

Balancing New Choices at Mid-Life

What did I want to be when I grew up?

I was asking myself the same question at 43 that my children were asking themselves as teenagers.

I realized that I was slowly losing my job as caregiver. I have always poured myself into my family. I truly felt needed. As my children reached their teens and became more independent they were less reliant on me for every little thing. I was always doing something by volunteering at church or with other groups at school and in the community.

At the same time, my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer and I dropped everything to help in anyway I could. When my mother was gone, my purpose was gone as well. My volunteer work had been taken on by other people while I was taking care of my mother and my children were now getting ready for college. I needed to find my next passion.

Searching for the Next Life Phase

I always knew that the time would come when I would want to do something for myself. I always thought of my life in stages. I had the stage with my husband before kids when I was working. Then I had my second stage when my focus was on my children and my family. I knew I would have another phase when I would focus on myself.

That doesn't mean that in all those years of being at home that I didn't have moments where I wished I got to leave the house and go to an office. But I always figured there were days when my friends who worked wished they had been able to stay at home. I was happy with my decision to stay at home.

But now it was time to make new choices for myself and figure out what the next phase of my life would be like.

I did know that I didn't want to work for someone else. Two of my three children were still at home and I wanted to still be there for them. Working from home would be the best situation. I knew I could run my own business because I had been running a household for 20 years. With all of my volunteer work, I had learned a great deal about managing, working with others, networking, etc.

I took my time and did a lot of research. After much prayer and contemplation I chose to give my generation of women a voice and created Boomer Women Speak (www.boomerwomenspeak.com) and founded the National Association of Baby Boomer Women (www.nabbw.org). The Boomer Women Speak (BWS) Web site encourages, connects, and supports baby boomer women through a variety of resources and forums that are a virtual Girls Night or Day Out. The National Association of Baby Boomer Women (NABBW) is the only association devoted to educating, empowering, and addressing issues concerning women at midlife. I could now take my relationship, care giving, and networking skills and use them to create a business.

Balancing Basics

So even though I was needed less, I would now have a home, children, and my own business to take care of. Managing all of these jobs would require I learn some valuable balancing lessons.

My balancing act starts with making sure I have time for myself. Every morning I have prayer time when I study or journal with my Bible. I also take a walk five times a week and take a bath every night. These are what most people consider extras, but they help me stay balanced. If I am busy all day, I know I have those two things for myself.

Sometimes you need to see it to believe it. I created a space in my home dedicated to my work. It helped my family realize when I was in that room I was working and it helped me focus.

Organization is also key. I make a lot of lists, one for my work, one for the house, etc. I also use a kitchen timer to stay on task. I allow myself so much time for each task and I switch to the next task when the timer goes off.

Balancing home and work also requires support. I am fortunate to have a husband who saw the value in what I was doing at home and encourages me to take on my new challenges with my own company. But you also need to support yourself. If your priority is to make your home business work, it means saying no and setting limits with others. I was terrible about this when my children were younger, but I know now that it is okay to ask for help.

And if you are going to have a lot of responsibilities you have to set realistic expectation for yourself and others. Our expectations are so high of ourselves. I have started asking myself, "Why do I have to do it all?" Now that my children are older, they can help out more. Delegating and setting boundaries means you value your work.

Our generation needs to know how to balance. Between raising children and taking care of our parents we are balancing many different roles. I have learned numerous ways to find balance now that I have started my own company and now need to work those responsibilities into my routine.

Dotsie Bregel is the Founder of the National Association of Baby Boomer Women, www.nabbw.com, and Boomer Women Speak, www.boomerwomenspeak.com, the number one sites on major search engines for "baby boomer women." She enjoys educating and empowering baby boomer women.