

<http://www.gettingto5050.com/faq.htm>

# GETTING TO 50/50

A game-changing read that's set to do for the cultural dialogue around working families what *Lean In* did for working women. In *Getting to 50/50*, Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober share personal stories, compelling social science and a practical roadmap to help women - and men - stay engaged with their kids without sacrificing their careers. *Getting to 50/50* offers encouragement, hope, and confidence to any parent who has ever questioned their choices regarding career and family.

## 50/50 Fact Sheet

*Below are just a few of the eye-opening facts discussed in Getting to 50/50, a new book for men and women who want to combine work and family – and skip a lot of work/life stress*

### **Children turn out equally well whether their mothers work or not**

- The largest-ever study of childcare and child development, run by NIH's National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), tracked 1,364 kids over 15 years and concluded that kids with 100% maternal care fare no better than kids who spend time in child care.

“There is no reason for mothers to feel like they are harming their children if they decide to work.” (NICHD ECCRN, *American Psychologist* 61, no. 2 (February–March 2006))

### **Working moms find time for kids – it needs to be possible for working dads to do the same**

- NICHD data shows that working mothers spend 80% of the hours interacting with their kids that non-employed mothers do. (Huston and Rosenkrantz Aronson, *Child Development* 76, no. 2 (March–April 2005))
- 2/3 of kids say they get enough time with their moms – equally true whether or not the mother is employed. However, 40% of kids feel they have too little time with their fathers. Galinsky, *Ask the Children* (William Morrow and Company, 1999))

### **Fathers provide unique benefits to kids – helping men be active fathers significantly improves outcomes for kids**

- A DOE study of 20,000 children found that, after controlling for parental education, income and maternal involvement, high levels of paternal involvement drove significantly better results in both academic performance and behavior.

Yet 73% of married fathers attend their child's school events less than three times a year. (Winqvist Nord, Brimhall, and West, *National Household Education Survey*, NCES 98-091 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997))

- The National Survey of Children, an 11-year study involving 584 kids in two-parent families found that “paternal involvement in childhood was associated with adult children's higher economic-educational achievement and lower delinquency, whereas maternal involvement was not.” (Pleck and Masciadrelli, *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, ed. Michael E. Lamb (John Wiley & Sons, 2004))

### **Marriage is stronger when men are full parents and moms can keep good jobs**

- Divorce risk is 50% lower when husbands do half the housework and wives do half the earning. (Cooke, *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 2 (September 2006))
- Couples have more sex and intimacy when fathers are positively engaged at home. (Chethik, *Voice Male* (Simon & Schuster, 2006), 119, 173; Cowan and Cowan, *When Partners Become Parents* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000))

### **Employment is good for the psychological health of mothers**

- Depression risk is significantly higher for women who leave the workforce - research finds 30% more psychological distress among women who quit work after having a child compared to peers who returned to their jobs. (Wethington and Kessler, *Journal of Family Issues* 10, no. 4 (December 1989))
- Based on data on 10,000 UK women, researchers found that "women with children are significantly happier if they have a job regardless of how many hours it entails." (Booth and van Ours, *The Economic Journal*, 118, no. 526 (January 17, 2008))

### **Work/life conflict is at an all time high – it means fathers can't get home for family dinner and moms can't keep good jobs they worked hard to get**

- Today, college-educated men work ten hours per week more than in 1990. (Kuhn and Lozano, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 11895, 2005)
- In a large survey of boomer working dads, 78% said they felt guilty about their lack of time with their children as compared to 76% of working moms. (Levine and Pittinsky, *Working Fathers* (Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997))
- In a study of mothers who quit their jobs, only 16% felt the decision was a “relatively unconstrained choice or preference to become full-time, stay at home mothers” while 84% quit due to inflexibility from employers and husbands. (Stone and Lovejoy, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 66 (November 2004))

- “The truth is women leave reluctantly, after long, drawn-out efforts to find a way to stay, begging for small amounts of flexibility – which they are often refused,” Joan Williams, director of Work/Life Law at UC Hastings Law School. Women earn 80 cents on a man’s dollar largely due to time out of the work force and fewer hours – and part-time jobs pay 21% less per hour. (GAO 2003; Williams, Manvell, and Bornstein, “*Opt Out*” or *Pushed Out?*, University of California, Hastings College of the Law, Center for WorkLife Law, 2006)

### **When women succeed in large numbers, the wage gap shrinks and workplace culture changes in ways men like too**

- Women in upper-level management positions “lift all boats.” Based on US Census data for 1.3 million workers in 155 industries, more female senior managers corresponded to better wages for women at lower pay grades. (Cohen and Huffman, *American Sociological Review*, 2007, Vol. 72 (October))
- When women are outnumbered (3 to 1) in a work group, they have higher heart-rates, more sweat and a lower sense of well-being and desire to participate. When part of a balanced group, women were more at ease – and likely to perform better. Men say they prefer the environment when they had more female peers. (Murphy, Steele, and Gross, *Psychological Science* 18, no. 10 (October 2007))

## **FAQ's**

### **1. What is a 50/50 relationship?**

50/50 couples believe that both dreams count – that careers are equally important to men and women, and so is having time with your kids. That doesn’t mean 50/50 every day – there may be times when a mom does 80% of the childcare and a dad does 80% of the earning or vice versa, but, over the course of a career, the batons are passed back and forth so that both husband and wife can maintain successful careers and strong bonds with their kids. When they do, our research shows that these couples become happier and enjoy more romance. Based on our survey of 1100 working moms and hundreds of interviews with dual-career men and women, we learned there are many ways to get to 50/50.

### **2. What problems arise when your relationship isn't 50/50?**

A lot of studies on marriage say that when the daily experience of a husband and wife grow too different, the risk of divorce gets higher. That when men don’t see themselves as valuable parents and women don’t see themselves as valuable earners, couples lose the common ground they had when they both had jobs and no kids. Many men who are sole breadwinners told us of the stress they feel. They see peers with working wives who can take risks – like changing jobs – that you can’t take if the whole family depends only on a husband to pay the bills.

### **3. Will men really go for this?**

We talked to a lot of guys who did not start out 50/50 – who expected to live in more traditional marriages. What they told us were things like this: “I have a relationship with my kids my

father could not have imagined.” “I know I’ll never be bored” “We have great conversations and our kids have two great role models.” “Having a career was important to her, so it was important to me.” More time with kids, economic flexibility to take risks with their careers, more sex and romance, lower risk of divorce, happier wives, no nagging. When men see how much they win from 50/50, they buy in.

#### **4. What's the best way to talk to your spouse about agreeing upon a 50/50 plan?**

It’s easier if you start early in the relationship but we talked to couples who did this many ways. Most important: Make it a friendly conversation. Really think through what you want to say and how you want to say it. Ask lots of questions. Have examples and facts. Research says that the biggest thing that gets in the way of 50/50 is un-discussed assumptions. So discuss them early and often.

#### **5. Won't the kids lose out if both parents are working and trying to do everything else?**

Research is clear that dads and moms are equally important to their kids. So when dads work so hard they can’t get home for dinner, that has a cost. On the other hand, there is no respected evidence that maternal employment hurts kids. (Whether moms work or not, the time they spend engaging their kids is not that different – but there’s large variation in the amount of time married men spend with their children).

50/50 parents we studied showed us how having two perspectives makes more time for kids. Dads are very good at questioning traditional “mom” views about what needs to be done. Does that house need to be \*that\* clean? Do all our meals really have to be home cooked? Moms are good at helping triage on the work front: Do you really need to go to that golf game? Here’s how I made my last business trip 3 days instead of 5 – can you try that? When men and women know that they are equally knowledgeable about how kids and the workplace function, they are more willing to listen to each other and set priorities that are really focused on the kids.

#### **6. Why is 50/50 particularly well suited to today's tough economy?**

Dual careers are a financial necessity for most families today. And two career bets are safer than one. In today’s economy, no one can count on a 30 year career. We should all expect that we will want to – or have to – change jobs at some point. When that happens, it’s much easier to make a good choice if there is another person in the family who can pay bills while you are looking.

#### **7. Where are the successful 50/50 couples in the news or pop culture?**

The Obamas are a classic example. You have to wonder how much more difficult it would have been for Barack if Michelle had not been a strong breadwinner. It would have been more stressful to raise a family on the savings of a community organizer and public servant – and it's harder to take strategic risks (like running for Senate or President as a relative unknown) if you are the sole provider of income in the family.

#### **8. What's the hardest part of 50/50 for women? And what's hardest for men?**

From our interviews, our friends and our own experience, it seems like the hardest thing is for

we women to say to ourselves: “My husband’s views about home life are as valid as my own.” And then act that way.

While fewer and fewer men still believe women lack instincts to lead and compete, many women continue to hold onto their own stereotypes about men. Like that men can’t multi-task and have wooden ears when it comes to kids. These beliefs become self-fulfilling.

Research by psychologist Ross Park and others has shown that the biggest predictor of a 50/50 husband is whether his wife believes that men can be equally capable parents – not that “maternal instinct” makes women superior. In these studies, what the wife believed mattered more than what the husband thought on this subject.

For men, a lot of guys worry that other men will think less of them if they do 50/50 – that it is a sissy thing, that you can’t be successful that way. What the evidence shows is that men who do their fair share at home earn as much as guys who don’t.

When men are confident about their masculinity (like an ex- NFL football player we interviewed -- married to a CEO), they’re less likely to think things like “if I’m seen volunteering at my kids school, people will think I don’t have an important job.” We need to help men see the many role models out there – guys who are very successful AND make time for their families.