

Perfectionism or Patriarchy?

**What a working mom learned from burnout, books, behavior change
and befriending a witch**

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Don't burn your witch at the stake!

A Burned Out Working Mom's Guide to Beating Perfectionism and Patriarchy

A Working Mom's Guide to Beating Perfectionism and Patriarchy to Prevent Burnout

HOW I BURNED MY WITCH, BEFRIENDED HER, AND DESIGNED A WORLD WHERE SHE COULD THRIVE

OVERVIEW

This book is for working moms who are experiencing symptoms of burnout and seeking solutions that go beyond self care. Moms play so many roles in their lives that they are overwhelmed. They are seeking reassurance that all this hard work is worth it in the long run and that there is some meaning to their struggle. This book will help working moms see that they are not alone in their fight, that there are science based strategies that can reduce their mental load and mom-tested solutions that finally address the complex challenges of modern motherhood. I also interview other working moms who have experienced burnout and female thought leaders to share multiple perspectives on this growing public health problem. I include the stories of these women throughout the book so that women who are struggling do not feel alone and to elevate working mom's voices. Throughout the book I also share the voice of my inner witch who represents my own doubts but also the external pressures working moms face. Her voice brings humor but also allows us to voice some of the harsh criticisms that often go unsaid.

In part 1 of the book, I describe my own journey up to, through, and post burnout when I left a 20 year successful career in academia to pursue a new passion for preventing burnout in working moms. I include a very personal account of self-doubt, suicidal ideation, and losing my identity. In particular, I present the scientific definitions of burnout and map my and other women's experiences to the workload, conflicting values, and lack of autonomy inherent in this World Health Organization recognized problem. While, workplaces are mostly the source of burnout, there is also parental burnout. I explore in greater depth two issues that I believe contributed to my burnout 1) perfectionism and 2) the male dominated culture; patriarchy. I describe the specific conditions and behaviors within these two major obstacles that have also been identified by social scientists.

In part 2 of the book, I share the lessons I learned from reading over 150 books in the last three years since I left my job. Because of the multiple roles working moms embody - mom, wife, colleague, leader – I share lessons from books I have read, written by female authors, that cover personal growth, parenting, partnerships, professional growth, and public policies to support working moms. This is a comprehensive view of all the areas of life that working moms struggle to manage. From interviews with moms, and in my own experience, we want to do our best in all our roles and are unwilling to compromise on our values. Doing less or being more organized is not the answer. It is about feeling valued in what we do and knowing that our efforts are not wasted. Not only do I share my experiences of the reading the books and trying to incorporate the most helpful approaches into my life to be the best mom, wife, colleague, leader I wanted to be, but I have also captured the advice in a searchable database. Moms can search by topic, book, whether the advice is an attitude change, an action, or requires assistance, and how long it might take. The advice is also tied to motivating identifiers I have created e.g. I want to be a better listener, I want to support diversity in my workplace etc., which support habit formation.

In part 3 of the book, I describe befriending my witch, my inner critic. I share the lessons I have learned from over 100 hours of life coaching. In particular, how to manage thoughts and emotions and how to express these so that others can understand your needs. I share the tools that I have found most helpful from these sessions. I describe the process of finding a new passion, facing the fear of stepping into a new role, and the benefits that I ultimately reaped from my burnout. I provide hopeful stories of other women's transformations and how I found meaning in helping others.

Part 4, gets into the nitty gritty of behavior change. It describes the processes necessary to support effective behavior change and habit formation, drawing on my 20 years as a behavior change expert. While parts 2 and 3 describe the what to do, part 4 recognizes the difficulty everyone faces when trying to incorporate new habits into their life. I provide tips, tools, and real life examples of how to prepare and persist in creating the life you want. I also describe what needs to change in workplaces to support working moms and other caregivers who work, recognizing that systems change only occurs when individuals take action and are held accountable. I provide examples of workplace approaches that are succeeding and tools for moving more workplaces towards supporting moms. I explain what moms can do, every day, to support other moms. I provide a master plan for beating perfectionism and patriarchy. This book is unique in its comprehensive approach to burnout, its focus on working moms, its real-life messiness and its scientifically supported and mom-tested solutions. This is a no bullshit, survival guide, for working moms, from the trenches.