



SPARE a thought for that harassed-looking woman in your office

THE OFFICE JUGGLERS

As soon as you start a family, you start to juggle it with your job, if you're a woman!

BY CLAUDIA REIZNER

This might seem like a sob story to you but I urge you to spare a thought for that harassed-looking woman in your office who always seems to arrive just in time for work, looks ever-so-slightly dishevelled, and always seems to be doing several things at once. It is not that she isn't coping or trying for that promotion. It is probably that she is working two jobs at once: in the office and at home.

She is a new breed of woman: the juggler. She is trying to manage these two jobs and be fantastic at both. What you don't see is that every morning she has probably been up since six. She's prepared the kids' lunchboxes, got them dressed, got them their breakfast, helped them with their homework, got them to school and — oh yes — got herself ready, all before you've even had your first cup of Nescafe.

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Then she's got on with her day job — the one you go on about that is sooo stressful and keeps you sooo busy. And then when that is done, it's the rush back home in time for getting them their tea, giving them their bath, putting them to bed — all while you're unwinding from your day down at the pub.

I'm not trying to make you feel sorry for her. It's her choice after all. But you don't see men in this situation. Perhaps it's because the sexual revolution was all too quick — women who used to be tied to the home now can work and have careers. But what hasn't changed is men's attitudes. They still feel they can go to work and come home to a home cooked meal, kiddies tucked up in bed and slippers warming snugly by the fire even if their wife has also been at work. But that's her home life. I'm just asking you for a little compassion. The odd cup of tea and sympathetic smile would make her realise she is not the only giver in her existence. To be the recipient of nurturing as opposed to being the nurturer would, if only for a minute, make her reflect on how it was before she procreated for the greater good.

If you're a guy reading this, take heed, if you have a working wife, share the load a little. If you don't have a wife yet, the chances are you will have one day. If you're a girl reading this and you don't have kids, brace yourself. Enjoy your life and career while you can. As soon as you start a family, you start to juggle.

It is possible to have a career and be a good parent — it just needs careful planning, a sympathetic employer, and boundless energy. And as long as you have those in good measure women will continue to be the foundations of the family and major contributors in the workplace. ■