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## Editor's Notes: Leaving the House Behind

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# EDITOR'S NOTES

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## Leaving the House Behind

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Since hearing Dr. Barbara Machoff at JAM and reading her interview in the last issue of *The Woman CPA*, I've thought a lot about the stress of women professionals. Dr. Machoff gears her remarks toward the stress caused by taking the office home and the necessity of making the transition from work to home. But I'm not at all sure that the stress encountered by women because they can't leave the office behind is as great as the stress encountered because they can't leave the house behind. And so I want to add to Dr. Machoff's advice and say that what we need to do is to go through a transition *twice* each day — once in the morning when we leave the house behind and once in the evening when we leave the office behind.

For the work-to-home transition, special significance has been attached to changing from a suit into sweats. According to Dr. Machoff, it is a transformational act, a visual representation that says you are through with that part of the day and starting on a new part. Equally important is the hanging up of the robe each morning. This says, "I am through with this part of the day; I am transformed from a homemaker/mother to a professional person." The trick is for the transition to actually occur when you hang up the robe. There can be no transition unless you are truly through with that part of the day.

Dr. Machoff suggests it is important that you consciously perform some act that signifies the leaving of the office. But it is just as important to consciously perform some act that signifies the leaving of the house. It may be adjusting the thermostat, turning off the coffeemaker, putting out the cat, or locking the door. Whatever it is, you should view it as the action that says, "My thoughts about this house and my efforts in this house are concluded for now. Period."

What any professional is trying to accomplish is to be emotionally, mentally, and physically at the same place at any given time. We never have any trouble knowing we are physically at the office, but we let emotional things tug at us so that we find we are mentally at home.

If you find there is a great deal of stress over leaving the house behind, perhaps you need to consider the causes. Is the stress caused because there is just too much for you to do in the house or because you resent or loathe the jobs you have to do in the house? You can change that; there are several things that you can do.

First of all, you can hire household help. And don't think to yourself, "Household help is not available in my area." Household help is almost always available if you are willing to pay the price. Just don't be so greedy; don't try to keep all your money if parting with some of it for household help will relieve the stress.

Secondly, you can make family members realize that **everyone** who lives in the house is **responsible** for the house. How many times have you heard, "Just tell me what you want me to do and I will help you?" What this statement really says is, "You are the manager, you are responsible, and when things are not done, it's your fault because you didn't tell me what to do." Even though some of the tasks get done because family members "help you" do them, this offers only a temporary solution to the stress caused from leaving the house behind.

Rather than offers of help, what you want and need is shared responsibility. It isn't your responsibility alone to do the laundry, load and unload the dishwasher, run the vacuum, clean the refrigerator; it is the responsibility of everyone who lives in the house. And I'm not talking about assigning tasks to family members and then having to remind

them to perform and **then** having to check on their performance. Being responsible means that the members of the household do a task when they see it needs to be done.

Shared responsibility is an attitude. It's everyone in the house saying, "It's my responsibility to do the laundry, to run the vacuum, etc." And then it's everyone in the house doing the tasks because they need to be done rather than because of someone's direction or assignment. When there is shared responsibility, there should be no more questions such as, "Do we have any clean towels?" or "Do we have any milk?" In most cases, when these questions are asked, the person has already looked for the items and has already gotten the answer to the question. The question is being asked to register displeasure about your not having done a task. With shared responsibility, doing the tasks is no more your responsibility than that of someone else in the house. And when tasks are not done, it's not your fault any more than it is someone else's.

Perhaps "leaving the house behind" is stressful to you because you feel guilty about leaving. We've all been conditioned by the saying, "A woman's place is in the home." Don't permit your family to use your guilt feelings to cause stress over leaving the house behind. If family members are telephoning you all during the professional day, you must control this in much the same way that you control calls from the office at night or on weekends. This means that you screen the calls. At home, you use an answering machine; at work, you use your secretary. Ask your secretary to take a message and tell the family member you will return the call later. If it's an emergency, you can return the call immediately; if it's for anything else, you can telephone at your convenience. Once the family members learn that they will not get to talk to you any and every time they call, the number of calls will diminish and so will some of the stress.

Finally, is the stress caused because you have succumbed to the super woman theory? Remember, Superman is a character in a comic strip — and so is Superwoman. Dr.

(More on page 24)

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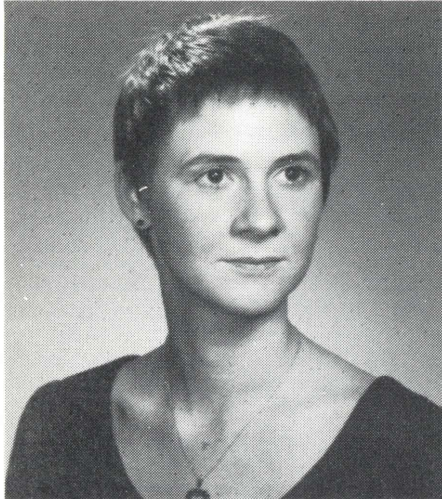
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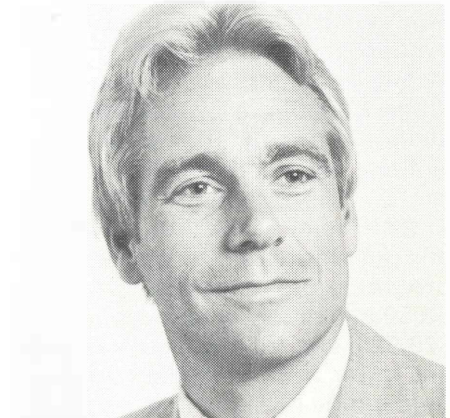
## Personnel Selection

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may result in noncompliance with SQCS 1 and possible litigation losses for failing to follow generally accepted auditing standards. Questions 13 and 14 relate to the effectiveness of the hiring process and the degree to which this effectiveness is monitored. Based on your responses, do your hiring policies need to be revised?  $\Omega$



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## Editor's Notes

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Machoff says being super people is nonsense and very stressful. Furthermore, she believes that "... what we really need to do is make smoother transitions between different parts of our life and that's about as good as it is going to get."

Thus, in the morning, there must be a transition from home to work with a conscious effort to leave the house behind. Conversely, in the

evening, there must be a transition from work to home with a conscious effort to leave the office behind. It's not being able to leave either one behind that creates stress.

*Lillian C. Parrish*