

SA, home to the seventh most stressed women in the world

 By [Eulalia Snyman](#)

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Now that we're in Women's Month, there's been a whole lot of talk about women, their issues, their successes, their challenges and whatnot. And of course, the auspicious occasion lends itself beautifully to dishing out advice lists. It is enough to scare me into the farthest hills...

Don't misunderstand me. I love lists and I love my job of passing on to readers all types of career news, tips and advice. It is just that on this Women's Day my mind keeps wandering back to some of the appalling things that have happened to local women lately.

The case of the 'Modimolle Monster' who tortured his ex-wife; the man, Paul Nothnagel who murdered his own daughters and left his wife behind to deal with the tragedy; and let's not forget the offensive comments by FHM journalists. We need to have a moment of silence here, even if on screen, shall we?

Moving on to the bright side - let's salute Malala Yousafzai, the girl from Pakistan who bravely put education for girls and women on the world agenda, and let's thank Angelina Jolie for forcing the debate on breast cancer up a notch.

And now, it is back to advice lists... Kim Meszaros, marketing executive at Kelly Group, is all too familiar with the pressures that go with balancing the responsibilities around family and work life. As a working woman and mom, she has the following tips for women in the workplace:

- **Rules** - make time to switch off your phone. Start off with just 15 minutes and work your way to achieving three hours. Every evening you should have three hours of uninterrupted 'me time' to read (something non-work related), have dinner with friends or family, go for a massage or watch some television.
- **Me-time calendar** - make a list of things you'd like to do (but never get the time) and set aside half a day every second weekend to do them. Examples include going for a hike, meeting an old friend for breakfast, getting your nails done, having a family picnic.
- **Support group** - surround yourself with people to support you and never be afraid to ask for support. Whether it's a team of potential babysitters, a friend to relax and laugh with, or mothers to lean on when motherhood stress needs a consoling ear.
- **Learn to say no** - not attending every social event, gym class or work drinks is ok. Finding a balance between attending one or two of each will keep you sane and give you more time to do what you really want to do.
- **Manage work expectations** - women are often fearful to push back, seeing any responsibilities outside of work as a weakness. By managing expectations, you will gain more respect from your colleagues and maintain a healthy family

relationship.

"With gender equality empowering the voyage of women up the corporate ladder, the modern woman is now faced with additional pressures in her work and personal life," says Meszaros. "Balancing out the other areas of her life becomes a rather stressful task."

In fact, a study shows that South Africa is home to the seventh most stressed women in the world (Nielsen, Women Of Tomorrow Study, 2011). Managing multiple roles was seen as a universal stressor for women, and, in emerging markets like South Africa, another contributing factor was that after paying for the basic essentials there was little spare cash remaining to spend on themselves or take vacations.

"Though technology has enabled people to work remotely, it has resulted in women continuing to work regardless of the occasion, company or time. This accessibility brings with it distraction from activities outside of work; with every beep or buzz from our mobile devices," continues Meszaros. "This Women's Day, let everyone start a new 'to do list', one which focuses on rewarding women for the incredible work that they do in every aspect of their busy lives."

This article was first appeared in The Star Workplace Report.

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