently. Most jobs can be done within office hours with proper planning." Lieze balances a demanding job and a demanding home life. "To really succeed you need balance, a good support system, open communication with everyone involved from your family to employers, planning, planning, planning and a glass of good red wine!"

## Keeping up with the (career) Jones'

Success is living the life that you want to lead and not someone else's life. Johannesburg clinical psychologist Kobus Coetzee offers the following advice:

- ▶ Be careful not to associate your personal goals with other peoples' success; rather make it a personal challenge.
- ▶ Make sure your own goals cover all areas of your life, family, work, finances and recreation.
- ▶ Share your goals with family and friends, and get the necessary support in achieving them.
- ▶ Don't be too hard on yourself if you don't reach your goals. The trick is to be able to readjust them as life throws you curve balls.
- ▶ Change your perspective, and make your goal about living successfully, not achieving success. ☺

## 4 STEPS TO PERSONAL SUCCESS

Instead of driving hard towards a goal, strive for balance in your life. If you do have certain goals you'd like to achieve, Williams suggests you follow the scenario-based principle, which makes provision for life's obstacles:

**1** Goals like "Conclude my MBA before I'm 35" are not realistic because it doesn't make provision for uncertainty or curve balls. Instead, have a focal question like: "How can I conclude my MBA by 35?"

**2** After you have a focal question, write down all the possible uncertainties. These are the aspects of your life which are both in and out of your control – things like finances and relationships.

**3** Circle the two items with the highest uncertainties and flesh them out so that they consist of two possibilities. For example, the two possibilities for finances could be: a) I could have more money, and b) I could have less money.

**4** Write scenarios for your life. Everybody naturally runs through alternative scenarios to almost everything they do, this exercise just helps you focus. Writing your scenarios can be very rewarding and gives you the chance to get creative. An example of one of your scenarios can be: "So I don't reach my goal by 35 because I don't have the money, but I complete it by 36 and start my own business!"