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The Secret All Successful Women Share

2 Join the discussion

Wednesday, October 9th, 2013 by Galit Breen from Mom, Myself, & I

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"Way to go, you!" he says, giving me a high five.

We pause there for a moment, as if stalling for a photo. In reality, we're still because it's quiet. Our three are asleep and this early morning time has become our own. We revel in it, even if it only lasts for a few moments.



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I note how our fingers fit in the way that only years spent together — holding hands in love and passing babies in exhaustion and back to threading because it feels so very right — can shed light on.

“Thanks,” I say back, shrugging, “I went really slow.”

I’m standing in my kitchen with my husband. The sun has just risen. My morning run is done at the same time it always is, but fall is officially here. Its tell-tale signs reveal this: the sunrise is later, the morning sky is elusive.

My fingers are wrapped around my water mug, elbows planted on the counter. Jason is sitting by my side trying to eat breakfast, get out the door for work, and maneuver around my words all at the same time.

This is difficult.

I’m paused by my words, and the problem within in them.

{ **MORE: Don't Let Best Be the Enemy of Good** }

Why was I so quick to deprecate, to put down his compliment at first blush, and, I guess, at second glance, to put down my self?

We women do this, don't we? We take compliments and volley them back — *it's nothing, it's old, it's just a coincidence*. And in this case: *Yes, I got out the door for a 5-mile run this morning, but I was slow.*

Let go, freely. Without perseverating or worrying or second-guessing. Perfection really and truly is a myth that we could all use to let go of.

Oh, this inability to say thank you — then stop talking. And this even stranger expectation of perfection.

Our millennium's Dear Abby, advice columnist [April Masini](#) says, “Perfectionism isn't a word you want to hear uttered. It's not an asset. It's a bar that can never be jumped.”

And I believe this.

How much of our day do we women spend beating ourselves up over jeans that don't fit quite right, forgotten permission slips, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for dinner — again — instead of celebrating what we did right with that curve, that slip, and even that sandwich?

April says too much. She explains, “The problem with perfectionism is the search for that perfect 10. Newsflash: A perfect 10 doesn't exist. 10 is a number — not a human being. A perfect specimen is a scientific term, not a humane one. Lose it. Accept flaws for what they are: Reality.”

{ **MORE: Confessions of a Not-So-Perfect Mom** }

The flip-side of this precarious coin is spending time expecting perfection of others. Our spouses, our children, our friends, the woman at the bus stop, or at the drive-thru.

When I read Emma Gray's article, [12 Things Successful Women Do Differently](#), coffee in hand, to-do list in sight, it felt familiar. Success comes from passion, belief, fearlessness. Yes, those I expected to see. But what I didn't expect — and perhaps loved most — was this.

Successful women don't expect perfection of themselves or of those around them.

Think about that for a moment.

What would it look — and feel like — to let these ridiculous (they are, right?) expectations go?



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- Yes, my child prefers Mom
- Yes, but the preference alternates between us
- Maybe in the past, but not anymore
- No

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Grey wrote, "Research has shown that wasting time and energy trying to be 'perfect' only leads to unhappiness." And quoting Barnard president Debora Spar in an op-ed for Glamour magazine added, "So don't emulate Wonder Woman; think about what's wonderful to you instead. Then boldly, audaciously, joyfully, leave the rest behind."

And that's the rub right there.

Let go, freely. Without perseverating or worrying or second-guessing. Perfection really and truly is a myth that we could all use to let go of.

What we could do is as as simple as this: After finishing morning runs and serving drive-thru dinners and slipping on new jeans, we can banish our negative thinking by giving ourselves credit for what we do well.

I'll start: I ran 5-miles this morning and it felt great. And that's all I have to say about that.

What do you think? The Secret All Successful Women Share

2 Join the discussion



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Galit Breen is a Minnesota writer. On any given day she can be found juggling three kids, one husband, one puggle, and her laptop. Galit writes women's fiction, is the series editor of Pens and Paint, an anthology of children's poetry and artwork, and is co-producing Listen to Your Mother Twin Cities 2013. Galit is a contributing writer for The Huffington Post blog, Soleil Moon Frye's Moonfrye and SheKnows's allParenting. Galit blogs at These Little Waves and may or may not work for dark cho ... [More](#)

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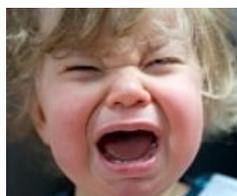
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