

super dilemma

Juggling a career and family has always been difficult but now more than ever it seems there's mounting pressure for women to become comic book superheroes. **Kylie Knight** spoke to lifestyle manager **Adele Blair** about 'Superwoman Syndrome' and how women can achieve a balance.

AS ANY working mother will tell you, balancing both roles is mentally and physically exhausting and the pressure to perform them perfectly and keep an immaculate house is immense.

Such pressure is unrealistic and unhealthy says lifestyle consultant and saviour Adele Blair who says it has created 'Superwoman Syndrome' mostly among Generation Xers and baby boomers.

"Most Australian women, whether they have kids or not, are trying to do everything and be everything," Adele says.

The big mistake they're making is trying to do it all at the same time.

"They need to be realistic about what they can achieve and not beat themselves up about it," she says.

Adele says reality television with beauty, home and garden makeovers, and featuring women with high-powered careers doesn't give women a realistic view of what's achievable.

You can't makeover your back yard in a weekend without doing preparation first. She says making the perfect cake or meal for your family doesn't just happen – someone has to go to the supermarket, buy the ingredients and clean up afterwards.

She says people are used to having immediate results and not waiting.

"People have an expectation that things should happen at the speed of light," she says. "That's just not realistic."

She says a precedent has been set in our psyche and there are also internal and external pressures.

Adele says women need to take into account what their mothers and grandmothers did before expecting too much of themselves. They didn't have the same pressure to have a successful career and family.

There's also external peer pressure – coming from those friends whose houses always seem to be immaculate.

"What you don't know is that they might have



SOUND ADVICE Adele Blair

some help," she says.

Adele has some clients who don't even tell their husbands that someone has been in to clean or organise their house.

"If you've got the resources and time, and financial resources there's no reason why you can't do it, but you don't have to do it all (yourself)," she says.

Getting some help seems to be the key to juggling all the balls and staying sane.

Adele says big business has been "outsourcing" for 10 years and it's finally happening on a domestic level as well.

She says it frees up your time so you can focus more on your career and family – let's face it there's more to life than washing and ironing.

"Try not to be superwoman and be kind to yourself. Nobody's really watching," she says. "If you do have resources, get help."

Adele says while men are "supremely better" at sharing the domestic load than they were in days gone by, unfortunately most tasks still fall to the woman of the house.

"The income has evened out but other things like parenting and household things may not have taken on the same balance," she says.

She says roles have changed, but this hasn't in many cases. While Adele doesn't have children, she does have a "contract" with her husband when it comes to cleaning the house.

"We were going to have to pay someone to clean the house so he may as well pay me," she laughs.

While she concedes she is in effect paying herself, she says the arrangement does take the angst out of doing the tasks and she spends the money on herself.

In her day job, running Blair Lifestyle Management, she helps other people organise their lives and lighten the load.

She offers home, office and lifestyle management and says her customers are mostly looking for domestic/lifestyle help.

De-cluttering houses and doing the "jobs" people have on their to-do lists but never get around to are the most sought-after services.

This could be relocating, gardening, getting prints framed, arranging plumbers, car tinting and servicing, or even finding dressmakers and dog washers. She even organises dinner parties.

Clients include small business owners, CEOs, lawyers, corporate wives, retirees and everyday mums.

"They're the ones that are smart enough to say 'how can I manage this better?'," she says.

