

Episode 41. Working Moms With Melisa Liberman

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Melisa Liberman, Kira Dorrian, Future Focused Parenting



Future Focused Parenting 00:03

What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other an agnostic Jew, sit down to talk about parenting? They take their listeners from surviving to thriving. I'm Deana Thayer, and I'm Kira Dorrian. Welcome to Raising Adults, a podcast brought to you by Future Focused Parenting.



Kira Dorrian 00:23

Hi, everyone, welcome to Raising Adults. Kira and Deana here with our very first guest of season three, and she is a good one. It's a great interview, I'm gonna tell you, I'm so excited. We have Melisa Lieberman on the show today from Corporate Mom Club, and she is a corporate mom coach. She works with working moms who are trying to navigate doing their job, their full time job and the expectations of their Corporation and their work environment. And then also how do you do that and have a home life and cook dinner and get the groceries and go to the school plays? And that is just so real. I mean, even as you know, Deana and I are predominantly flexible work, and it is still impossible.



Deana Thayer 01:05

Yeah, absolutely. So I love, I love her. I love this interview. I think she just has so much to

offer to our listeners. I know we have a lot of working moms. And we were saying even after the interview that even it doesn't even have to be work, right? It could be volunteer work, or a project that you're really passionate about. It's like doing anything outside of motherhood is really hard. Yeah, you'll feel that pull of how do I pick and how do I juggle? And is there a way to have balance? And is there a way to manage your time well? And she addresses all of that, which is great.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:34

And especially for people in a partnership where both partners are working or actively involved in something. I mean, this is just a challenge. So she's amazing. I'm so excited that she's here. Yeah, let's get to the interview. Okay, so today, we have Melisa Lieberman on the show. She is a coach for working moms. She runs an amazing group called the Corporate Mom Club. And we are just so excited to have her here with us today. So, Melisa, welcome to Raising Adults. Welcome to the show.

M

Melisa Liberman 02:01

Thank you for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:04

Yay! So I'd love for you to start by just telling our listeners a little bit about yourself. And how did you end up being a coach for working moms? How did you kind of get to this spot?

M

Melisa Liberman 02:15

Okay, um, it has been a journey for sure. I actually was very career focused, career minded. I never thought I would have kids. To be honest with you, I thought people who had kids were crazy. And I was 100% dedicated to my career. And that for about 10 years, I rose through the corporate ladder at a startup, I started at the bottom and made my way to the executive team. And I was the only woman there and the youngest. And it was really, really fun. But I started getting older, and I started feeling less fulfilled and like something was missing. And so we decided to dive in and have one child just to test the waters. Yeah. And then all of a sudden, you know, I thought, well, why do people need maternity leave? They can just go straight back to work. And I think I was the worst boss ever, when it came to, you know, supporting working moms. Just completely not understanding any of it. And so then when I had my own child, it all just hit me. What, with a huge weight on my shoulders of how challenging it is to balance everything, feeling like

you're a good mom, especially as a new mom and spending the amount of time you want to spend seeing all of the changes happening when they're that young. And going on business trips and trying to bring back you know, breast milk in your carry on, all the things are just so crazy. And so over the course of time, as my son got a little bit older, he was about two and I decided to take a step back and start consulting so that I could work part time and, you know, still maintain some level of financial contribution to our family and some level of my sanity and, and, you know, ability to think a little bit and talk to other adults, but at the same time really have the ability to experience my son as he was getting older. And eventually I had two more kids. So I have three total now. And so it was kind of an accidental path that I got to, my initial step which was consulting and helping companies create scalable processes. But from there, I just started really noticing all of these women that we're working moms who are struggling the same way that I did, trying to, you know, maintain their career but feeling like they were failures at home and with their husbands, with their kids, with their friends, if they had any left as well, as, you know, if they had time for any, as well as with their career and the stagnation that they were, you know that they see with their, you know, career path, the compensation gap that they see. And quite frankly, so many times where they're just overlooked and set aside once they have kids, being seen more as a liability. And so it's kind of interesting how my path came from someone who didn't want any kids and had no empathy or understanding of working parents to you know, now I'm a coach helping other working moms navigate their career, and stay in their corporate job, if that's what they want to do, or branch out, like I did and create their own consulting firm or, or freelance or something like that, if that's what they want to do, and really following their own passion and their own direction.

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Deana Thayer 06:05

Wow, that is,

M

Melisa Liberman 06:06

So that was a long answer. Hopefully, that's ok. You know, you got the whole story.

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Deana Thayer 06:12

Well, I think that's common sometimes for it to be a little bit of a circuitous route to what your passion is, and where that intersects with what you want to be doing. So that's great. So when you're talking with these working moms, what would you say? I mean, you mentioned a few, and I'm wondering, are, maybe those are them, but what would you say are the most common struggles? Maybe things you hear over and over again, that are pretty, pretty much a recurring theme for these working moms, and then maybe some tips

for what you suggest to combat some of those issues?

M

Melisa Liberman 06:42

Yeah, I would say, I'll give you a couple, one on the career side, and one on the personal side. And, really, I think on the career side, it's, it's navigating, all of a sudden, I think, especially as we have kids, and we start to try to figure out how to navigate our life after things have changed so significantly. I see so many other working moms who are, who all of a sudden have lost so much of their confidence. And they somehow feel like they have to apologize for having a child or somehow it's a liability now that they have a child and that they aren't contributing as, either they feel like they're not contributing as much, or they're not sure how to manage the viewpoint of their colleagues who might assume they're not contributing enough, or as much. And so it's really like this dip in confidence that I see with so many other working moms who are confused, you know, they're working late at night, they're putting in all of the hours and then some. They're still, you know, producing the same types of deliverables that they were before and the same types of results. But for some reason, they see themselves differently. And in some cases, their employer and their colleagues and their managers see them differently. And so I really help them look at that. And just, first of all, be aware that that's happening, whether they're doing it to themselves, or if they're noticing it happening, you know, with others around them. And then really just start to notice the fact that this is not a fact, this is just the inner mean girl coming out and questioning, you know, everything. But when in fact, they're still contributing at the same level that they were before, it just might look differently, they might not be in the office late hours, but they are dedicated and they're working on the weekends or working late at night and making it happen, it just looks a little bit different than it might have before. So that's a first one is just that confidence or imposter syndrome, caused by the inner mean girl, and then the second is really helping, you know, we all just seem to be so hard on ourselves, and, and cause ourselves so much pain in terms of guilt and guilt, and feelings of inadequacy. And so, that's another one that I think is so common, where we really you know, as, as working moms, we want to feel balanced, we want to be able to go to work or be at home and not feel like we should be at the other, you know, at the other place. And it's that guilt that comes along with it. And I think it just becomes such a heavy burden to bear, carrying that around all the time that we're not good enough. We're not doing enough. We're not, you know, the mom that we want to be. When in fact if we, and that's where the focus starts to become of looking at all the places where we're, we're falling short, versus just switching gears and thinking and looking for the evidence of where we are contributing. Where we are great moms, where our kids are doing well. And if, even if we didn't make it to the school play, it's really not the end of the world, we can show our kids that, you know, we had to go on a business trip. And this is what we're contributing to our job. And we'll do, you know, for example,

we'll take them out on a date another night or something, you know, as an alternative. So it's really just looking at all of these feelings that we bring on ourselves, the mom guilt, the confident, the, you know, the, the imposter syndrome, the lack of confidence, all of these things as we're shifting into becoming a working mom. And we're realizing that we're bringing on so much of that ourselves, which is such good news, because we're able to then, you know, use techniques to stop the guilt without any other, those other feelings of inadequacy without having to change anything. We don't have to, I tell so many of my clients who come to me and say they want to, you know, they think they want to quit and become a stay at home mom, which I've been a stay at home mom, and they're, you know, there's great benefits to that as well. But for so many of them, they don't really want to do that. They just feel like that's the only way to stop the madness. And it's really not the only way. Where's, there's a lot of techniques to, to use just to stop the madness without having to quit your job.

K

Kira Dorrian 11:21

It reminds me of that meme. I don't know if you've seen it on Facebook, but it says we expect ourselves to work like we have no kids and raise our kids like we have no job.

M

Melisa Liberman 11:30

That's a perfect way to summarize the challenge. And I think you know, we're just hiding everything right, from ourselves, and from our colleagues, like, nothing has changed.

K

Kira Dorrian 11:42

And I think many people aren't, aren't expecting to feel that way. Because they've never had to juggle something like this before. Right? This is like a brand new juggle, of something just so equally demanding on both sides, whereas maybe they had a demanding job before. But to have the demanding job at home, too, is, is just so brand new. And so I'm curious, I know that one of your focus areas is finding that balance between the two. So tell us, is that balance even possible for a mom who's juggling work and family and her other responsibilities? And so many of us now are in that sandwich generation? So we're also maybe caring for parents? And just, is it possible?

M

Melisa Liberman 12:23

Oh, I think it is, I really do. And I've seen so many clients achieve the balance. And I think the first step is really, you know, we sit, we throw around this word balance so freely, but without really thinking about what it means to us. And we think about what it looked like,

you know, growing up and what our moms might have done, um, and what their version of balance was. And, and I think so often, we think we're imbalanced, without even really, really thinking about what does it mean in my life? What does balance really look like? And it doesn't mean equal time, to, you know, to work versus family. It doesn't mean equal priority in all cases. It's such an ebb and flow, and it can really be anything you want it to be. It's all about proactively looking at what does balance really mean to me? What does it look like on a weekly and a monthly basis? And what are the compromises that I'm willing to, what am I not willing to compromise no matter what? And really figuring out what those boundaries are. And then what am I willing to compromise? And how am I going to navigate that? And having those kinds of answers upfront, versus trying, you know, so many of us, I think, let life happen to us, let work happen to us, let our families happen to us, it's so common, and then we just try to pick up the pieces later, versus taking, taking it proactively and saying this is what balance really looks like to me. When I'm asked to go on a work trip, you know, on the, at the last hour, you know, the day before, for example, and I know that I have something coming up with my kids, how am I going to manage through that? How am I going to get ahead of things and direct the travel if I can, with my you know, with whomever I have to travel for that client, for example? How am I going to message it to my kids when I have to agree to a late night work meeting, and it conflicts with their school play? All of those kinds of things, thinking about them and and really designing it up front so that you're setting yourself up for success versus constantly criticizing yourself that it's not good enough.

D

Deana Thayer 14:46

Yeah, that's so important. I know that another really big thing a lot of moms who are also balancing a career struggle with, is time management, and this idea of how can we make sure that our calendar and our schedule works for us? And not the other way around that we just become a slave to it. So would you be willing to share some practical time management tips with our listeners?

M

Melisa Liberman 15:07

Yeah, this is one of the, one of the number one questions that I get is, how do I better manage my time, become more productive, get more done in the time that I have? One of the tips that I love the most is really going through on a weekly basis. So I do this on Sundays, where I go through and put in all, you know, everything I can for the week. And of course, it starts a lot with work meetings, and other work obligations. But the next thing that I try to, that I try to encourage my clients to do after those must haves is scheduling the fun time. Schedule in what you're going to do on the weekends with the kids to have that balance that you're looking for, if that's your priority. Schedule in a date night, or

schedule in, you know, something fun with with the kids one night in the week day. Like finding those times that you can carve out to do something intentional, that's fun, that makes the memories, that's creating that balance that you're looking for, and put that in your calendar, because our calendars always show our priorities. If you're able to go back and look at your calendar from, you know, last week or last month, does it match up to the priorities that you've set for yourself with regard to you know, your work responsibilities, what you want to do with your family, and the goals that you're trying to accomplish? So that's the one thing that I think a lot of people miss is putting in the calendar, like actually scheduling the fun time. And sometimes we tell ourselves, well, it's just better to be spontaneous. But at the end of the day, this, the spontaneity typically doesn't happen. And it's so much better and more fulfilling to actually have those fun things, and have those memories from them than trying to tell yourself that it's better to be spontaneous, and then it never, you know, then you end up doing errands instead of actually the fun things with the kids.

K

Kira Dorrian 17:09

Right. So I have a question, because this episode's airing in the summer. And I would like to hear from you some thoughts for our working moms about summer. Because I would imagine I mean, I'm a, I'm a flexible working mom, and summer is still a nightmare. So I cannot imagine for women with corporate jobs where they, you know, maybe had kids in school and now school's out. And now we're juggling camps and extended care. And do you have tips for moms over the summer? Does it differ somehow?

M

Melisa Liberman 17:42

Yeah, I get this question so much. And I you know, I work from home. And so it's a challenge when you just even the noise, right? The noise level, I mean, when the kids are home versus at work, so, or at school. So we're at the point now where hopefully, we've hopefully the listeners have scheduled their camps and given themselves some coverage during the summer. If you haven't, that's the first step is really looking at the calendar and figuring out what are you going to do each week of the, of that summer break. For some people I know they've got extended camps. And then for others like me, I have we get it, you know, it's a week at a time. So it's literally like putting together the pieces of a puzzle, trying to get the coverage in place. But I think one of the biggest things is again, try not to set the bar so high that it just ends up making you feel like you failed. So for example, ask, getting a mother's helper to come and cover the time between the, when the camp is over, and when you're finished with work, if you work from home, for example. Or asking for a babysitter that can take the kids you know, finding yourself a babysitter that can take the kids and drop them off at the camp and pick them up and you know, make them

dinner or whatever it is. Asking for help doesn't mean that you're a failure or that you're somehow not balancing things or juggling things, it just, taking down that pressure and, and being honest with yourself about where you're going to need help. And then getting that help proactively is where I've seen most of my mom, working mom clients have the most success. It's when we're not realistic with ourselves and we think we can get it all done, that we end up feeling so frazzled and frustrated and, and have such a short fuse as a result.

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Deana Thayer 19:33

Yeah. Isn't that the truth? Managing expectations becomes really important.

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Melisa Liberman 19:37

Yes.

D

Deana Thayer 19:37

So, we're curious. We're like, back here doing, you know, crazy hand motions. And so what do you think about families where both parents are in a working environment and maybe those two worlds collide? Maybe you're both scheduled to be at a meeting or one of you has to travel but one of you has a meeting you can't miss, and how you decide who's on kid duty? And what happens? Do you have any suggestions when there's two parents dealing with this?

M

Melisa Liberman 20:05

Yes, this just happened to me last week. It's really tricky. It's so tricky because, you know, it can get very, it can make one of the partners, the one of the spouses feel really resentful, if you know, if it's, if it's not something that you can manage very well, communication wise. So I'll just give you a little bit about my story, and then give you a few tips from there. My husband has a newer job, it's, he's only been in this job for three or four months, a corporate job. I've had a consulting client, that's, that I helped to coach and consult for, that I've had for a few years. And I had a meeting scheduled for several months that I was, had planned to attend, and my husband was due to be home and handle all the kid things, you know, like our normal schedule. At the last minute, he came up to my office literally the day before my flight and said, I have to go on a work meeting tomorrow, and if I don't, I'm going to be fired.

K

Kira Dorrian 21:12

No pressure there.

M

Melisa Liberman 21:14

There's no pressure, right? And so you start I mean, you start weighing the pros and cons of whose job is more important. Who's, how do we, how do we navigate through all of this? What I like, what ended up happening for us is his, his trip got delayed by a day and we ended up working it out, it turns out that he was actually exaggerating, that he wasn't actually going to be fired. So I think the first step here is just once the initial shock sort of wears off, like really having a meaningful discussion about how, who's flexible? How can we be flexible? How can we, how can we maneuver this so, and so for us, what ended up happening is his, his trip got delayed by about a day, we were able to delay it by about a day and a half and make it all work out. But in some cases, that's not possible. And so what I always like to have is a backup plan, we don't have family nearby that we can call upon, which I think is pretty common. At least it is amongst all the working moms I talk to. So many are lacking that family support structure right nearby. And so what I like to have is just a college student in my back pocket. Or if you don't live near a college, having someone that's pretty flexible, maybe like a single, you know, single professional that, that's got some flexibility with their schedule, that you can call upon to come and stay, knows your routine, and can give you that coverage when you're both going to be gone.

K

Kira Dorrian 22:46

I wonder. So my husband and I have had this happen several times. And you nailed it when you said suddenly you're arguing about whose job is more important, which is so absurd. But this is like where it takes everyone, right? But one of the things my husband has said that I think is unfortunately really true, is he said that the expectation of him to step out to take care of the kids is totally different than of me. So he said, you know, it's it's fine for me to do it sometimes. But if I do it too much, people are wondering why you're not doing it, which I think is, and that's not how he feels about it, but that's what he's getting from his corporate world. And I think that's really true. I think there's a real gender gap here, that it's expected if the kid is sick, the mom's gonna stay home. And I'm curious how you deal with this when you're talking with these women, because it must come up and it must be just so frustrating on so many levels. Is there a way through that? Because we live in this world where honestly, that is the view of a lot of corporations?

M

Melisa Liberman 23:48

Oh, it is absolutely the view. And, and quite frankly, you know, I think it's the view that the, that the wife should defer to the father, you know, to her husband's schedule, when when these kinds of conflicts come up. And quite frankly, I think there's also oftentimes a view of how many passes let's call it, how many passes that working moms get before, you know, before their boss or the company loses, loses faith in them and their ability to deliver. And so I've seen so many times where that reaches a boiling point between, you know, the working mom that I'm helping and her employer and her boss and trying to navigate through that. And so that's where I like to recommend that, you know, they're able to find a backup plan and navigate and understand really, you know, there's a scorecard, right, just like you described, what's the scorecard at your husband's job? What's the scorecard look like at your job? And how many times have you had to be absent from work, or not physically present. And even though most of us work from home when our kids are sick. How many times have you had to adjust a, a work trip because of a family conflict, and kind of playing that game of keeping up, knowing what the score is, how your individual jobs are perceiving you, and then figuring out who's going to, you know, take on the responsibility of that of that family obligation. But also having the backup plan, and you know, of someone who can come in and help provide the coverage when you both feel like you don't have any flexibility for a given situation.

D

Deana Thayer 25:35

That's really important. Thank you for sharing that. That's because, that's, those are some tricky situations, but they definitely come up. And there's kind of a lot of layers there with all the gender stuff, and just underlying societal assumptions and all of that. So we know that you do coaching, and we love that because we love the coaching model, and we're parent coaches, I'm wondering if you could share with our listeners, just what it looks like to work with you if someone's looking for, how do I create balance? Hey, I might want some coaching around how to juggle work and family, what would that look like?

M

Melisa Liberman 26:06

Yeah, I work individually with my clients one on one. And so they come to me with a wide range of, of balance related requests that we work through. So first, we talk through their goals, what are their goals? They are, range from anything from, I'm looking to get promoted. And I seem to be being held back, because of, you know, the scorecard we were just talking about, the motherhood penalty. And they, I have clients who come to me that want to convert to part time, or, you know, change jobs, because they're not finding the ability to be, have the balance that they're looking for, where they're, where they're at right now. Other moms who have taken a step back and been a stay at home mom for a little while, and they want to return to the workforce. And then the other bucket are moms

that are really looking to go out and do something on their own and create their own type of, you know, consulting business, where they can continue to contribute and progress their career but on their own terms. And so those are the types of career request, you know, questions and goals that I help women with and working moms. So they come to me and we talk over their goals, we talk about what's been preventing them from achieving those goals to this point. And so oftentimes, it's things that we, you know, things in our life that are in, that our situations, and, you know, whatever our job title is or where our business is, how long our commute is, those kinds of things. But it's also a lot about our mindset and what we think is possible for ourselves versus what we're settling for. And so I talk through it with them. And we really get to the bottom, the heart of what is really the obstacle holding them back. Sometimes it's situational, circumstantial. And so we talk through that. And then a lot of times, it's, it's the mental game, and what's holding them back with, with how they're perceiving themselves versus what's possible. So we dive into all of that. And I give them a couple of things that they can focus on right away. And then we, if it makes sense to work together in a longer term capacity, we craft a personalized coaching program for them. And we dig in and work weekly to achieve the goals that they've set and overcome those obstacles that have been holding them back. It's so much fun.

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Deana Thayer 28:35

It's great. I can tell you your passionate about it, your enthusiasm is coming through which is great. So if people are interested in these kind of tips, and this, this kind of help, where can they find you? Tell us how to get in touch with you?



28:48

Yeah, they can find me. Um, you mentioned earlier today, the Corporate Mom Club, it's a free group on Facebook, so they can find me there for free tips and other, other what I call quick mom wins. So quick wins, I, things that we could do in less than five minutes that help to, to increase our productivity, decrease our self sabotage, all of those things. So they can join me over there on Facebook at the Corporate Mom Club. And you can find me at the corporatemomclub.com. That's the easiest way to find that group. And then I'm also on LinkedIn. And my profile is Melisa.Lieberman. So those are the two best ways to find me.

K

Kira Dorrian 29:37

That's great. And, you know, our listeners don't know this, but you do. But I'm in the

Corporate Mom Club. I joined and I love it because you post these great videos, like weekly and then there's also just the most amazing support amongst the members. I've noticed like people kind of post something they're struggling with and a lot of people will weigh in on wow, I feel the same way, like really normalizing that for each other, and giving tips and tricks to each other. So it's like you're kind of leading this group with your own knowledge and expertise, but also just encouraging this like safe space for women who are struggling with that work life balance to be able to talk about it.

M

Melisa Liberman 30:18

Oh, I'm so glad that you're there Kira. And, and that, that's been your experience, because that's exactly the type of community that I've been working to build. And I think every, everyone who's in the community is so solution oriented, and just wants to help each other and, and make this experience for all of us the best that it can be. So I'm glad, I'm so glad you're in the club.

K

Kira Dorrian 30:42

Oh, me, too. I love, I love it. Well, thank you so much, Melisa, for being with us today, it has been such a pleasure to just hear such smart points of view and solutions and tips. For our listeners, I just know, we have a lot of working moms who listen to the podcast, and I know they are going to get so much out of today. So thank you for being with us.

M

Melisa Liberman 31:01

Thank you for having me. I had a great time with you. And I look forward to seeing you over in the Corporate Mom Club.

K

Kira Dorrian 31:10

Well, that was so wonderful, and helpful. She's fantastic. I just think that it's, it's such important work that she's doing. I mean, this is something that most moms are dealing with in some way or another and, and just you know, it's so easy to get lost in motherhood and where am I in it? And then to also be looking at yourself as a, as a working person, as a person person, and as a mom person. Like that's just a lot of people

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Deana Thayer 31:33

That's a lot of hats to wear. It really is. And how do you not get lost in all of that? So I'm just appreciative for what she shared. I'm sure a lot of people benefited from it. I know we

did. And the thing is, we're doing that. I mean, literally, we're tucked away in a laundry room right now trying to fit our work in in the midst of all these other things, right?



Kira Dorrian 31:52

Yeah. Well, how many times have you and I had a work meeting at six o'clock in the morning?



Deana Thayer 31:56

Oh, more than I can count. Right. I mean, that's predominantly what we did for the first year of this, was a lot of work meetings at six in the morning and 9:30 at night. Yes. Can I, can I call you after the kids are down? Exactly.



Kira Dorrian 32:08

Right. So I think it's, it just speaks to, to so many people that are listening. So we hope you enjoyed her interview. Be sure to check out the Corporate Mom Club on Facebook. It's superduper awesome. I love being a part of it. And thanks for being with us today.



Deana Thayer 32:21

Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian, Deana Thayer and today, the wonderful engineer Eric Johnson, and recorded partially with Eric, partially in the beautiful laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 32:32

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