

BODACIOUS

Juggling. Look in the dictionary and you'll see it means 'to throw and catch several objects continuously so that most are in the air all the time'. Every day vast numbers of us are pulling off balancing acts of extraordinary skill as we keep an increasing number of balls in the air. OK, we may not always get it right. A complete meltdown was narrowly avoided recently when I caught myself about to compile monthly figures on a tray of baking potatoes and cook my laptop for tea. Luckily the oven wasn't preheated. And if you've ever run out of the house on a dark morning to deliver a blisteringly good presentation to a client and done so wearing odd shoes, I empathise.

Time and motion: it's a great mantra. But whereas the surge of guilt at hissing sales figures into the Blackberry while waving at your darling in the nativity may be uncomfortable, an awful lot of us do actually thrive on a good old juggle. So for those who are devotees of the doctrine: 'If you want something done, ask a busy person', is there such a thing as a juggle too far? Or is the attempt at maximising every micro-second leaving us in a miasma of forgotten birthdays, over-burdened friends and an array of domestic catastrophes our grandmothers would faint at?

For those of you who have ever ended up giving Tesco flowers instead of the Space NK candle you meant to, these tips are for you:

1. It doesn't have to be perfect

Ask yourself 'so what?' and have the confidence to smile in the face of an imperfect world. Perfectionism is a pernicious saboteur that will wear you out or stop you from delivering. The woman who took nine months to produce a brochure because it had to be perfect comes to mind. The brochure was good. Her reputation of being able to deliver on time and budget was in tatters.

2. What can you ditch?

Make a list of everything you are juggling right now. Divide it into:

Must haves : Might lose : Can lose

Take a look at anything you do that isn't essential to your livelihood, happiness, wellbeing or peace of mind. One client stopped answering her phone to a colleague after work. Every night the colleague felt liberated after spending her 'dead' time in the car downloading about her day. Every night my client felt exhausted and resentful at repeatedly losing a whole hour of *her* day being supportive.

3. Tiny Specific Tasks

Take time each evening to prepare a cracking to do list for the next day. Make sure you break your list down into Tiny Specific Tasks and accept help. The down side of taking on the world is the feeling that we have to do it singlehandedly. We don't!