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MOTHERS ON THE FAST TRACK

How a New Generation Can Balance Family and Careers

Mary Ann Mason and Eve Mason Ekman

“*Mothers on the Fast Track* is must reading for professional women starting families, second chapters or simply trying to break through to the next level. As the demands of parenting and the workplace have intensified, we’re searching more than ever for the right work-family balance. Now Mary Ann Mason and her daughter Eve have produced **an indispensable guide and realistic cost-benefit analysis of motherhood and women’s careers.**”

—Lynn Povich, Former Editor-in-Chief of *Working Woman* magazine.

“**What an excellent book!** What makes the book so powerful is the personal stories, gleaned from what must have been hundreds of interviews with women in American society. *Mothers on the Fast Track* made me think; and, most often, find validation of what I have seen in the lives of my wife, five sisters, and ten nieces.”

—Tom Campbell, Dean, Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley.

“Compared to her sisters of the 1960s, the fast track mom of today has it made — the new man at home, big opportunities at work, wider supports in place. True? Or, as Mason and Ekman warn us, false. Standards of motherhood have risen, they point out, and moral support declined. But, we can beat —and improve —the new odds, and this useful, **timely and wonderfully warm book** shows how.”

—Arlie Hochschild, author of *The Second Shift* and *The Time Bind*.

“Why can’t privileged women on the fast track crack the glass ceiling? This mother-daughter team offers **a compelling and provocative explanation**, helping us understand why all women face gender inequality once they enter the labor force, and even more - what we can do about it.”

—Ruth Rosen, author of *The World Split Open*.

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How a New Generation
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MARY ANN MASON and EVE MASON EKMAN

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A revealing look at why working mothers aren't at the top — and how they can get there

In the past few decades the number of women entering graduate schools and professional schools has been skyrocketing, while the number of women reaching the top rung of the corporate, legal, medical and academic worlds has remained relatively stagnant. Why are so many women falling off the fast track?

In this timely book, Mary Ann Mason traces the career paths of ambitious women who started careers in science, academia, law, medicine, business, sciences and the media in large numbers since the doors opened in the 1970's. What she found was that many women who began on an equal footing with men swerved off the fast track during what she calls the "make or break years," the decade between ages 30 and 40 when both men and women must make their mark in their chosen career, and, for women the stakes include "make or break" motherhood as well. Women who start a family are likely to veer away from their career goals, to slide into a second tier in their profession that offers fewer hours, less pay, lower prestige, and limited upward mobility. Men who did likewise — entered the career world with high aspirations and then started families while working — not only did not show the same trend, they reached even higher levels of professional success than men who had no families at all.

Along with her daughter, an aspiring journalist, Mason has written a guide for young women who are facing the tough decision of when — and if — to start a family and how to stay in the game. It is also a guide for older women seeking a second chance to break through to the next level, beyond the "second glass ceiling" as Mason herself did in academia. The book features not only a wealth of telling statistical data based on Mason's research, but also anecdotes and strategies from dozens of the women they interviewed. Advice ranges from the personal (know when to say "no," how to re-enter the fast track after a baby-break) to the institutional with suggestions for how the workplace itself can be changed to make it easier for ambitious working mothers to reach the top levels and why this makes competitive sense. The result is a roadmap of new choices for women facing the sobering question of how to balance a successful career with family.

Mary Ann Mason is the first woman to be appointed Graduate Dean at University of California, Berkeley. A former lawyer and current academic, she can speak from personal experience of struggling to balance family responsibilities and a fast-track career. A national expert on child custody issues, Mason is author of *From Father's Property to Children's Rights*, *The Custody Wars*, and *The Equality Trap*, which was praised as "the best book ever written on American working mothers" (Caitlin Flanagan, *The Atlantic*, 2004).

Eve Mason Ekman, a journalist, social worker, and member of the new generation, offers the perspective of her age group and captures the voices of women of three generations who have faced the career and family dilemma.

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