



Book Review: *Answers to the Mommy Track: How Wives and Mothers in Business Reach the Top and Balance Their Lives* by Trudi Ferguson and Joan S. Dunphy (New Horizon Press, NJ: 1991)

Trudi Ferguson is an Assistant Professor of Management in the College of Business and Public Management, University of La Verne, CA. She's taught leadership and management at UCLA and USC as well as authored another book, *Blue Collar Women: Trailblazing Women Take on Men-Only Jobs* (New Horizon Press, 1994), with Madeline Sharples.

Answers to the Mommy Track is a response to a concept proposed by Felice Schwartz, founder of Catalyst Inc., in her article: "Management Women and the New Face of Life" (*Harvard Business Review*, January/February 1989). Schwartz suggested that women and corporations prepare themselves for a future where there were two female career paths: "the career primary" vs. "a career-and-family" path. The criticism of Schwartz's work focused on the either-or nature of the idea. The fear was that women who chose the "career-and-family" path would be condemned to a near second-class status.

Ironically, Schwartz's article, itself, was intended to be an alternative way of thinking to the concepts proposed earlier by Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardin in their work *The Managerial Women: The Survival Manual for Women in Business* (Doubleday & Company, 1977) which suggested women must adopt male-styled behaviors, methods, and strategies in order to climb the corporate ladder during the 1970s.

Answers is as topical today as it was when written in 1991. In fact, it's one of those books that mothers ought to be giving their daughters for Christmas even today, 25 years later. Ferguson interviews over 35 women of achievement to get their insights into what it takes to succeed as both mother and a successful professional.

Ferguson begins by describing the layout of the debate from Hennig/Jardin to Schwartz. She introduces the successful women (and mothers) she's interviewed. She presents the "personality profile of successful women" which looks just about the same as a successful man.

Next is a brief discussion of "missing mentors," which are described as are sources of confidence and inspiration, images that helped the women develop their personal standards. Thankfully, these women do not whine about there being too few role models out there to "help" them succeed.

Ferguson's book is packed with the good advice young women (even men) need: common sense advice that starts with what the individual must do to deal with HER problems HERSELF. A consistent pattern in the behavior of successful women is their unique ability to accept responsibility for their own actions and their own future. This is one of the first books I've seen that includes a full chapter on the "Obstacles from Within," without judgment or recrimination or crying, sounding almost like a gentle maternal adviser.

When Ferguson talks about how others interact with successful women, she's careful not to step out of the circle of personal control over how one remains responsible, even when facing un-

supportive players from the home front or from the corporation. She keeps the focus on how individuals can only control their own behavior and reactions -- how we cannot control the behavior or actions of others.

This book answers many of the questions about work-family balance. It's not balance at all -- it's just choices. Your choices. Your path. Your career. It's a refreshingly hopeful and optimistic book, with many "how-to's" sprinkled throughout. If more members of our generation had read this book, we would clearly have many more women happily in leadership roles in corporate and entrepreneurial life. It's not too late. Even twenty-five years later, it's still one of the best books for mothers, daughters, and any woman who aspires to be herself and be in business.

Chapter Headings:

1. Then and Now
2. Backgrounds for Success
3. Personality Profiles of Successful Women
4. Case of the Missing Mentors
5. Supportive Players from the Homefront
6. Strategies for the Fast Track
7. Corporate Workstyles
8. Alternative Workstyles
9. Problems on the Workfront
10. Obstacles from Within
11. Problems on the Homefront
12. How-to For Individuals
13. How-to For Corporations
14. Tips and Tactics for "Mommies" in the Boardroom
15. What Do Women of the '90s Want?

Chapter Headings:

Then and Now

Backgrounds for Success

Personality Profiles of Successful Women

Get along with others, friendliness, sensitivity, facility, openness/optimism, upbeat attitudes; confidence, self-control, avoidance of domination, risk-taking, visibility, courage, broad perspective, status symbols, and insecurities propelled them toward achievements, self-awareness.

Case of the Missing Mentors:

Values, sources of confidence and inspiration, using images to develop personal standards

Supportive Players from the Homefront:

Unconditional love, professional endorsement from mates, advice and counsel, balance, partners in the same field, mutual support, institutional support, family attitudes: confidence, problems with supporters: “extended parenting”

Strategies for the Fast Track:

Deliberate steady push for challenge, being prepared, finding a compatible institution, tales of courage, great individual effort in their chosen career, changing jobs, finding supportive people, partners, changing directions, following your interests, creating your own life, deliberate choices for hard temporary duty, resisting jobs incompatible with interest, the unusual career ladder – down, deliberate strategies for reducing stress, clearing your own path, deliberate education, learning politics, using your background and experience, making demands and proving themselves, flexibility, foundations.

Corporate Workstyles:

Positive views of corporate life for women, opportunities for women, corporate success stories, confidence in strengths, active management of one’s own career, do good work, accepting and learning about the environment, inviting and using constructive criticism, working around discrimination

Alternative Workstyles:

New work patterns, job sharing, new benefits, new business, independent business, alternative work life explored, and new family patterns.

Problems on the Workfront:

Factors influencing retention of women into partnership, hiring, women’s career commitments, realistic discussion of the work environment, women’s roles in interviews, involving more women managers in recruiting, role models, career paths, “good ol’ boys club”, attitudes influencing women, negative attitudes about the possibility of women

combining career and family, the assumption that women will leave, lack of seriousness about careers, the perception that mother should be at home, problems with part-time work, perceived negative responses of clients, lack of sensitivity to women as a natural part of the professional population, stereotypes about women's lack of toughness, crude gossip, harsh "Marine like" attitudes, difference in the ways men and women work, work assignments, family considerations, communication, hidden struggles.

Obstacles from Within:

Time and balance, appropriateness of behavior, obsessive careerism, insecurities, women's issues: pregnancy, emotional demands.

Problems on the Homefront:

Predicaments, marital care, child care, changing careers, drug crisis, guilt, resources, self-care, women's comments about time for themselves.

How-to for Individuals:

Looking in a mirror, ask others for feedback, find work you love, find a career for which you are best suited, use your unique combinations of experiences and perspectives, "a soft touch hits hard", assess your priorities, set goals and define steps to achieve them, review your own inner-dialogue: create positive self-talk, look over the fence, understand the business environment: rules, language, behavior, lifestyle, trade-offs, fantasize and visualize: create a world, "you can't dictate simpatico: go where you are wanted", understand the differences in behavioral styles: men and women, be sensitive to male stereotypes about women, articulate your career commitment when you become married or pregnant, gender defines us: let it be, educate your colleagues: explain your needs and ambitions, unveil the hidden, invite constructive criticism, men can see women as moody and emotional, work around discrimination, get a broad range of contacts, develop breadth of experience, be proactive, learn your shadow self, make demands, keep the focus on what you as a woman want, learn to say no, focus on necessary development work, rehearse and practice new roles and skills, be authentic, relax, compete, get support, make periodic assessments of your goals and priorities, dig in and push forward, be forgiving.

How-to for Corporations:

(13) to dos

(7) don'ts

Tips and Tactics for "Mommies" in the Boardroom

What Do Women of the '90s Want?

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