



The Third Shift

Managing
Hard Choices
in Our Careers,
Homes, and Lives
as Women

Michele Kremen Bolton

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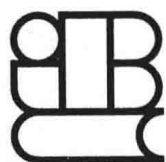
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The Third Shift

It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve—
a story which shows, among other things,
that if you make a woman out of a man,
you are bound to get into trouble.

Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*

Acknowledgments

This book is about women, but I cannot even think about acknowledging the many people who believed in me and made this book possible without first thanking and acknowledging my family members, male and female. My thanks go first to my husband, Roy, who appears to suffer from no third shift whatsoever. Without appearing arrogant or being a know-it-all, he is blessedly free of the doubts, reservations, and uncertainties that plague so many women. His confidence helped me overcome my doubts. His strong sense of himself has always allowed me to take all of the space that I need.

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Los Gatos, California
April 2000

MICHELE KREMEN BOLTON

About the Author

Michele Kremen Bolton, Ph.D., is a founding partner of ExecutivEdge of Silicon Valley, an executive development and management consulting firm located in Los Gatos, California. She is a “recovering academic” and former professor of management, having recently retired from nearly twenty years on the faculty of the College of Business at San Jose State University. She taught M.B.A. courses in visionary leadership, strategic management, entrepreneurship, and team building. While at the university, she received several awards for outstanding teaching and leadership, including a Presidential Special Recognition Award. She is the author of numerous articles in such journals as *Organizational Science*, *Organizational Dynamics*, the *Journal of Management Education*, *California Management Review*, and the *Journal of Management Studies*. She is active in a number of scholarly and professional associations and has reviewed for the IEEE, the National Science Foundation, and several other journals.

She has served as an advisory board member on a venture capital firm, a business incubator, and a range of nonprofit organizations, from Big Brother/Big Sisters to Hope Rehabilitation. In 1993, she cofounded a community mentoring organization to guide women entrepreneurs, the Center to Develop Women Entrepreneurs, at San Jose State University, which won the Community Organization of the Year Award from the Silicon Valley chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners. As its first executive director, she led the organization in helping more than twelve hundred women entrepreneurs find the courage and direction to move toward their dreams.

Bolton has been an executive development consultant for fifteen years. She works both with individual clients as an executive coach and with larger teams. She conducts seminars and training

and gives keynote presentations. She has appeared in *Business Week* and *Inc.* and on National Public Radio. Her clients include start-ups and Fortune 500 companies as well as educational, government, and community organizations. She has consulted to individuals at all levels, including CEOs and their executive staffs, boards of directors, senior managers, and technical or scientific employees in nonsupervisory positions. She specializes in executive development in strategic leadership, leadership style, and gender issues. Her recent clients include Apple Computer, Applied Materials, Cadence Design Systems, the California State University, Compaq/Tandem, The Gap, Genelabs, Hewlett-Packard, Intuit, Microsoft, National Semiconductor, Nike, Silicon Graphics, Sun Microsystems, and the University of California.

She lives in the Santa Cruz Mountains with her husband, two children, and three dogs.

The Third Shift

In memory of Evelyn Berman Kremen

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INTRODUCTION

Managing the Third Shift

Choices and Challenges for Women

*Oh dear, how hard it does seem to take up
our packs and go on.*

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT, *Little Women*

The idea for *The Third Shift* began the night our six-year-old daughter, Clare, was to spend her first overnight with her best friend, Yael. She was extremely excited and feeling *so* grown up. My husband of twenty-three years was also thrilled, especially after we arranged a last-minute overnight for Clare's nine-year-old brother, Evan; it looked like we'd have the house to ourselves for a cozy evening.

The bubble burst at ten o'clock that night when the phone rang. Yael's harried father was calling to explain that Clare had been sobbing for an hour and wanted to come home. She wanted to sleep in her own bed. *And she wanted her Daddy.*

I was devastated.

With that single, innocuous phone call, I was reminded that as a woman a continuous inner dialogue second-guesses whatever decisions and acts fill my days. A first shift at work and a "second shift"¹ at home can be physically tiring, but the third shift is psychologically relentless; it ranges over professional anxiety about workplace assignments and self-perceived derelictions on the home front. In essence, every day is lived at least twice, like a videotaped instant replay that won't shut off.

Some women are far more vulnerable than others to this self-destructive and exhausting ritual. But most suffer at least a mild case of third-shift angst because it stems from the universal difficulty of choosing wisely and remaining satisfied with our personal life choices as contemporary women. A few women apparently live the third shift throughout the day, whenever they face hard decisions and trade-offs. For them, the third shift may feel more like an *endless* shift! But most of the women I interviewed for this book seemed to use their private, quiet time—in the car, in the shower, before falling asleep at night—as a psychological third shift after finishing the actual first and second shifts that made their days too busy to fully think through their actions and choices.

Adapting the particulars to your own situation, have you ever spent unpaid time toiling over questions such as these in the privacy of your own third shift?

- *Am I doing it “right”?*
- *Am I sacrificing time with friends and family for the false gods of ambition and material success?*
- *Is the high of luring a new client as lasting as the joy of watching my son smash a double way into the outfield?*
- *Am I turning my back on career success by settling for the “mommy track”?*
- *Am I a “good person” if I prefer to spend my precious allocation of personal free time with my nose in a book rather than selling scrip for our kids’ school, like the other moms?*
- *Am I lacking commitment as a businesswoman because I want to spend more time expressing myself outside of work?*
- *If I quit my job to stay home with my family, will I feel bored and restless? Or guilty?*
- *Can I really be a good mother even though I have no idea what my kids most like to find in their school lunchbags?*
- *Am I spending enough time with my aging parents when they visit, or do they feel bad because I don’t take more time off from work when they come?*

Despite the uncertainties revealed by these questions, our inner third-shift dialogue can help us find our most profound and enduring strength as women. This is because our third shifts are