

The Possibilities of Space to Gain Balance

Are you a professional woman who feels like you're running your life in ways that are running yourself into the ground? Health coach Chris Vasiliadis's book, *Ignition: A Professional Woman's Guide to Energized, Burnout-Proof Living*, provides guidance to turn the tide in how you're doing and being.

Through working in her business, Priority Wellness, since 2008, Vasiliadis has observed several factors that keep professional women on the constant "hamster wheel" of doing, sidelining their health and well-being, and putting them at risk for burnout.

- Not knowing where to begin or telling themselves they don't have time to make changes.
- How they talk to themselves or what they tell themselves about their roles.
- Society's badge of honor in being busy.
- Expectations and boundaries women let slide.
- Perfectionist standards they create for themselves.
- Trying to do it all on their own.
- Not paying attention to what energizes and drains them.

Vasiliadis often witnesses the blurring of lines between work and life, with technology, workplace cultures, and entrepreneurship enabling women to be more connected and mobile where and when they perform work. While technology and apps can help their lives in many ways, their ability to be connected 24/7 can contribute to burnout.

Instead of prioritizing work-life balance, Vasiliadis advocates for first establishing inner balance. She finds that the desire for work-life balance typically arises out of feeling unbalanced, chaotic, and/or frenetic. Trying to create balance starting from that state of mind tends to generate more chaos and frenzy. That's why she recommends focusing on ways to create space, ground and center internally first: which even enables folks to be balanced *while working!* Here are a few examples from *Ignition*:

- **Calendar Space:** are you jamming your calendar with back to back appointments? Allow gaps to regroup between activities and give yourself buffer time to arrive at a meeting, so you're not wildly rushing in.
- **Phone Space:** are you chronically glancing at and using your phone when you're waiting for someone? In line? At a traffic light or on public transportation? Avoid the pull of the phone, tune into your five senses and notice what's going on around you.
- **"Shower" Space:** ever notice how ideas pop up in the shower? You've allowed your mind to disengage and wander. Place wander-breaks into your day: step away from intensely focused work every 60-90 minutes to grant space for your brain's creativity to unfold.
- **Joy Space:** deliberately schedule routine moments that bring you joy. Spend quality time with the people who matter most to you, participate in activities that touch your soul and generate positive energy for you.

- **Quiet/Disconnect Space:** intentionally build in moments of silence, whether through meditation, sitting quietly, or using focused intentional breathing between transitions during the day.

In her client work, Vasiliadis has found that some women professionals can feel uncomfortable and guilty around having down time, quiet spaces and simply being present in their surroundings. Often women can talk themselves out of this behavior change process before they even attempt to start. Vasiliadis's philosophy is that your health and wellness is a tool to achieve whatever it is that's important to you. As a way to start, she suggests that once you decide you're ready for better energy and burnout-proof ways of living, ask yourself why attaining that way of being matters to you. You'll likely generate multiple whys. Connect those whys to the big picture of what you want to contribute, keep your desired state of health to fuel you top of mind, and use your space creators to begin putting yourself into motion.

Chris Vasiliadis, a National Board Certified Health & Wellness Coach, inspires people to use their well-being as their secret weapon to successfully lead their life. Working both one-on-one and speaking in professional, healthcare and corporate settings since founding her business, Priority Wellness (www.prioritywellness.com), in 2008, she has helped countless individuals energize their health, avoid burnout and improve their performance. Choosing to prioritize her wellness after her multiple sclerosis diagnosis in 2005, Chris has been relapse-free for over 12 years. A lover of reading and writing since childhood, *Ignition* is her first book.