

Photographers spend their days capturing families' most precious moments, but miss prime time with their own. This section will help you equalize the scales and start living a happier, more balanced life.

WORK & LIFE

By Lorna Gentry

Balancing act

Have you been able to find peace in the work/life mix?

On the first day of school, hope and nostalgia in the autumn air, Davina Fear, a wedding and portrait photographer in Charlotte, N.C., should have been happy. Instead she was in tears. "I realized I'd missed the summer with my kids," she recalls. "I missed my kids' *lives*."

How ironic. Fear's photographs of smiling, united families had become so popular that she had no time for her own family, much less herself. "I hated photography and wanted to quit," she

admits. "My business had taken off like a horse. I was holding onto the reins, but I was being dragged through the dirt."

Davina Fear had hit an emotional wall—exhausted, frustrated, guilty and angry, a casualty of unbridled success that had thrown her off balance. This experience isn't unique. Many women and men suffer burnout, and photographers, like all artists, are especially vulnerable. And women photographers tend to arrive at burnout faster and more often than their male counterparts because they generally have more to juggle. Like men, most women establish their photography businesses when

they're in their 20s and 30s, just at the time they're getting married and having children.

According to a survey published by *Time* magazine in the October 26th cover story, "The State of the American Woman," just under 70 percent of the women surveyed said they carry the primary responsibility for taking care of the kids, and 43 percent of the men agreed that the ladies do the heavy lifting when it comes to child-rearing.

Running a business and household can be stressful. When women skimp on spending time with their children to focus on business, they feel guilty. If they don't focus on business because they're involved in family time, they feel guilty, too. Guilt wears you out.

Fear's heard this catch-22 from other female photographers, too. "They feel guilty about saying 'just a minute' to their kids all the time," she says. "I tell them to stop saying



©Davina Fear



'just a minute' to the people you love and say it to the people who don't matter as much. Let go of the guilt and make of your business what you want it to be. No rules are set in stone."

But setting limits can be another catch-22. "Women grow up with a 'script' that says they should try to please everyone," says Elaine Yarbrough, Ph.D., president of the Yarbrough Group, a communication and human relations consulting agency in Boulder, Colo. "As we add more to our plates—family, work, social obligations, keeping communities together—we don't subtract anything. So it becomes a matter of how much energy we have to do it all. But whom do you decide to not please by taking them off your plate? It's easy to say, 'Just stop doing XYZ,' but when you think about the impact that saying no will have on relationships, which are very important to women, it becomes a huge interior barrier."

Piling on business and personal commitments means constantly juggling logistics, schedules and relationships, often leaving women feeling conflicted, exhausted and

demoralized. That's why having a good professional and personal network is critical, says Yarbrough. "Women tend to isolate themselves, and when they do, they tend to think it's just their problem. It's not. Try brainstorming creative problem solving with friends and col-

leagues, rather than think in either/or terms."

Yet sometimes you have to disregard the advice of others and follow your heart. Davina Fear decided to take a year's hiatus from her business to spend time with her children, especially her pre-school youngest.

I used to believe the way to manage family, work, and life was to squish it all together. I'd work from home so I could "spend time" with my children, trying to photo edit and run the business while looking after the kids.

Then I finally decided to separate my work from my home life. When I was at work in my retail studio space, I'd simply focus on work, and when I came home, I'd set aside work (as best I could) and really be with my family.

I created a calendar to log what time was spent where, and scheduled work and family appointments around that, with scant exceptions. The transition didn't happen overnight, but after awhile, I noticed I was getting twice as much done. Before long I was able to not work every night.

I think the concept of the perfect work/life balance is a myth. Events will always rear up and knock us out of that perfect middle. The sooner we recognize that, the more peaceful we'll be about working toward the balance we are capable of achieving. Zen: stay mostly there."

—Tamara Lackey • tamaralackey.com

“It was not a popular decision among others in the industry,” she says. But she knew it was right for her. “I wouldn’t have given up the year with my daughter for having my business booming right now. The year off also gave me the opportunity to re-evaluate my goals and check in with what’s important to me.”

Like Fear, portrait photographer Laura

Cottril, CPP, of Laura Cottril Photography in Walnut Creek, Calif., was feeling burned out and unhappy after six years in business, but it took a confluence of stressful events to make her step away. Her 4-year-old niece with leukemia was struggling through chemotherapy, her father found out he had stage IV lung cancer, and her own 4-year-old son was

pleading for her time and attention. Cottril felt guilty, torn and overwhelmed. But the interruption of her work helped her reappraise her goals and revise her business model to be more manageable and healthy.

Melanie Mauer of Photography by Melanie Mauer in Lexington, Ky., ran a successful portrait and wedding photography studio for

POWER OF TWO

Feeling overworked and unmotivated? Joining forces could be a solution

BY STEPHANIE BOOZER

In 2005, Tammy Wolfe, Cr.Photog., CPP, met Tamar London, Cr.Photog., CPP, while chatting in an online photography forum. Both were running successful yet small home-based photography studios. Both were looking for something more, and

uncertain about how to get it. Their studios were just an hour’s drive from each other in western Pennsylvania, and they agreed to meet for lunch.

“When I received Tammy’s e-mail, I was a little suspicious,” admits London. “I remember worrying she’d try to steal my marketing ideas. I thought we’d have little to talk about and that the lunch would be awkward. Boy, was I wrong!”

The pair instantly hit it off, finding com-

mon ground in their attitude toward business and art. London had yet to attend any PPA events, while Wolfe was active in several photography organizations, and she encouraged London to get involved.

“I’d never considered entering a print competition, and had no interest in becoming a certified professional photographer,” says London. “Tammy was excited about her upcoming CPP exam, and her enthusiasm was contagious.”

Wolfe felt her business was doing just fine for the moment, while London had ambitions of growing hers. They began to refer wedding clients to each other, and the referrals were turning into bookings. Before long, London and Wolfe were sharing ideas on marketing, business plans and long-term goals.

“Not long after our first lunch, Tamar was invited to speak by a photography guild, and she asked me to join her in the presentation,” says Wolfe. They talked about the marketing techniques that had helped them get established in their respective small towns.

As they traded management techniques, Wolfe and London realized their businesses were practically identical, and both growing dramatically. About a year into their collaboration, “It occurred to us that a partnership might be a good way to reach the next level in our business,” says Wolfe.



©Tamar London

many years before starting a family. Having a baby changed everything. "I had this vision of my daughter being easy, like she'd be in the seat beside me while I worked on my computer. She was not that kind of baby. She was colicky and high-spirited. I needed help. In a push for balance, I began to outsource."

Outsourcing also saved Claudia Kronenberg

of Claudia Kronenberg Photography, a wedding and portrait studio on Nantucket Island, Mass. She's a single mother with three children, a kindergartner, a first-grader and a high school senior. "I have a nanny who also does the laundry and housework, and her husband takes care of my yard," says Kronenberg. "To help with my business, I

hired an office manager and an assistant. In addition to running the studio, they assist with shooting and production."

All four women used their wits and wisdom to find ways to balance their active lifestyle with a successful business. In their search for answers, some crossed paths through
(continued on p. 86)

In February 2008, they met with an attorney to make it official, and became London Wolfe Photography, LLC.

"From that point, everything happened extremely fast," says Wolfe.

They combined the studios in a single space advantageously located in downtown Altoona, Pa., then began merging clientele and streamlining the workflow.

"We were explicit in our division of labor," says London. Wolfe handled employees and photography education, while London was in charge of finances and marketing. Both agreed to participate to some extent in every aspect of the business.

"There are so many benefits to having a business partner," says Wolfe. "Besides the obvious sharing of expenses, we motivate each other. Before we merged, I'd come up with great ideas only to see my excitement fizzle out before following through. Now I have someone who relies on me and to whom I'm accountable."

London is just as exuberant in her praise. "Tammy has made me a better photographer and business woman," says London, who's since become a CPP. "I started entering print competitions because she thought it would improve my photography. Tammy makes me move forward, even when I'm scared."

The pair splits expenses and revenue

right down the middle. Each continues to work with the clients they had before the merger, and take turns accepting new clients. Wolfe is better with seniors, while London enjoys babies and children. They do about the same number of weddings per year, and they do destination weddings as a duo.

"We get to do more of what we love and what we're good at," says London. "I am absolutely terrible at sales, but Tammy could sell ice to an Eskimo."

Individually, London and Wolfe were averaging about \$600 to \$700 per portrait session, and now, working as a team, the average sale has doubled. The same goes for bookings. In 2007, they handled about 15 weddings each; in 2008, they booked a total of 47.

By dividing the workflow and agreeing on procedures, London and Wolfe find tremendous peace of mind in working together.

"Any relationship that does not have balance is likely to fail," says Wolfe. "Balance of talent and personality are the makings of a great team. A partnership isn't always easy, but we see ourselves stronger together than separately. Our business has grown, our photography has improved, and our lives have become richer."

To see more of this team in action, visit www.londonwolfe.com.



©Tammy Wolfe

THE OTHER SIDE OF BURNOUT

Yes, there's light at the end of the tunnel | BY LAURIE KLEIN



“I attacked my burnout like it was war. I was going to battle to win back me.”

One day my youngest son asked me, “Mom are you happy?” I felt a stab of pain in my stomach.

Then he asked “Do you like what you’re doing?”

Did he know I wasn’t looking forward to going in to work?

Then the crusher, “Is there anything besides us you feel passionate about?”

No, no and no. Ouch.

I’d wanted to reinvent myself for some time. I felt I wasn’t growing as an artist. I’d been doing the same thing for over 20 years and I needed a change. I forgot how to nourish my soul, because I was so busy taking care of everyone else and supporting my family with my photography. I was suffering from burnout and it took a month of mulling it over to see that I had choices, that I could do something about it.

I attacked my burnout like it was war. I was going to battle to win back me. Any changes

had to happen inside myself—working from the outside had been disastrous. I started listening to the advice I had been giving others, and resolved to retake control of my life.

If you think you’re in the same boat, read on. Start by making a commitment to carve out time for yourself. One of the first things I did was to commit to taking at least one photograph a day just for myself, not to make money. I wouldn’t show it to anyone unless I wanted to. Just the act of using the right side of your brain will feel so good. It will reconnect you to your creativity.

After that baby step, I started feeling better inside. It dawned on me that in nurturing my personal artistic work, I would become a stronger commercial photographer.

Exercise more than your creativity; go out into nature for a walk, even if it’s only 5 minutes a day. I also do a breathing meditation for 5 minutes before I get out of bed in

the morning. It brings calmness and a feeling of connection to my source. Quiet moments of meditation or doing yoga help you hear the voice of the muse inside you. It took me a few years to get quiet enough to hear her, but she’s coming in loud and clear now!

I believed I couldn’t take time for myself because I had major responsibilities. But the truth is, I discovered, that when I take time for me, I’m more effective and happier. So are my kids and my business.

I was also convinced I had to change everything and start over to be happy. Well, I changed my mind about that, at least, and asked myself what had worked in the past. What it was it about my business that I loved, that excited me? What impassioned me about photography when I started out, so passionate I couldn’t wait to start the day? What inspired me in the past? I started a list of what was working for me. Try doing the same thing, only add things that aren’t working and things you truly don’t like about your business or photography. Jettison what doesn’t work to make room for what does.

You might consider finding or starting a group that will support one another, and hold one another accountable for the goals you commit to.

Perhaps the most uplifting bridge to the other side of burnout was mentoring high school kids. It’s like a shot of adrenaline. They’re excited about everything. Mentoring rejuvenated my passion, and it may do the same for yours, too.

Creative people need creative tactics to get off the burnout track. It takes years to get to burnout, so give yourself time to work through it. There’s life after burnout—fantastic, fulfilling life! However bizarre it sounds, my burnout was a gift in disguise.

Laurie Klein Gallery is in Brookfield, Conn. (www.laurieklein.com).

©Claudia Kronenberg



“I learned a few years ago my staff should schedule my appointments. The doctor doesn’t tell sick patients he can’t see them for a week, his staff does. I don’t have to tell my good clients they have to wait for a session, and I don’t have to fight the temptation to squeeze them in. I’m good at leaving work at the studio when I’m on vacation. I have a simple rule: If it burns down while I’m gone, it will be burned down when I get home. If it’s something that will ruin my vacation, I don’t need to know.”

—Angela Carson • angelacarson.com

My single most effective trick to balance work and life is to have passions and hobbies outside photography. I road race motorcycles, scuba dive, ballroom dance, and I try to keep life exciting and active.

—Dave Huntsman • huntsmanphotography.com

Our best method of maintaining balance is to remain close with our friends outside the photography industry. Our closest group of friends, whom we’ve known more than 15 years, keep us grounded. If you’re in a couple, it’s important to set aside time for your friends and for yourselves. If you’re busy shooting weddings on the weekends, plan occasional evenings together during the week. Running your own business can take a toll on your personal life, so it’s important to remember we weren’t always photographers. There was—we were—something before this.

—Garrett Nudd • garrettnudd.com

(continued from p. 83)
networking and workshops. They discovered common ground with other women, what Elaine Yarbrough calls “the collective journey.”

“Knowing the collective journey shows you you’re not alone,” says Yarbrough. “It helps you quit blaming yourself for everything. Once you know the collective story and apply it to your life, you can sort out what to keep and what to actively let go.”

“I tend to crash and burn,” says Laura Cottril. “I don’t want to do it that way anymore. I’m driven to figure this out, and I want to share what I’ve learned with others so they don’t have to go through it. There is much more to this business than meeting your goals or making money.”

Balance, she says, is the Holy Grail. Here, Laura Cottril, Davina Fear, Melanie Maueur, Claudia Kronenberg and Elaine Yarbrough share tips for living a happier, more balanced life.

1. FEEL INSPIRED, NOT DEFEATED.

DF: I think it’s important that women don’t

compare their lives and work to other people. Holding yourself to some standard or bar as to how you should be or how your work should look doesn’t help. Standards, like PPA’s Masters program, are good. Just don’t put yourself in some kind of box.

EY: In a workshop I once took, the group leader gave each of us a piece of rope and asked us to make a figure out of it on the floor. Then she asked us stand in front of each other’s rope figures and say, “I like this and I really like mine better.” Be inspired and learn from others, then figure out how to make it your own.

2. VALUE YOUR TIME.

DF: When I say yes to a client, in reality I’m saying *no* to something else. Saying yes to a Saturday session also says no to spending time with my family. Is that client paying you enough to make that worthwhile? Consider what you’re giving up when you create your price list.

LC: Make yourself hard-to-get. For example, I do custom Christmas cards, but

I got kind of burned out on it because it's so time consuming; so I raised the minimum order to \$1,000. I was nervous about it. One client gave me a hard time and didn't order, but another client didn't blink. I raised my prices on smaller prints, too. Now I always weigh my business decisions against family time, which I'm really protective about—that's a good feeling.

LC & CK: Write everyone's schedule on one calendar. Use a different color marker for every category, such as family, work and social. One glance will tell you if your life is in balance.

3. SET BOUNDARIES.

DF: I decided to move from my home studio to a retail space. When I did, I started taking myself seriously as a businesswoman. I stopped bending over backward for

everyone and kept regular hours. My new studio is in my house again, but that experience enabled me to mentally separate my business from my family life. I try not to work at night. If you are a mom, you have to have down time; otherwise you'll lose patience and creativity. You have to cultivate both sides of yourself.

MM: I always had boundaries, so that's not a problem for me. I know the ancient law of a day of rest, and I carried it into my business. I work on so many Saturdays that I need a day to focus spiritually and serve others. Every Sunday should feel like a mini vacation.

4. OUTSOURCE TO EASE STRESS.

MM: After having my child, I outsourced my lab work and hired an office manager. I used to spend a good part of my day on e-mail

I gave up a studio space in midtown Manhattan and combined my studio with my home in Tribeca. It's pretty common for artists in downtown Manhattan to have live/work loft spaces. My staff works here, we do shoots here, and meet our clients here, but when my two boys come home from school, I'm here to see them, too. Of course, I'm fighting a continuous battle with errant Legos before client meetings, but it's a small price to pay.

Besides, I figure if brides invite me into their rooms while they dress on their wedding day, the least I can do is have them over to my home for a drink.

—Brian Dorsey • briandorseystudios.com

©Melanie Mauer



SMART OUTSOURCING

Good help isn't so hard to find | BY BETSY FINN, CPP

We spend our work hours capturing the relationships of others. Yet all too often, we find ourselves catching up at the studio after hours, slogging through post-capture tasks instead of being home with our own family. Maybe you'd like to hire a retouch artist, but can't spare the money. What if you could outsource some of your post-processing workflow to a qualified company that would respect your style and your vision?

Here are a few resources you may not have heard of:

ART BY CHERI. Cheri MacCallum, M.Artist.MEI.Cr., CPP, specializes in hand and digital painting and portrait enhancement, fine-art printing on canvas and art papers, and custom framing.
www.artbycheri.net

COLORATI. Raw processing, album design, and retouching. All tasks can be customized to your studio's stylistic preference.
www.colorati.com

EDITTEAM. Post-production solutions, including customized editing and retouching. Every client photographer is assisted by a specified liaison and a senior editor, who can analyze your needs and tailor every job to fulfill them.
www.editteam.com

DARLENE FOSTER IMAGE ENHANCEMENT. Provides a range of services, including retouching, restoration, collage and digital painting, her specialty.
www.darlenefoster.com

HAPPYFISH DESIGN. Personalized album design and editing services performed by husband and wife team, Chad and Karen Dahlquist—she does the

designing, he does the image editing. Raw processing, color correction, photoshop retouching, and custom graphic design services as well.
www.happyfish.com

DIGITAL EXPRESSIONS. Photoshop solutions by Jeffrey McIntyre, an experienced retouch artist. Other services include custom album design and layout, as well as making custom Photoshop actions and templates.
www.digital-expressions.net

RED BOOT DESIGN. Specializes in custom album design—any type—to the specifications of any album company you like. Layouts are individually designed in Photoshop to showcase your images. To simplify your workflow, Red Boot has partnered with AsukaBook and Silverback Imaging + Design.
www.redbootdesign.com

REVOLUTION IMAGING & DESIGN. Standard services include image processing, album design, action-based artistic edits, and full retouching. Through partnered services, Revolution offers slideshow development, online design presentation, printing and binding. Editors will work with you to develop a customized workflow and edit profile.
www.revolutionimagingdesign.com

SILVERBACK IMAGING + DESIGN. Replicate your studio's style or develop an all-new look. Services include post-production management, retouching and design. Its business partnerships include Kubota Image Tools, AsukaBook, Red Boot Design, Bay Photo Lab and Emotion Media.
www.silverbackimaging.com

correspondence with clients, and now the office manager does it. That's a huge boon to my family time. My husband is a great help—he does the laundry—and once a month I pay a neighborhood teen to help with the housework.
CK: I collaborate as much as I can. The only way to get on and off Nantucket is by plane or boat. I have a car parked at Hyannis Port, so I don't have to rent a car, which saves a lot of time. This year I teamed up with an aerial photographer with a plane of his own. I hire him to fly me to weddings all over New England, and to help with the shoots as well. Not relying on commercial flights means I don't have to spend a night away from my kids.

LC: Raise your prices to accommodate outsourcing. Work smarter rather than harder. To pay for outsourcing production, I raised my rates \$50. Ask yourself: What's worth more, working on the computer for another hour or spending the time with my family?

5. PUT YOURSELF ON THE CALENDAR.

CK: I take along my dog when I drive my kids to school, and we stop at the park on the way home to exercise together. I have an elliptical machine in my office. In season, I get a weekly massage, usually on Mondays. When I work more than eight hours at a weekend wedding, I take Monday off completely.

LC: If I hadn't exercised, I couldn't have gotten through the stress of last year. Why don't we prioritize exercise? Fitness has become a survival tactic for me. I'm as guilty as the next person about thinking I don't have enough time, but it's really important.

DF: I am a journaler. I really encourage other women to do it. We have the answers inside, and we need to take the time to tap into them. Every morning I read something inspiring, write and walk. If you want to feel

I have a routine. I wake up, then meditate or work out for an hour every day. Before I open up that e-mail box, I make time for me first. Mostly, I learned to be selfish. I learned to say no. I can't be everything to everyone, and only taking on what I can helps me be the best I can be. I know we're all brought up to give and help others, but there's a time and place for that. We spend our days and nights giving so much that we forget to have a life. Friends drift away, you become single, and you forget who you were before photography.

—Gene Higa • genehiga.com

more creative, make your business more personal and be inspired, write a journal. My best ideas come to me when I put pen to paper. Once I committed to journaling and exercising, things really changed for me.

6. REGULARLY ASSESS YOUR GOALS AND CHANGE YOUR BUSINESS IF NEED BE.

DF: Weddings are not conducive to family life because they take up weekends and the summer when your children are home. I switched my specialty to family lifestyle portraits and now do only a few weddings. To discourage weekend bookings, I raised my weekend rates. Some people pay the higher rate. The price is right, so that's ok.

7. PACE YOURSELF.

CK: Because my work is seasonal—New England's high wedding season is June through October—I schedule my business in seasons to balance my life. In winter I concentrate on my website, marketing, vendor relationships, albums, and family time. In spring I get my gear ready for shooting. In summer the emphasis shifts to shooting. My kids know I'm out of commission most weekends, but I try to take Sundays off. Weekdays, we spend time together in the mornings and evenings.

8. LIVE FEARLESSLY.

DF: Fear takes over without our realizing it. We're afraid of what others think, that we're not up to standards, and we fear being ourselves. It's liberating to let go of fear. It was liberating for me to take a year off, even as I was soaring to my peak. *I get to say how I live my life!* ■

See more at lauracphotography.com, davinafear.com, melaniemauer.com and claudiak.com.

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