

# **"I'm Surviving (Happily) My Career in Science—You Can Too!"**

## **My 10 Commandments for Negotiating Work and Life**

Joanne Kamens, Ph.D.  
WEST Board of Directors  
HBA Mentoring Committee Chair

And now, my public service announcements....



# WEST

Women Entrepreneurs in  
Science & Technology

## [www.westorg.org](http://www.westorg.org)

- WEST is a nonprofit organization for women in science and technology who want to become innovative leaders and enhance their professional and personal development.
- Programming supports development of entrepreneurial thinking, risk taking and problem solving in compelling new ways, and lead others to success. Great scientific community to join.
  - Intrapreneurship—leading change from within
  - Leadership in Turbulent Times: CEO Panel
  - Alternative Careers for Scientists and Engineers
- Workshops (3 hour interactive programs)
  - Leadership: The Leap to Management
  - Presentation Skills for Scientists
  - Social Networking for Career Development
  - Corporate Savvy
  - Mentoring: How to Find and Be a Great Mentor



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# AWIS

ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

*Massachusetts*

**[www.mass-awis.org](http://www.mass-awis.org)**

- MASS-AWIS
- 200 members in academia and industry
- Monthly events, many opportunities to get more involved (the best way to really meet people)
- Innovative Mentoring Circle Program-Recruiting now
- AWIS is a national advocacy organization championing the interests of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) across all disciplines and employment sectors.

[www.awis.org](http://www.awis.org)

# More Opportunities for Career Development

- Harvard Biotech Club ([www.thebiotechclub.org](http://www.thebiotechclub.org))
- Biotech Tuesday
- Massachusetts Biotechnology Council: [www.massbio.org](http://www.massbio.org)
- Propel Careers website
- NPA—National Post-docs Association
- HBA—Healthcare Business Women's Association
  - For the industry inclined ([www.hbanet.net](http://www.hbanet.net))
- GWIS—Graduate Women in Science ([www.gwis.org](http://www.gwis.org))
- Professional organizations
  - AAAS, ACS, AAI, etc.
  - Often have student and post-doc volunteer/leadership opportunities

# Why Should I Get Involved?

- That is a whole other seminar
- You might get lucky and not need any connections or leadership skills...but why take chances?
- I am about to talk about work/life balance and you are probably thinking “I don’t have time to get involved in any organizations—is she crazy”....
- Different organizations can provide different opportunities
  - Shop around
  - Ask me
  - Pay it forward

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RXi Pharmaceuticals, Director of Research Collaborations

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# **Lest You Think Work/Family Life Issues Won't Be on Your Agenda...**

- Elder Care
- Unexpected illness (you or your partner)
- Train for a triathlon
- Buy a horse
- Kids
- ???

# Thou Shalt Not Bear the Burden Alone

- You, alone, are not solely responsible for care and attention to your home and family unless you live alone
  - If you try to do it all alone, it should be obvious that your career will suffer (more) and there is almost no way to keep working
  - Yes, your partner can take the kids to the doctor without your help!
- Your spouse or partner is equally responsible /capable (except, perhaps for actually carrying a baby in utero or breast feeding)
- Keeping this ALWAYS in mind will go a long way towards alleviating the guilt you should **not be having anyway** for enjoying your career and life as well as your family. If there is any guilt—you should be sharing it absolutely equally which means ½ of the guilt and you can handle that right?
- This is an important topic to discuss and agree on before you get enmeshed in a serious relationship--but few (especially women) consider their spouse's or partner's attitudes on this topic until it is too late



# Thou Shalt Find Enjoyment in Your Work

- If you are happy at work—you will find balance
  - If you are not happy—you probably need a new job
- If you are happy, your family will be happy
- If you enjoy working and come home happy in the evening—your kids will truly sense this
- If you are miserable at home or work—your kids will suffer in both the short run and the long run and so will work (nobody wins, least of all you)—make a change....

# Honor the Work Day and Keep it Holy

- Keep a regular schedule at work
- Work 8 - 5 or 7- 4 or maybe 7 - 6 whatever works for you, but most of the time go home at the same time whether you are done at work or not
- Be realistic about goals within these bounds
  - Your co-workers will learn to work with this
  - You can work later (that evening or in a few years) when life responsibilities are less
  - You can work at home sometimes, but carefully and with attention to those around you

# Thou Shalt Not Sweat the Small Stuff

- The house can be messy and things won't always get done, but you'll have time to read a story to your baby which is way more fun
- And when the kids get older, they can help too!
- No, the towel corners don't need to match up when you fold them
- I know, easier said than done, but if you try to resist the impulse to control...you'll make progress over time

# Thou Shalt Throw Money at the Problem if You Can

- Pay someone to:
  - Clean your house
  - Deliver your dry cleaning
  - Make your take-out dinner
  - Deliver your groceries
  - Anything to make your life easier and to have more time with your family or to relax
  - What do you pay for?

# Thou Shalt Create Community to Help

- Involve family. Create family.
- If you don't have local family to help...try to form a social circle of people in the same situation!
- Go to church, join a club, meet the neighbors...
- Create a network of support to help with elder care, carpooling, cooking on nights when you can't get home, babysitting and errands--if you give when you have time you can get help when you need it

# Thou Shalt Sometimes Put Work Ahead of Life

- Sometimes work comes first
- You want your family and friends to know you care, but that you have an important life too
- That means you (and/or your spouse) won't be at every school performance, field trip chaperoning, soccer game, or whatever.
  - Take turns going, that way you can have someone there clapping more often
  - They will respect you if you show respect for your own career and it will teach them to respect their own responsibilities

# Thou Shalt Enthusiastically Foster Your Children's Independence

- They will enjoy day care and school if you tell them they will enjoy it
  - If you cry and tell them they will miss you, of course they will—try really hard not to do this, really hard
  - For a family with working parent(s), the sooner your kids can make a decent meal, fold their laundry, take the T, remember their own school assignments..the better!
- A level of independence is better (in my opinion) for them anyway
  - You will worry less about how they will handle an emergency
  - This will make you much more confident about their safety when they leave home which happens very, very fast!

# Thou Shalt Make a To-Do List and a To-Don't List

- **Prioritize!**
- Some things can wait and some things can't
  - I kiss my kids good night every evening no matter how busy I am if I am home (believe it or not, with teenagers they can go to bed and you'll never know it), but the laundry or dishes can wait
- Keep a family calendar
  - So everyone can see when you will be out of town, at a late meeting, or when the kids have an unusual schedule at school (mock trial, swimming, driving lessons, flute, exercise, sleepover...aak)
- Be ready for anyone in the family to have to miss something
  - Say no to some of those birthday parties!
  - Tell your mom you can't make dinner this week
  - One swim lesson missed can mean a world of mental relaxation
  - I actually let my daughter skip school last month!
- PLAN time with your family, for yourself and for fun



# Thou Shalt Also Have Fun

- I'm REALLY busy, but I go to the gym almost every morning—of course, this is more than just fun—health needs to be a priority
- Pick an area to focus on with, for example, your "volunteer" and/or fun time
  - I have done volunteer work at our temple, my kids' school, at work, with AWIS, WEST, HBA.... I try to do a really good job in one area at a time and try to mostly say "no" to other activities.
  - Most people I know are aware of my volunteer roles, so when I say "I'd really like to help, but I am very busy with AWIS/WEST/HBA right now...maybe another time". they really get it and don't ask again until I volunteer my time
- Vacation alone with your spouse
- Get a massage—no guilt
- Go to a game with the guys—no kids