

# HAPPY WOMEN Live Better



by VALORIE BURTON

## Personalized Action Plans

based on your life stage

### Single without children (SWOCs)

- Don't idealize marriage.
- Make a list of ten good things about being single. It's your single girl gratitude list!
- Host a get-together. Invite friends you haven't seen in a while and people you'd like to get to know better.
- Take a trip. Where have you been thinking of going?
- Be intentional about being around people. Get a roommate if you don't like living alone. If you work alone from home, get out and have lunch go to professional association events, and find a way to serve.
- Don't wait for a knight in shining armor to save you financially.
- Buy your own home. It can be a great pre-marriage investment. Keep it after you get married – rent it out and pay it off.

### Single moms

- Live near family or close friends. Place a high value on your support system. This means think twice before moving somewhere you don't have a network

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- Accept and tell the truth to your children. Don't belittle your ex, but also don't make excuses for him if he is not involved. Speak the truth in love and support your children as they learn to handle the truth.
- Do you best, and accept that you can only be a mom, not mom and dad. Seek trusted male role models to provide a fatherly influence if the father is not involved.
- Take regular breaks. If you can afford a sitter, get one and give yourself a weekly rest. Or trade with another mom or family member.
- When others offer to help, accept their offer! And if they don't ask and you need help, *ask*.
- Have a "play date" with your kids once a week. Let them pick the activity. Lighten up, laugh and have a ball!
- When you tuck your children in to bed, start a gratitude conversation with them: What were the three best things about today?

### **Empty nesters**

- What have you been putting off? Do it! Make a plan. Set a timeline. Enjoy!
- Take up a new hobby.
- Engage your senses by learning something new. Take a class in Italian, learn to play the piano, or start painting and creative writing for the first time in your life.
- Take a family trip with your adult children.
- Take a girlfriends trip to a fun destination. Make it an annual adventure if you want, or join a travel club.
- If you are married, rekindle the romance with your spouse – take a second honeymoon to celebrate this new phase of life together.
- Ask yourself, "What am I looking forward to in the next 3/5/10 years?"

### **Married Working Moms**

- Make your marriage a priority. Sit down with your spouse to schedule time together daily (even if just 30 minutes) and weekly.
- Agree that if one of you is swamped at work, the other will pick up the slack at home. Discuss this now, rather than in the midst of a hectic week.
- Let the kids plan "play dates" for the whole family. Whether it's a night in with pizza and board games, flag football or a trip to the amusement park, make "play" a tradition in your entire family (mom and dad included!).
- Make love to your husband today – and forget about the dishes when you're at it! It's good for you, your marriage and keeps you connected. I know you're busy, but when the sex goes, the marriage follows.
- Take a break. Talk to your spouse about a break once a week – even if just for a couple of hours, for you to relax and breathe. When would be the best day of the week and time?
- When you tuck your children in to bed, start a gratitude conversation with them: What were the three best things about today?

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## Stay-at-Home Moms

- Write down your own personal definition of happiness. How do you define “having it all”?
- Connect with other women. Have other moms over while your kids play, plan a girls night out once a month, and call to check in friends and old colleagues. Don’t lose touch with the outside world!
- Savor your season with your children. Take pictures. Make scrapbooks together. Ten years from now, what do you most want to remember doing with your kids?
- Let go of perfection in pursuit of connection. The house doesn’t have to be perfect before you play with your kids. *Enjoy them.* This time is precious.
- When the kids are big enough, find a volunteer or service project to do together. Even let the kids choose a cause that is meaningful to them.
- When your kids come home from school, ask them, “What’s the best thing that happened at school today?”

## DINKS (Double-Income No Kids)

- Focus on building a strong relationship with your spouse. Don’t let work overwhelm your evenings and weekends. Make each other the priority when you’re at home.
- Work out together. What do you both like to do? It’s a great way to stay connected, release some endorphins and stay healthy.
- Pray together. Connecting spiritually leads to a deeper, more fulfilling marriage.
- Have a no-tech period in the evenings, even if just for a half hour. Put the phone away. The texts can wait. Catch up with each other. Look each other in the eye. Connect.
- Aim to live on just one income. Double income has become a necessity in too many households, often because couples pursue a lifestyle that *requires* two incomes. But if you want a fast-track to building a nest egg, living below your means and being able to bless others, aim to live on one of your incomes and use the second income for savings and special treats such as vacation.
- Make a list of things you want to experience before you have kids (if you are planning to have them). Savor this season of your marriage. Do the things you won’t be able to do during your children’s early years. Enjoy!

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