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Work-life-what? - How I try to rock my career and still find time for Netflix

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JULIA SCHWENDNER

Work-life-what? How I try to rock my career and still find time for Netflix

Setting boundaries, saying no, and taking care of my own needs. These are the three things that ChatGPT advised me when I asked how I can pursue a career and lead a balanced life as a thirty-something. Outdated gender roles should be reconsidered and discarded because we live in an emancipated Western society. The opinions of "others" should be irrelevant because our needs always take top priority. If everyone takes care of themselves, then everyone is taken care of - or something like that. And if one realizes that the hamster wheel is turning into a centrifuge that will soon catapult them off, they should simply meditate. Or keep a journal. There are some great ones on Etsy. So far, so predictable and, unfortunately, so unrealistic.

Nevertheless, I continued to ask what I should do best if I wanted to turn these tips into an article that also helps other women. The suggestions: develop an outline, find an inspiring work atmosphere, and block out time. According to Chatty, as I have now nicknamed the machine, I should have written this text with a super healthy drink full of fiber and vitamins next to my MacBook, undisturbed by appointments or other manifestations of private life. Once again, I must say: So far, so predictable, and at least for my here and now, unfortunately, so unrealistic.

Because, in fact, this text is being created in stages. While standing, waiting for the (fortunately delayed) subway, I have some thoughts. Others while I eat my lunch, albeit in front of the computer and without movement, but at least it's a salad. And still, others, while an incredibly stereotypical and seemingly invincible Chris Hemsworth flickers before me on the screen... Netflix and think.

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Certainly, on the one hand, it's due to how I am wired. That I prefer working in small sprints rather than long marathons. On the other hand, it's also because I am a thirty-something and working on being successful in my job while leading a balanced life at the same time. And sometimes, time gets pretty tight.

Tight because Chatty wasn't entirely wrong. Taking care of one's own needs.

For example, my need is to not slide into old-age poverty. Thankfully, it's still far off, but now is the time to set the right course. So I'm using the time when I don't have a family yet to put myself in a comfortable position for the moment when I do have a family. So I've decided to occasionally work more. I accept that it comes at the expense of my free time. And it's also my need to help others, to make things happen, and to move items forward. That applies to my life in the job and beyond.

But sometimes, that goes hand in hand with my boundaries being more decoration than a defining line. The magic happens mostly outside the comfort zone - it sounds like a wall tattoo, but it's true.
So what to do?

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Accept that work-life balance may not mean that every day is balanced. That every day is a little bit of everything: some work, some leisure, some relaxation. Rather, I believe that we can organize our lives in waves. That there are times when more work takes place. And other times when the self takes center stage and my need for rest and physical rather than mental exertion. And eventually, "others," especially when they are small children. Since I admit these waves to myself and accept that I need to shift, I can occasionally cross boundaries without constantly carrying a guilty conscience on my back.

Because what is balance, if not the fleeting moment before the pendulum swings back in the other direction?