

Working at Working is Serious Business

You were going to work today, but the house needed cleaning and the phone rang a dozen times. Your cat had to go to the vet, your houseplants needed baths and SOMEONE had to clean the refrigerator. So, you didn't work today, but maybe you will tomorrow - unless the kids are home from school, or someone comes over for lunch, or the phone rings all day, or there's laundry to do, or you have errands to run.

The hardest part of working at home is - WORKING. Other people don't take you seriously. First of all, they don't think you really work - not really. You don't have clocks to punch or a boss standing over you. You're home. You're available.

Said a free-lance writer once, "No one believes that I work! My children certainly don't; I'm just 'Mommy' to them. They can't understand why I get mad when they burst into my office, or why I can't drop everything if they need a ride somewhere.

"My husband doesn't believe I'm a 'real' working woman either. Otherwise he wouldn't expect me to do all the housework and cooking, take care of the kids and iron his shirts and pick up the clothes he drops all over the floor."

She looked down at the flowers she'd been attending in her backyard and shrugged. "He acts as if my career is an amusing little hobby," she said. "It never occurs to him that it's as important to me as his is to him."

If you work at home and absolutely no one seems to take your work seriously, it's time to make sure YOU do. Here are some questions you might ask yourself:

- ♥ Do you have a firm work schedule? Have you set aside fixed hours each day, or each week, during which you work and do nothing else?
- ♥ Do you have the basic equipment you need for your job? Have you invested in supplies, a telephone or extension, a digital recorder or iPad, a file cabinet, a comfortable desk and chair, a personal computer, unlimited cell minutes- whatever you need to run an efficient operation?
- ♥ Have you invested in pleasant surroundings as well? Do you have your own permanent space? One with a door and a "Do Not Disturb" sign?
- ♥ Is there a warm, cheerful place for you to work? It need not be lavish, but curtains aren't expensive. Posters can take the place of paintings. Soft music can come from an inexpensive tape deck. You deserve a welcoming place to work. You work hard, and you almost certainly will spend less than most men would spend on a home office.
- ♥ Do you talk about your work without discounting it? Do you say, "I'm a writer" or "I'm doing a little writing"? Do you say, "I am an artist" or "I paint in my spare time"?
- ♥ Do you dress for work, even though no one will see you? Slipping around in a comfortable robe is wonderful on a rainy Saturday, but you may not feel like working in your fuzzy slippers.
- ♥ Do you ask yourself (at least three times a day) how those around you would manage if you worked in an outside office? They would manage - millions of families do. Saying "someone has to do it" is pure sabotage. And "if I worked for someone else, would I be there?"

- ♥ Are your children clear about what you do and when you do it? Do you have ironclad rules about when and why they can interrupt you? Even a young child can learn to respect your time at work. You can be there for real emergencies, but YOU define what a real emergency is.
- ♥ Finally, do you like what you do? Are you proud of it? Is it important? If it's important to you, other people will get the message. If it's not important to you, if you're not proud of and committed to what you do, you might consider other work. It's true that when a man goes to school (or works at home) everyone assumes he's investing in the future. But when a woman does the same, people may assume she's "dabbling". It's up to us to change that perception, but first we must change our own. Dig deep in ALL events. NEVER miss one, NOT ONE and get to know other people's success stories.