‘TORN’ Author Samantha Walravens Addresses Career and Motherhood: Can Women Do it All?

By Melissa Tierney

In the world of modern motherhood, it’s believed that powerful professional women should be able to “have it all” without a problem. By watching celebrity moms like Angelina Jolie and Reese Witherspoon who are able to maintain loving relationships with their beaus, amazing careers and happy and healthy family lives, it inspires the rest of us to think, ‘Hey, why can’t I have that, too?’. Samantha Walravens, author of the new book *TORN: True Stories of Kids, Career and the Conflict of Modern Motherhood,* shared with us her wisdom and insight on what it actually means to “have it all” and just how normal a little bit of chaos can be.

In addition to her take on modern motherhood, she also shared her personal take on how to maintain a healthy and loving relationship with your spouse, a successful career and a great family life, something she happens to know quite a bit about. Walravens is an accomplished writer, wife and mother of four, giving her enough life experience to navigate the everyday conflicts even the most organized moms are facing today.

If you feel like you are about to have a meltdown because you just can’t manage it all, worry no more! Our interview with Walravens will reassure you that you’re doing just fine. Here’s what she had to say:

How do you manage it all (successful career, family and a healthy loving relationship)?

Honestly? I don't. One of the key messages of my book, *TORN* is that women today are admitting—and learning to accept—the fact that nobody can "do it all." Trying to be the perfect mother, the perfect wife AND the perfect professional—all at the same time— is a recipe for a nervous breakdown. And I'm only stretching the truth a bit when I say "nervous breakdown." What I have learned— with age, wisdom, and each successive child (I now have 4)— is that by trying to do it all, I am not doing anything at a level of 100 percent effort or enjoyment. There is simply too much to accomplish to feel 100 percent about anything other than my stress level.

What made you go back to writing after having children?

One of the keys to being happy—as a mother, worker and wife—is to find a vocation or hobby that brings you joy. Writing is, and always has been, my joy. From childhood on, I've kept journals and written stories and poems. I'm one of the lucky few that have been able to combine my passion with my work. If you can't combine the two, you just need to look outside your job to find your passion—be it gardening, tennis, reading, or just enjoying time with friends.

How do you keep the "spark" alive with your husband? Do you have date nights?

We've been married for 15 years and together for 20, and we actually still like being with each other. Imagine that! I agree with Michelle Obama when she said of her marriage to the President: "I think in our house we don't take ourselves too seriously, and laughter is the best form of unity in a marriage." My husband and I work hard on our relationship—we've done a weekly date night since we started having kids 13 years ago, and we've had our share of marriage counseling. But we try to remember to have fun together and

to laugh often. At night, we like to watch a funny show in bed together—30 Rock or Modern Family. It's nice to go to sleep with a smile on your face.

In your opinion, what are the 3 most important things to maintaining a healthy, loving relationship?

Managing conflict in a healthy manner. Recognizing that conflict is not the end, but a situation awaiting resolution. This has been an essential component in helping my husband and I deal with arguments and conflict. Early on in our relationship, I used to think that if we had a serious difference of views on something, it meant that he didn't love me anymore and would possibly leave me. Over time I learned that it was safe to disagree and that we could talk our way through problems.

Feeling appreciated and letting your partner know that s/he is appreciated. With four kids, my husband and I feel like we are both "on" at all times. Coming home from work isn't a break—it's just more work, but with the kids and the household. We have learned to tell each other frequently how much we appreciate the other person's efforts and to say "thank you" even for the little things, like putting the garbage out. Since we are both working, we are in murky territory when it comes to who does what—with the kids, the house, etc. And we have learned to take turns doing things: One night I will be in charge of dinner; another night, he will be. One night, I will put the baby to sleep; another night, he will. Gratitude is one of the key things that keeps our romantic relationship alive. The old complaint, "My husband doesn't appreciate me" or "My wife takes me for granted" points to what happens when gratitude is not expressed often enough.

Keeping your sex life alive! Let's call a spade a spade. If you are not having sex with your partner, then there's a good chance your partner will seek sex elsewhere. Don't fall into

the trap. If you are having problems in your marriage that make you NOT want to be intimate with your spouse, seek help. The money spent on a marriage counselor is well worth it—and it's a lot less expensive than what it costs to get a divorce these days. Sex can definitely get better with time as you feel more comfortable communicating your desires with your partner.

Are there any celebrity couples that you feel are doing a good job at "having it all"?

One celebrity couple I feel is doing it really well is John Travolta & Kelly Preston. John and Kelly have been married now for 29 years. Believe it or not, lists are John and Kelly's secret to marital bliss. The couple uses lists to make sure they make enough time for each other, and for sex, among other things. According to John, "We make lists of what we need and want from each other and check them regularly, we list everything, from how much sex to what kind of food we want". This may seem like a chore but according to them, it helps them find out what the other person needs and reminds them that they are going the right direction. Sounds a little un-romantic but hey, if it works!

Cupid wants to give a big thanks to author, Samantha Walravens for giving us some of her time. Be sure to check out her new book *TORN: True Stories of Modern Motherhood* at Amazon and for more information on Samantha, check out her website at www.SamanthaWalravens.com.