



...ever wishing they ever dreamt else they can see that it's not the answer
— Jim Carrey, American actor

...matter what any of us has — and how grateful we are for what we have — no one has it all
— Sheryl Sandberg, COO, Facebook

...who you are — Lady Gaga, American pop singer and songwriter

what they said



PHOTO: JIM SPELLMAN

work-life balance

Top-notch executive Indra Nooyi's statement, "Women can't have it all", has raised the career vs home debate yet again. This time, setting aside stereotypes, we ask a basic question:

CAN ANYONE HAVE IT ALL?



I don't think women can have it all. I just don't think so. We pretend we have it all. We pretend we can have it all," said Indra Nooyi, PepsiCo CEO, in a recent interview, when she was asked the question that's put forward to every accomplished woman in the world — can a woman ever have it all? There are some women who agree with Nooyi, some who have voiced their displeasure as they felt let down by her.



Indra Nooyi

Break Media in Los Angeles, US, revealed that 68 per cent men would sacrifice career advancement for more time with family. That's not all. Over 90 per cent of men believed that part of being a man meant taking care of their families and an equal number said they would sacrifice their own needs to take care of their families. However, pressure to follow traditional gender roles as being the "man of the house" kept them from openly expressing the same.

Niret Alva, co-founder, Miditech, says not spending enough quality time at home makes him feel very guilty. "I see men all around me striving for that 'work-life' balance, and there's no easy way to get there. I feel the pressure and the guilt when my kids tell me, 'Only one of you turned up on our annual day', or I'm caught distracted at home with work. I'm trying to strike a balance by using technology to stay connected."

There's always a lot of guilt, if I stay away from my family for more than a month. Men aren't having it that easy either."

WHY WE'RE OFF BALANCE
American author Julie Schnall says the first thing is to define what "all" means for you. Schnall had started The Balance Project, an online forum, to interview accomplished women about work-life balance. She says, "If 'all' means that you are at the pinnacle of your career, caregiver of your children, a devoted partner, and that you can balance it all perfectly, then no, I do not believe anyone can have it all. But you can be good enough at those things and still lead a fulfilling life. It's important to be realistic."

VN Dalmia, chairman of Dalmia Continental, says, "Having it 'all' is one big fairy tale. There are countless examples of highly successful men, who've made an absolute mess of their family lives. We can't have it all, but we can have some of everything,

which could be called "balance", or a lot of some things and a little of others."

Schnall adds, "The women who you admire, who you think are truly doing it all, they are not. They are all making sacrifices. You just have to decide what sacrifices you are personally willing to make."

HOW TO SET IT RIGHT
In other words, prioritise. Anika Parashar Pari, COO, Mamma Mia, Fortis Healthcare Ltd, believes it's especially important for women to prioritise because "we have this amazing ability to focus on multiple things at one time". She advises, "You must make peace with yourself about what you can do and get realistic about what you can't. Break away from guilt, it's self-defeating. I used to have panic attacks, allergies and ulcers trying to 'have it all'."

Now, I only do what I can, I have a holistic approach to life when I'm aware that mental stress directly impacts my well-being."

Author Matthew Kelly in his book *Off Balance: Getting Beyond the Work-Life Balance*, writes, "It doesn't matter how satisfying your personal life is. If you are miserable at work, it will spill over into your home. Living a life that is deeply satisfying requires strategy, daily attention, self-awareness and discipline."

Spiritual guru Mohanji says, "The secret is being in the moment at each point, having focused attention and to switch roles (office to home) objectively. We are one body, mind and intellect, just playing many roles."

Most people remain in the unhappiness zone, as their personal and professional goals keep getting more ambitious. Author and UK-

based PR guru Julia Hobstetern has some bright ideas in her book *The So-Now 100 Ideas for Work-Life Balance*. Some of the very basic ones that everyone should follow are, she says, "Don't overload yourself. Ditch unnecessary work meetings. Learn your limits and don't push yourself to a breaking point."

HOW TO CREATE A WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- List your top three priorities in life. You may not get to do everything you want to do — at least all at the same time — but you'll be happy.
- Make time for yourself. Don't push yourself ahead of your own cost. If you are physically unwell and mentally exhausted, you won't be good at anything else.
- Use your calendar. Make appointments for a half-hour walk, coffee with your daughter or a date with your partner. Make these things non-negotiable.
- Be realistic about what sacrifices you're willing to make. And understand that you must make sacrifices.
- Don't try to balance everything every day. Some days may be more child-focused. Some days are all work. It's impossible to make everyone happy every day. Think forward and try to imagine what you will regret later.

— Julie Schnall



"Have it all? Are you kidding me? We would be happy if we could have 'some'. And if you think women are judged for having a career, try comparing that to society's reaction to a man saying he wants to be a househusband!"
— Pooja CJ comedian



"Nobody can have it all. For me's too, it's like chasing some elusive dream. We become mechanical metro machines running after fame and success. We sacrifice personal life unit for professional success!"
— Kapil Dalmia, anchor and comedian



"I see super successful women, craving to spend time with family and kids. I see stay-at-home mothers wanting a career and a life beyond home. Nobody's in paradise. Everyone is searching for their own heaven!"
— Ramesh Parid, model

