**Inner wheel club- Speech**

**Aug 7th 2013**

Good Morning everyone and a very Warm Welcome. I am very happy to be here to meet all of you. Also many thanks for the kind introduction, , I need to take a copy of it to show to my mother in law- as I am sure all of you will agree that it is quite difficult to impress our mother in law!

The topic given to me today is about ‘Practical tips for managing one’s daily life’ Highly relevant and deeply personal , I will share with you a few things that have worked for me and the lessons that I have learnt during my journey…I will then throw the floor open to questions ..

We will start with the first slide- Can you identify what is common across these women?

Yes –that fact that they have been able to manage both a home and a career..I am sure that the very fact that all of you have taken great pains to be here and spend the whole day listening to speakers on various important topics- means that you are looking for something more than what you are currently doing. So that’s a good sign- and a starting point..for you to achieve something in your area outside home.

But as the slide says” One cannot cross the sea by merely standing and staring at it”- so we have to take a few steps to move forward- and that is what this talk is all about.

**Slide 1- Job description of a mother**

Let us look at another slide and identify who am I talking .. Please see carefully- take a couple of minutes—any answers please..

Right- we are talking about a mother! Isn’t it true!

Being a woman – especially that of a mother- is one of the best jobs that we can have. It may look like a under paying profession- but that’s what makes it worthwhile. It is also a fantastic privilege to be born a woman..You get to play many roles, assume many responsibilities, experience a myriad of emotions and of course have an opportunity to build an organization at home by way of a family structure as well as and build a home environment in your place of work. . All these help you become more complete as a human being.

Having said that, the journey is not easy. One has to make choices along the way.. Both for yourself and for your loved ones. Working mothers’ stories are hard to narrate. In our attempt to glorify their careers, we often miss out on their personal struggles. Or when we start describing their personal accomplishments, we tend to ignore their professional side. Please remember that the working women’s achievements often come at the cost of putting their child to sleep or teaching a poem to their little one—these are tough choices. For a woman born with talent and ambition, it is very hard to let go of her dreams once she is married or has children simply because it is the right thing to do. These can be emotionally draining moments- but can only be compensated by the fact that responsibilities cannot substitute dreams.

I will talk about the critical five aspects along with practical insights – of managing daily life- and while doing so- retaining your enthusiasm for doing something more on either your work or career front.

**Slide 2 :**

1. **Know what you want**
2. **Believe it is possible**
3. **The relationship strategy**
4. **Learning to let go**
5. **Reflect**
**Slide 3 : Know what you want**
As children, many of us are pretty much raised in a manner similar to our brother counterparts in the same household. Yet, by the time we reach thirty, we seemed to have lost all zest for doing something meaningful other than just running a home. I am not for a moment suggesting that running a home should not be prioritized, but we are all capable of doing something much beyond just that. We should identify our individual areas of passion- these could be what we enjoyed doing during our school or college days—and stay with that passion. According to Ms Kirti Singh, a researcher and lawyer practising on Women’s issues, even working women spend more time on household work and less time advancing their career and promotion . Ms Kirti Singh has challenged the conventional understanding of productive work and advocates the recognition of women’s household work in business environment. At this juncture, I want to share with you the thought process being considered at one of the companies that I used to work for earlier- Hindustan Lever Limited—Upon finding that many talented women take a break for pregnancy and rearing a child, the Company now wants to consider that the period of sabbatical be treated as an official break- that is -those women will be treated for promotion or seniority as if they had not gone on a break because the organization believes that the maturation process that takes place in a woman because of child rearing will impact her work contribution positively when she returns to her job after the break- what a progressive thought ..Very encouraging .

Hence it is important to know and pursue what we want out of our lives. Every time we get an opportunity within our home schedules, try and build on that passion.. It could be anything as small as gardening to writing-don’t let go of that fire within you. Once your children are grown up, and your familial responsibilities are reducing , you can carve an identity for your self through this. I know of many talented women , who, because they have not built on anything substantial beyond their home, go through an identity crises around 40- when their children are more independent , go away to college etc. Pursuing a specific passion not only gives you financial freedom( which in my mind is a very important part of gaining your man’s respect in today’s world) but also leaves you with a feeling of increased self worth. And we are only to blame ourselves for this- if we do not work towards increasing our self worth in our own eyes.

I would now like to show you a video by our own Aishwarya Rai- who has talked about this aspect.

**Slide 4- Aishwarya Rai**

We now move to the next aspect- so what does it take to achieve the goal that we set for ourselves? It is fundamentally SELF BELIEF- Believe that it is possible. We all have heard the famous saying- God helps those who help themselves. This is especially true for us women- we definitely have to help ourselves substantially if we are to do something worthwhile in our lives.

**Slide 5 -Believe it is possible.**

Again in our daily roles of being a mother, a wife, a daughter in law, a sister etc- we must still gather sufficient self belief to say I believe that I can accomplish what I set out to do. All of us know of Mohammed Ali, the great boxing champion. What distinguished him from the rest of the boxers was his immense self belief that he was indeed the BEST. Which is why he came back after a long break of seven years and still won the World Boxing Championship.

I would like to quote some statistics of how a typical woman spends her day in India- Out of the 24 hours available, it is said that she spends around 8 hours on sleeping and another two hours on eating and basic necessity things. The next 4 hours are spent on cooking and cleaning the house. Child care , on an average , takes another three hours per day. Out of the remaining seven hours left, together family time takes ONLY around a maximum of one hour.. So what is left is a full six hours- she spends atleast four hours out of this just watching TV- i.e16% of her day..Imagine if you live for 100 years, you spend 16 years watching TV out of this!

An idle mind is a devil’s workshop- most of the programs that we see on TV are not particularly positive or energy building..If we are able to divert atleast 2 hours out of these four hours daily, towards something more productive regularly on a daily basis, then we would have built something absolutely worthy.

In this context, one aspect that we women need to specifically look at is our energy levels.. We should take care that it is optimal – so we can focus it to achieve something . Disciplined exercise is a must. Just doing house work is NOT exercise. It may take our time and make us feel tired- but it does not emphasise the areas needed for our physical wellness. Doing regular check ups are also a part of looking after ourselves- not only for our sake but also for our loved ones’ sake.

Take a look at this video that outlines time management tips for working from home.

**Slide 6- Time management**

**Slide 7- The relationship strategy**

Relationship strategy is probably the most important part of this whole talk. The book Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus talks about how the two genders are made differently. We should know this and use it to our advantage in an intelligent manner to achieve what we want. Women are natural communicators and nurturers. Which is why we see more women in professions like teaching, nursing etc. We are considered to be more patient, compassionate and good at building long term relationships. The importance of this cannot be overstated in a context of this topic.

In order to have it all, a family with children and older people , and in addition to build an independent career, first focus on getting your relationship right with your husband and your in laws. They are your biggest support system. This will involve years of investment and trust building in the initial stages- but will bear fruit later. Whether it is a decision of child care or your work related travel- or having help at home- it will be imperative that you will involve your in laws. And all these decisions have an important bearing on the career that you will want to pursue. The mothers here will agree with me that nothing gives them peace of mind as much as knowing that their child is well taken care of at home either by in laws or by a day helper.

In this context, I would like to mention about my book MY LIFE MY CHOICE. It was written during a time -3 years back- when I took a sabbatical from my high travel corporate career- in order to spend time with my seven year old son. I was beginning to feel that I was not doing justice to my role as a mother- in terms of attending to my sons needs- both physically and academically. My career growth was coming clearly at the cost of my sons’ overall growth. Though there were support systems, in my case, I personally wanted to be a hands-on mother. So I quit my corporate career and undertook a journey where I met ten real people from different walks of life who made made changes in their careers for various reasons. These are featured in the book – MY LIFE MY CHOICE- that was published by Macmillan and released by Dr Shashi Tharoor in Delhi-and Prof M S Swaminathan in Chennai.

If you ask a man what is the key reason for his success- he will probably say things like, hard work, ambition etc. But if you ask a successful woman what is the reason for her career success, she will definitely talk about her supporting relationships first. She will say it is only because of my mother that I was able to go to work- or because of my mother in law that I was able to concentrate without worrying about my child. So to reiterate, it is very difficult for working women to have a fulfilling career – if they are not ably supported by relationships.

I would like to show you a small video clip by Global CEO of Pepsico- Ms Indra Nooyi- in the context of this section.

**Slide 8- Indra Nooyi**

**Slide 9- Learning to let go.**

So after having set a goal and acquiring self belief to attain it and having the right relationships to make it happen, what next. Learn to LET GO.

This may sound defeatist but it is far from it. Letting go should be done of the things that don’t work for you- be it job or relationships. And we women are actually quite weak in this area.

One of the top most reasons that drain a women of her career ambition is her inability to say no to the wrong relationships- or even worse- not knowing how to get out of something that doesn’t work for you. So you put up with it for reasons of lack of courage, to keep up the image of ‘goodness’, society etc. And it robs you of the positive energy required to accomplish anything substantial- as you are wasting time spending it on things that you don’t believe in.

Learning to let go can be one of the most rewarding lessons we will ever learn in life. On a philosophical note, it also tells you the power of detachment leading to renunciation- so what is not good for you, learn to let it go- so that better things can enter your life.

According to Knowledge Center statistics on ‘Overview of women at workplace’,in 2012, there were less then 15% women executive officers in Fortune 500 companies. Around the same percentage held Board seats , though it has gone up from 9% in 1995.

One of the key traits of Senior leaders in corporate is to be able to identify what is NOT working and let it go. It shows discretion, courage and action oriented ness. And the above numbers that I just shared will definitely go up, if we as a lot, learn the art of letting go of the things that drain our core self and prevent us from focusing on things that we can positively accomplish.

**Slide 10- Finally REFLECT.**

Self -reflection and meditation can have profound effects on one’s mental health. In fact, to be able to practise the above art of letting go, one needs to do understand one’s own strengths and weaknesses . The popular author ‘ Marcus Buckingham’ defines ‘strength as that quality that we are able to consistently demonstrate in a superior manner, atleast more than 90% of the time. Important to note are ‘demonstrate’ and ‘consistently’ – any achievement done randomly or inconsistently is NOT strength. Similarly for weakness- it is that quality that pulls us away from displaying our strength, We may not know many things- eg music, cooking, running a business etc.but those do not become our weaknesses unless they pull us back from displaying our strength. In our daily grind, we should allocate at least ten minutes of quietness in solitude., in order to assess where we are. Whether in our attempts to do things for others continuously, we ever take sufficiently care of ourselves- and this is a question only we can answer honestly to ourselves. And act based on that.

To sum up, the five aspects that spoke about today are :

**Slide 11 : Practical tips to managing daily life**
1. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

2. BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE

3. THE RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY

4. LEARNING TO LET GO

5. REFLECT

I hope you found this talk useful. I dedicate this to one of the greatest influencers of the last fifty years- Dr Stephen Covey- whose book of SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE- I first read in 1994..He is a pastor, author, trainer and finally a father of nine children! He passed away last year in 2012 at the age of 90..a life well lived and so worthy to the entire humanity.

I will now show you a slide from which you can write down any three areas that you believe you are good at—and subsequently I will show you the professions that may suit you in this regard..

**Audience to write**

We end with a small video that talks about ten best jobs for Women..

Thank you for the opportunity and I INVITE any questions from the audience..

**Slide 12 : Jobs for women**