

# Help! I'm a working mother

We know all too well how juggling work and family is no easy feat. So do the women behind Working Mothers Forum, who set up a one-stop platform at the start of this year to pool together resources that working

mothers need. Here, panel member Cheryl Liew, 40, shares her five must-dos for a good work and family life balance. The mother of three is the director of Employer Alliance, a network of corporations that embrace balanced work-life strategies and advocate other companies to follow suit.

**TIP 1: Talk to your husband.** "Knowing what is important to you and your spouse helps set the boundaries for a successful family life. You need to have the same priorities."

**TIP 2: Decide between childcare or family care.** "Choosing the best option available to you frees up time to pursue what you deem as a balanced work life. My parents supported me by looking after all of my three children."

**TIP 3: Explore various work options.** "This means you have to choose between working full-time, part-time or even from home depending on what's best for your child."

**TIP 4: Simplify life.** "Think about ways you can save time such as going to the supermarket once a week instead of every day. Delegating chores to your children or other family members also saves you precious time. Working out a schedule with your neighbour or a good friend to babysit the children gives each of you a turn to have a breather."

**TIP 5: Be adaptable.** "Don't have a fixed plan. Be flexible because you need to be able to handle crises when they come and change the plan to suit them. For example, a weekend at the zoo can be affected by bad weather or one of your children falling ill. This will require you to spend the weekend indoors instead. It's useful for mothers to have a 'magic bag of tricks' to handle unpredictable situations. Even being stuck in a traffic jam may require you to pull out some colouring pencils and paper to keep your children occupied if they get impatient."

**FINALLY...** "Don't be too hard on yourself if you don't succeed the first time. I'm still learning and evolving as a mother."

For updates on the Working Mothers Forum, go to [www.workingmothersforum.org](http://www.workingmothersforum.org).



Your children need not suffer while you're climbing the corporate ladder.

## IS IT OK TO CRY AT WORK?

Two experts share their views on this sensitive subject.

**YES:** "I have worked with individuals who have cried over clinching a multi-million-dollar deal after working on it for a long period, or because they got retrenched," says Angeline V. Teo, 45, principal consultant of d'OZ International, a corporate training firm. "In these situations, shedding tears in front of your colleagues is fine. Crying is therapeutic and it is nature's way of helping us cope with stress and discomfort."

**NO:** "It causes women to lose their credibility as a professional. At the workplace, many people wouldn't have the time nor patience to listen to another colleague's woes," says Lydia Gan Seok Hul, 34, head coach at Wow-Her.com, which provides life coaching services.

"Catch yourself before the emotions become too much to handle. Explain to your colleagues or clients that the situation is affecting you, and you need to clear your thoughts for a short while. Excuse yourself to the restroom, and let the tears flow."

**168** That's the total number of productivity hours most Singaporeans are losing yearly due to blocked nose or other allergy symptoms, like sneezing, itching, watery eyes and rashes. Supporting research also states that untreated allergies can lead to difficulties sleeping and concentrating, or infections in the sinuses, throat and ears, which make you less alert at work.

SOURCE: FORBES RESEARCH 2008



## Her World May 2008: Worklife What Young Managers Are Doing Wrong

Here are the top SIX mistakes young women managers are making:

1. Taking things too personally

Women are naturally more emotional creatures than men. We tend to read between the lines and overanalyse the words and actions of our colleagues, especially our subordinates.

2. Not knowing how to craft your words carefully

Miscommunication can lead to unnecessary tension between you and your subordinates. For example, sharing a job well done excitedly may come across as bragging depending on how you voice it.

3. Boss or friend? Not knowing how to balance playing both roles

You may have to deal with some teasing from subordinates who used to be your peers. For example, they may say: "Whatever you say, *boss*," when replying you. You may also notice that you aren't always invited to manicure outings with the girls anymore.

4. Not knowing how to win the respect of older, more experienced subordinates

Some of the older staff may intentionally make life difficult for you in the beginning as they feel snubbed that they have to report to someone younger than them.

5. Being too eager to prove oneself

Bulldozing your way through to prove yourself, even if it means stepping on the toes of others and being disliked.

6. Not being discerning in the information you share with others

Gossiping to others, even if they are your personal friends at work may cause you to lose credibility.

### Questions for the top SIX mistakes:

For each of the mistakes, please answer the following question:

1. What **advice** can you offer young managers who make each of these mistakes?