



07/27/12: The Colbert Report

While I was awake late one night this week, I turned on the TV and watched The Colbert Report (Stephen Colbert has a talk show on the Comedy Channel that comes on around midnight. It is very funny if you are ever awake then!). I was very intrigued to see his short interview with Anne-Marie Slaughter, who wrote the famous article in the July issue of The Atlantic magazine, called "Why Women Still Can't Have it All". Colbert stated this article was the "most-read" ever in The Atlantic magazine. Wow! I had heard of the article but hadn't read it, so I knew it would get onto my MUST READ list. And I'm sure glad it did.

First, here is a link to this lengthy article, in case you are interested in reading it (I highly recommend that we all read at least the first few pages):

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-can-8217-t-have-it-all/9020/?single_page=true.

Here is a link to the short clip on The Colbert Report, with his interview: <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/07/stephen-colbert-solves-the-having-it-all-dilemma-in-5-words/259936/>

While the title of the article gives much of her story away, I'd like to offer a few comments of my own. Before I became a mother, I worked for 15 years. For the past (almost) 20 years, I have been a working mother, and I've tried different ways to find the perfect "work-life (parent/professional) balance" including working full time, working part time, getting my (then) husband to do more of the housework/child care work, taking a short sabbatical, trying to convince several employers to allow me to work from home occasionally (most said no). I'd have to admit, I never quite found the nirvana I was looking for, so, something had to "give". Did some of this effort to take care of my kids AND do my job impact my "success" in BOTH areas? Sure. Do men have the same challenges (in general) as women do in this area? No, they really don't. Is this changing in our workplaces today? Maybe, but Anne-Marie actually sees evidence of younger women opting out because it just looks and feels too impossible to have it all, and the risk of trying is too great. There are still not enough role models for the younger women, and that is a problem. As she states near the end: "The best hope for improving the lot of all women is to close the leadership gap: to elect a woman president and 50 women senators, to ensure that women are equally represented in the ranks of corporate executives and judicial leaders. Only when women wield power in sufficient numbers will we create a society that genuinely works for all women."



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Sigh.

Anne makes another really good point in the interview (and the article) that is worth noting here: young kids certainly need their parents, but don't be fooled into thinking that teens need their parents any less. This is a fallacy that I'm afraid I had for a long time; that once my kids were a little older, they wouldn't need me as much. But, it's just a different kind of care. And perhaps, a much more challenging kind of care to give properly. Anne-Marie Slaughter found this out as well, and it took her about the same amount of time to figure it out as it did me. Right when our kids were well into their teenage years. Funny how that happened, isn't it?

Would love to hear any comments that you have on this subject. Thanks for allowing me this diversion, I have to get back to work now.