



Peaceful

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Work and Home – Balancing the Two

Often, people are overwhelmed with all the things that take place during the day: making a living, the actual workload, and the home. Many times a person comes home from a hard day at work, (or lack thereof,) and takes it out on their spouse and/or children. Clearly this is not the intention, but what else can you do in such a stressful situation? Even if you are not overloaded with the typical burdens, there are others; for instance, not earning enough money to support a family. Or a housewife has too many mishaps in one day and couldn't have supper ready on time. The list is endless.

As silly as some of these things may sound, if it is not dealt with correctly, these issues have proven to lead to the breakdown of the family unit time and again. Even if the family does not fall apart, it creates a lot of tension. (Stress, as we know, is a large cause for heart attacks in America!)

A somewhat typical scenario : *Chaim* gets up in the morning, goes to *shul* and then he's off to work. The day just got off on the wrong foot. (He came in late to the office, spilled his coffee, or left an important paper at home – you fill in the blank.) All day at the office, things keep piling up and he just can't wait to go home and enjoy a wonderful dinner with his wife *Devora* and his children *Estie*, *Sruly*, and baby *Moshe*. Sure enough on his way home he gets a flat tire, and then, after he finally puts his spare on and is back on the road, he finds himself stuck in heavy traffic.

At last, he pulls into the driveway. Annoyed, cranky, starving and somewhat disheveled, he walks into the house. All he wants is to just sit down and eat a good meal. He envisions being able to sink into his chair, enjoy a good meal with his family's company and to just fade away into the moment. But when *Chaim* opens the door, he sees the house in disarray. Kids are screaming and *Devora* has not even begun to cook.

What happens next?

He loses it! He screams at the kids, shouts at his wife, stomps his way to his room and just doesn't know what to do. Little does he know, *Devora* had a crazy day too. *Sruly* missed the bus so she drove him to school. She got home, only to find out that *Estie* left her project on the kitchen table, which, of course, was due. Then *Moshe* wasn't feeling well, so she went to the doctor only to find the waiting room packed with kids.

Both tried their best. Both had a day filled with mishaps and small troubles. How can they take a step back, so the negative feelings don't get overwhelming?



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Changing of the Hats

Although it is hard to address many specific scenarios on a piece of paper, I will offer a great solution that has been proven to work in many every-day stressful situations.

Before you cross the threshold of a different position i.e. work vs home, take a few minutes to prepare yourself, and *change your hat*.

A short while ago, you were a worker, now you are a husband/father, wife/mother.

Remember for a moment, that on the other side of the door are the people/person you love. Focus on the fact that you would never want to harm them or let them be harmed by another. And so, whatever happened at work (or wherever) *put it aside*. This may take a few minutes and/or you may need to learn a few techniques to accomplish this task.

Here are some ways to implement the “Changing of the Hats”:

- a) One such technique is something so simple; you’ll think it’s childish. But *it works!* Clarify the distinction between home and work by writing it down on a piece of paper. Yes, write it down! Using the above example, *Chaim* might write something like this:

I had a crazy day at work but I love Devora so much and I haven’t seen the kids since yesterday. Therefore, no matter what I see when I open the door, I will smile and be loving towards them. [Write and then read it aloud three times before getting out of the car].

- b) Or, it can be something as simple as collecting your thoughts and consciously deciding to refocus.

Ex: *Even though I have been sitting in traffic for two hours without air-conditioning on a hot day, I’m just going to put it aside “for now”. Because the people I love and are most dear to me DO NOT need to be hurt by it.*

[This is something you meditate on. There is no need for real meditation like yoga (you could do that too) but just take a few moments and visualize how you are going to act in the first few minutes when you enter the home].

- c) Another idea is a mantra – an individualized phrase that resonates with “you”.
Ex: *No matter what, I’m not going to scream.* [Say it fifteen times before entering].



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On the flip side, the other spouse should also brace him/herself.

Think, “Hey, I know I had a rough day but my spouse is about to come home. Let me clean up, prepare something to eat, and quickly make myself look attractive.”

And if none of the above are viable, simply be at the door with a smile!

Another great tip : If all else fails and you just feel that stress coming on even though you tried really hard to do the above, there still is something you can do that will save the day.

Just say, “Honey, I love you. I had a really hard day today. Can we sit down and discuss it?”

Or, “Dear, I love you. I had a really hard day today. The house is a wreck right now, but would it be okay if we discussed it later?”

Such communication diffuses the situation *before* it becomes a situation. And most importantly, it really shows the other person that regardless of what happened to *you*, you really care about that other person!

And my dear readers, showing you care truly helps to build a strong, loving household.

