

Breakdown, Breakthrough: The Professional Woman's Guide to Claiming a Life of Passion, Power, and Purpose

Kathy Caprino

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A study conducted by the author in partnership with the Esteemed Woman Foundation uncovered an epidemic of women feeling deeply disempowered and dissatisfied with their professional lives. Yes, these women appear to have all the trappings of success—career, friends, family—but inside, they're falling apart. Kathy Caprino, formerly an executive high flyer, knows first-hand. Now a coach, career transition consultant, and speaker, she reports from the other side of breakdowns: "Many women today are reclaiming their lives and finding passion, power, and purpose in the process," she writes.

Drawing from the study's research, Caprino explores the dilemma of disempowerment for mid-life professional women, as the women themselves recount their crises. As an antidote to the loneliness, this compendium provides stories along with resources, exercises to heal, empowerment recaps, and acknowledgement of the real pain. Readers experience a powerful dose of possibilities, as well as recognition that the territory of breakdowns can lead to a fertile area for breakthroughs.

Laura's story in "Doing Work and Play You Love" examines the heartbreak that occurs when a woman doesn't follow her dream until other career paths become intolerable. Some stories begin with childhood abuse. Other crises erupt with the death of a mentor or collapse of a close relationship. Sharing stories relating to each of the twelve common breakdowns, the women's own words show readers the commonalities in experiences. Whether related to self (health, loss, self-love); others (speaking up, breaking cycles, shifting from competition); the world (finances, talents, helping); or the higher self (falling apart, balancing, loving work and life), these crises represent the spectrum of breakdowns that can yank women off the treadmills and wake them up.

While the examples may not perfectly mirror the specifics of any one woman's crisis, the variety of situations will likely resonate at some level for even moderately introspective working women. Some might quibble with the need to address professional women specifically since they have access to coaches, therapists, and support systems. Yet while each woman's empowerment is important, working women may be the vanguard. As the author concludes, "...we ensure that outdated cultural patterns and career models will be revised, making room for more expansive, inclusive experiences." Readers couldn't ask for more.

BOBBYE MIDDENDORF (December 15, 2008)

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