

## THE "NEW NORMAL" FLEX FOR ALL ...

*October is National Work and Family Month and a great time to launch another exciting year of our Thursdays with ThirdPath free webinars.*

ThirdPath has been promoting change in the work and family arena for over 14 years - not just by supporting men to share in the care of their children, but also by supporting leaders to follow an integrated approach to work and life.

We've also learned that men and women benefit from flexibility for reasons that span the life-cycle.

*That's why all year long our Thursdays with ThirdPath webinars will underscore how everyone gains when flex becomes the "new normal."*

We hope this year of calls underscores three important messages:

**1 - Both men and women want to work towards change around these issues.**

Click here to read my insights from the National At Home Dad Convention I just attended.

**2 - Change won't happen until leaders model flexible career paths.**

Click here to read our Whole Life Leaders PDF for more information.

**3 - The need for flexibility spans the economic spectrum.**

Click here for one of our favorite articles on this topic where Susan Lambert illustrates how "availability" has become an increasing problem both high-powered salaried positions and low-level hourly jobs face.

We're also developing exciting partnerships with forward-thinking groups to help get the word out - such as the wonderful people at 1 Million For Flex and FlexJobs.

Want a copy of our Thursdays with ThirdPath flyer to put it on your wall? Here it is.

Want to learn more about the "new normal" of flexibility for all? Look for the fall mailer we just sent.

In the mean time - Happy National Work and Family Month!

/Jessica

***PS - Want help developing an integrating work and life?***

*We've got one more opening in our fall OMG! (Overwhelm Mitigation Groups) - click here to learn more.*

## When Flexibility Hurts

*Susan Lambert - Op Ed: New York Times - 9/19/12*

*AT first glance, women at the top and the bottom of the labor market seem to have very different problems.*

**Professional women at law firms, in academia and in the media complain about the punishing hours - and unceasing streams of e-mail - that make it difficult to make time for their families.** At the other extreme, many women in retail, restaurant and health care jobs are underemployed; they're looking for more hours of work (and ideally, regular hours) to support their families. But both problems share a root cause: the incentives that guide businesses' employment practices.

**Rather than being long and relentless, work hours in hourly jobs, especially low-level ones, are often scarce, fluctuating and unpredictable.** Sales associates and restaurant servers might be scheduled for 7 hours one week and 32 the next. Hotel housekeepers might work Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday one week, and then Sunday, Thursday and Saturday the following week. Schedules are often posted just a few days in advance. And women in hourly jobs are likely to have less input than men in determining their work schedules, according to national surveys.

**The lack of stability is especially hard on parents.** Unpredictable work schedules leave them scrambling to arrange child care and reluctant to volunteer for school events or to schedule doctor's appointments. They make it tough to establish the household routines that experts tell us are essential for healthy child development, like bedtime rituals, homework monitoring and family meal times. Unstable hours also result in unstable earnings, a nightmare for parents on tight budgets ...

**Although over- and underemployment create different challenges for workers, the trade-offs are strikingly similar.** "Availability" is now a major form of human capital, in both high-powered salaried positions and low-level hourly jobs. Low-wage workers need to be available at all hours or risk not having work. Professionals are expected to remain electronically tethered to their jobs day and night or risk forgoing coveted opportunities. Both groups of workers lose earnings if they interrupt their careers to care for family members - as women at all points on the socioeconomic spectrum are more likely to do than their male counterparts.

[Read more ...](#)

## Rewriting Fatherhood

*If you believe men can't parent as well as women, then you only need to attend the National At Home Dads Convention to completely squash that misconception.*

*I spent two days near the end of September enjoying the company of over 100 stay at home dads.*

Every single one of them was actively changing the definition of what it means to be a man as they exchanged funny toddler stories, bragged about their ability to change a diaper blindfolded, and shared frustrations of being referred to as the "baby sitter." I also quickly realized their decision to be involved in the every day care of their children was only one of the ways they were redefining manhood. The convention itself was another profound way they were fostering change.

As I participated in the different events over the course of the two day convention, I couldn't help but be impressed by the safe space they had created for men to break down the isolation too many men encounter. Instead, fathers gathered together to speak openly and honestly about the joys and challenges they faced in their everyday lives.

*I felt honored to be part of this experience and appreciative of the different path they were forging for their sons - and their daughters.*

However, I was also aware of an invisible force that was not being addressed - the rigid workplaces that demand too much of employees including employees with families. On the one hand, some of these men had always known that they wanted to be stay at home dads. On the other, too many described a familiar story; faced with two demanding jobs and a new baby at home, they ultimately decided to have one parent leave the workplace in order to create more time for family.

*Listening to their stories, I couldn't help but imagine how a significant number of these dads (and their full time working spouses) would have jumped at the opportunity of a more supportive workplace.*

Instead of an all or nothing approach to work, this "new normal" would support both mothers and fathers to follow a gradual return to work when their children were young. Then, as their children became school aged, they would be supported to flex work so they could leave early a few afternoons to enjoy caring for their children after school.

*As men and women - as parents and leaders - increasingly follow this approach it will become the force to shift things for everyone.*

**Eventually, a "new normal" could become available for all** - a flexible approach to work and life for parents; or employees who need to care for a loved one who is ill or their aging parents; or employees who want to get involved in their communities; or employees who want to phase into retirement.

Although it may seem like we have a long way to go to achieve this kind of change, the men at the National At Home Dads Convention are taking important steps forward by showing us that men are as capable as women in caring well for our loved ones.