

Keep company.

Nora Ephron was once asked how she managed “it all.” She credited a strategy of thinking about each item on the “do-it-all list” we now know as the mental load. There are glass and plastic balls - inevitably balls will drop, but if you know which ones are glass and which are plastic, you can let the plastic ones fall and bounce.

WHAT'S THE MENTAL LOAD?

The mental load exists both at home and at work, and everything it's comprised of breaks down into 3 categories .



INVISIBLE WORK

the unseen work it takes to keep things running smoothly.

Examples: Ordering groceries, refilling the printer, scheduling appointments.



EMOTIONAL LABOR

the effort to mask your feelings while in an uncomfortable situation or re-frame a conversation to avoid others' emotions.

Examples: Remaining calm during tantrums, editing your email to sound less mad.



MENTAL LOAD

the omnipresent low-level anxiety about the health and well-being of your family and your team at work.

Examples: Wondering if your kid is on grade level, hoping no one quits

Being strategic about what you say yes to, and what balls you drop, is critical to sustainability - at work and at home.

WHAT'S THE IMPACT OF THE MENTAL LOAD?

The “cost” of this heavy burden is multifaceted. It impacts our health and well-being. It hits us at home, and impacts our relationships. And it can impact our careers. Carrying the mental load can have a negative impact on our earnings and promotion potential.

SELF

88%

of caregivers report negative impact on their health and wellbeing.

AT HOME

59%

report their day never seems to end.

EVERYWHERE

78%

of parents who work at law firms feel they're doing a less-than-good job balancing home and work responsibilities.



Women tend to carry a disproportionate amount of the mental load, at work and at home. However, no matter who you are or who you care for, we know having a big job at home and a big job at work is hard. Seeking that elusive balance is lonely, and it can leave so many of us feeling defeated.

Sources:

1. Milliman White Paper, *Informal caregiving: The unseen obligations and opportunity*, 2023
2. ABA Report; *Legal Careers of Parents and Child Caregivers*, 2023

SO... HOW CAN I LIGHTEN THE LOAD (TODAY)?!

1

ASSESS

What is on my plate? Making this invisible list physical is a powerful (often validating) exercise.

2

VALUES CHECK

Put every item on your list through a check. First, is it necessary? Second, is it important to me?

3

DROP THE BALL

Found something that you think should be important to you but... isn't? Drop that ball!

4

MAKE THE ASK

Who or what can help? Make the ask and keep it explicit. Spoiler: this might mean a hard conversations.

5

CREATE THE SPACE

Because you deserve a version of your life that makes room for you.

