

BUSINESS



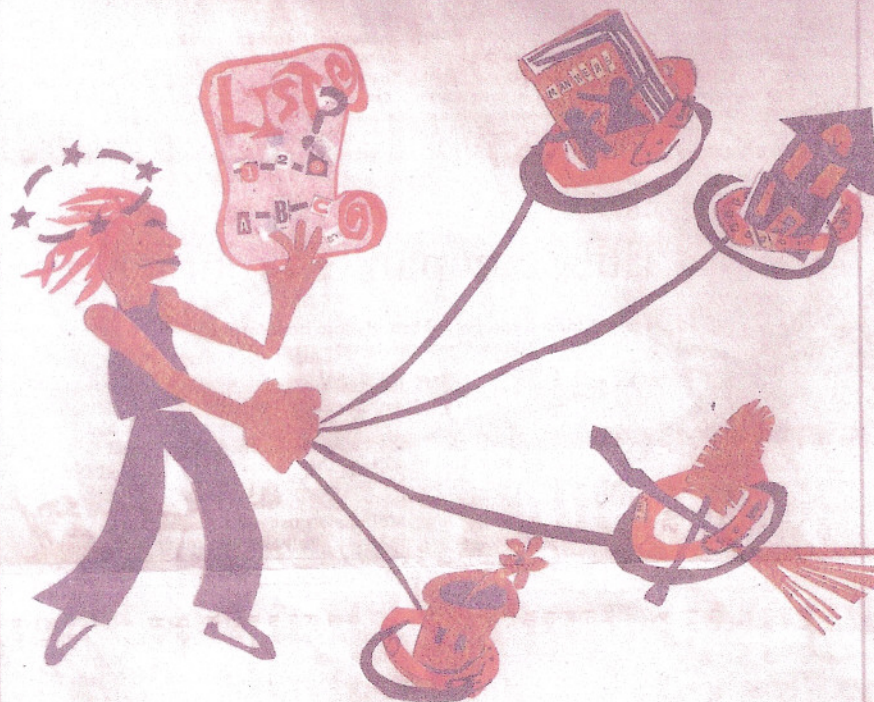
The Miami Herald



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A

BALANCING ACT



‘ I NEED A WIFE!’

INCREASING NUMBERS OF WORKING WOMEN - AND MEN, TOO! - ARE LONGING FOR DEVOTED HELP ON THE HOME FRONT

Construction executive Vivian Bonet regularly finds herself wishing for something that helps some of her male colleagues prosper.

“A wife would be handy,” says Bonet of the DYL Group in Miami.

Even though her husband pitches in with housework, she still feels like she has an overflowing plate. “There are so many little things I could have her do.”

Working women, whether married or single, find themselves yearning for someone dependable — anyone! — to get a soccer uniform washed, call



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incorrect charge or exchange a shirt for a bigger size. With two-income families now the norm and both men and women working long hours,

the question has become how to accomplish what used to be a wife's full-time job.

When I asked women of all income levels what they would have a wife do for them, it took only seconds for most to rattle off a list.

are sharing the chores and child care with their wives, and some single working men do it all. Nonetheless, women generally still do more. And, some chores simply aren't on most men's radar.

“I'm lucky that my husband does a lot around the house,” says Pam Tebo, a Miami Lakes bank teller. “We have a system



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BALANCING ACT | FROM THE FRONT

Who's left to fulfill vital role of 'wife'?

•BALANCING ACT, FROM 1C

that works, but there are other things that slip through the cracks, and I'm struggling with that."

The angst over this issue spills over into the workplace, too. "The real challenge is companies still follow the old career model and expect you to perform as if someone is at home taking care of everything for you," said Mary Shapiro, a professor at the Simmons School of Management in Boston.

She notes that some men are better positioned to advance because they have a spouse at home to keep the household running. Most women don't.

Women also suffer because their work/life balancing act leaves little time for networking. Women often spend their lunch hours running errands instead of making the social contacts that are essential to managers who want to move up. "Even carpooling is difficult for women because they do

chores on the way home," says Suzanna Rose, director of the Women's Studies Center at Florida International University.

Working women have noticed, correctly, that their male colleagues often advance further at work with the support of their wives, regardless of whether those wives work or not. Women occupy 50.6 percent of managerial and professional positions, according to the research organization Catalyst, but they make up only 15.6 percent of Fortune 500 corporate officers.

Female politicians are affected, too. Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics, says more women are determined to show they can raise a family while serving in office. But while plenty of male lawmakers have small children, the pressures and responsibilities don't seem to weigh on them the way they do on women. "We hear very

often from women who are running or elected that they wish they had a wife, someone to make sure the basics get done — pick up the kids from school or make sure there's something edible in the refrigerator."

Shapiro, a specialist in women's studies, thinks the guilt factor weighs heavily on women. "We want huge jobs; we want to have clean homes. Women beat themselves up because they haven't taken anything off that plate. Women have to realize a bathroom cleaned by a husband is better than one not cleaned at all."

One mother notices there's another factor working against employed women. With boomers more active, grandmothers are less available to fill in the gaps. "A lot of women wish their mothers could help them more," says Lisa Shaw, a working mother of five. "Instead, a lot of women in their 60s are doing things they never got to do, like going back to school or trav-

BUSINESSES THAT HELP

Outsourcing household work is a potential solution for families that can afford it. Here are a few ideas, from people who wrote to me in the past couple of days.

- **Monica Muniz-Collado** says her North Miami business, The Task Lady, offers errand running for time-starved individuals and virtual assistant services for small business owners.

She has been hired to do everything from screening job candidates to organizing clients' CD collections.

- **Then there's whateverdirect.com**, an online shopping site that lets visitors search for local food, services and products to be delivered to their homes.

- **Carolina Argiz** launched her Miami personal concierge service, ZeroStress, at an accounting firm during tax season. "While the accountants crunched numbers and filed tax forms for their clients, I picked up prescriptions, ordered dinner and even scheduled car tune-ups."

OTHER SOLUTIONS

- **Ann Mody Lewis** of Women's Journey, a nonprofit self-help group based in Plantation, says women need to resist the notion that their families are solely their responsibility. Be willing to engage in healthy debate with your spouse about sharing responsibilities, she says.

- **Rebecca L. Hernandez** says her best friend, who lives in Alabama and loves the beach, made a deal. She and her two kids would come to Miami and stay with her for the summer, saving Hernandez summer camp fees.

"It was perfect," Hernandez wrote. "She cleaned my house, cooked dinner, read to my children, took them to the pool plus more while I went to work."

- **Fran**, who didn't give her last name, says she has employed a full-time helper/nanny for the past 17 years. "It is a luxury, as I am not rich. But there is simply no other way to have a quality of life without this help."

—CINDY KRISCHER GOODMAN

eling."

Maybe women aren't alone in their wife envy. Entrepreneur Bob Sullivan, chief executive of newbaby.com, says with more men in business for themselves and their wives working, men

also feel there's not enough time in the day. "I could use another wife, too," he says. "There's a lot to do."

Send your comments and ideas to [Cindy Krischer Goodman](mailto:Cindy.Krischer-Goodman@MiamiHerald.com) at cgoodman@MiamiHerald.com.