

Not Just Moms Internet Radio Show

Interview Questions for Darlene Hull

Interview Day and Time: Tuesday, March 14th, 2006 at 8:15pm EST

1. Please provide us with a short bio as an introduction.

I am a classic “Frazzle”.

I’m a professional, Left-brained ADD musician who is presently an almost stay-at-home, homeschooling entrepreneurial mom with a strong international flair!

I’m Canadian, I’ve been married for 14 years to Tom – who’s from Belfast Northern Ireland, and the kids - Simon who’s 12 and wants to be a film producer/director, and Christina who’s 11 and wants to spend her life doing anything artistic - were born in the French Alps. It makes for an interesting mix!

2. Tell us a little bit about your site <http://www.mom-defrazzler.com>?

The Mom-Defrazzler is intended to be a site for real moms. It’s not about being perfect or having everything together. It’s about helping moms de-stress, find shortcuts for the every-day challenges of motherhood, and enjoy their mothering role without losing the essence of who they are.

3. How can moms start to move from burnout to bliss in their lives?

The top ten stresses in the workplace are the things that mothers live with every day of their lives and there’s no HR department working hard in the background to remove these things. Therefore, it’s critical that we learn how to take care of ourselves realistically. We need to find those critical needs in our lives that make or break our ability to cope.

For example, I need sleep. If I don’t get enough sleep I’m useless, so I have to make sure that I’m in bed by about 9:00pm as often as possible. I also need to take time to read something every day, and go for a walk.

Another friend of mine said that everyday she did whatever it took to get three square meals and a shower. All moms need to find out what those “critical things” are and make time for it.

We have to live more consciously, aware of what our bodies are telling us, and make sure we are meeting our most important needs. We also have to make sure we retain the essence of who we are and enable ourselves to grow and move forward.

4. What time saving tips can you offer busy moms who complain of not having enough time to relax?

Well, the the most important starting place is with the realization that we don't have to do everything. In fact, it's impossible. However there are some things we can do to make life a little easier:

Reduce your kids activities. Homework is crazy right now – kids are spending as much as 8-10 hours a day on school work, both in the classroom and at home – that's a lot of a child's day. Other activities should be reduced so the kids have time to actually play and connect with their inner selves. That's much more important than piano lessons or hockey teams.

Lower your standards on the non-essentials – we don't have to have a house that looks like Martha Stewart's or spotless laundry, or phenomenal gardens. If that's an area of passion, fine. If not, let it go.

Combine tasks:

- Prepare dinner and lunch right before you clean up after breakfast. Put supper in the crockpot or in a timed oven and do one major meal clean-up instead of 3
- Plan your menus ahead so you're not panicking at 4:30 wondering what to cook
- Pair socks as you fold the laundry instead of waiting until it's all done
- Watch your favourite movie while folding or ironing clothes
- exercise during commercial breaks.

5. On your site, you have written an article *The Graceful Art of Defrizzling*, can you give us some more information on this topic?

That article is all about living in moments and seasons.

I think as a mom we often feel stressed about all the stuff we're missing. Perhaps we have childless friends or friends whose kids are at a different stage who travel a lot, eat in fancy

restaurants, wear nice clothes, or have exciting adventurous lives, when ours feels like there's nothing but the dirty laundry or the sleepless nights.

It's important to realize that we are always living different seasons, and each season has its joys and its challenges.

For example, having small babies is a magical time as you come to terms with this new life discovering itself and the world around it – but you have severe sleep deprivation and a lot more laundry.

Kids get to school age and you suddenly have all this freedom during the day, but then the mornings are stressful as you get everyone out the door on time, and evenings are stressful as you try and help your kids through homework you don't understand. You might also begin fighting against values that they're picking up at school that you don't want at home, and so on, until kids are grown.

It's important to understand what stage or season you're in, and to get all you can out of the benefits of that season, while working hard to minimize the challenges.

You also need to live in moments. Sometimes the laundry is beckoning, but your new baby is sleeping peacefully in your arms. It's ok to cherish that moment and let the laundry wait just a little longer.

Or you have five minutes with nothing to do in a busy day – you can use that time to do a quick relaxation exercise or read a chapter in a new book or some other small thing for yourself to power yourself up for the rest of the day.

Sometimes that moment is a child asking a question while you're busily fixing dinner – you can turn off the stove for 5 minutes and just listen. You have to grab special moments whenever they arrive.

Sometimes it needs to go the other way, too. You are working on a project that is special to you, and your family wants your attention for something that is perhaps not so important. You need to have the ability to take the time you need to finish your project. It's not always easy to keep the balance there, but as long as you keep yourself aware of both sides of the equation – your needs and the needs of your family – you should be ok.

6. What are some balancing strategies you can offer busy moms?

Let me give you a two part answer here:

First of all, the key is not balance, but priorities. Moms often don't have enough control to maintain a balance, so don't even go there. There may be a time when everything seems to go well, but if you're like most moms, your "wheel of life" always has a flat somewhere. For me, the key is to make sure that the "flat" doesn't stay in any one place too long. Keep rotating it!

For example, once I started working both homeschool and housework took a nose dive. I've been working on getting both of those up and running to full capacity again, but I'm really struggling. My choice then, has been to leave the job – even though I love it. It's just the wrong season for me. School especially, is too important an area for me to have a flat for too long.

Part 2, However, is that I do have three key areas where I always try and focus:

My most important balancing strategy would be to have a living faith – not just a series of routines and traditions, but one that's based on a personal relationship with God. This keeps me balanced, focused, and in check.

Another key area for me is to keep a certain amount of discipline – not rigid perfectionism – but a good system or routine that I can stick to so that things get done regularly and properly. I personally have to work from a list. Daily!

The other important thing is to make time in that schedule for my marriage. Research indicates that a strong relationship between you and your spouse is more important to your child's self-esteem and eventual success in life than any other thing. There are lots of simple ways to keep the romance alive even for busy couples. I have a whole month's worth of ideas on my blog, if you want to check out the February posts.

However, even in those areas I wobble regularly, and so I just keep focusing on "moving the flat"!

7. Can you give us more information about your Defrazzle your Weight Loss Challenge, featured on your blog?

Well, I'll be honest here. I started that topic because I need the self discipline! I've done lots of research on weight loss, and I've had moderate success with a number of programs, but not lasting. So when I put this blog together, I wanted it to be more than just starving ourselves to lose 10 pounds. I wanted it to be about creating habits that last a lifetime, and fit into any mother's schedule. Each week we focus on one specific habit, and I try and gather as much support material as I can to make it possible for any mom to succeed. There's also a prize for moms who post to get conversation happening.

8. What inspired you to put together the Mom-Defrazzler program for moms?

To be honest, I began this journey when I was trying to get an MLM business off the ground. I came across this program that you could use to create a tool that a person could download onto their computer, and it would pop up with any message you liked once a week. You had to write all the messages ahead of time and load them into the program before it was downloaded.

As I tried to make this work for my MLM business, I got more and more frustrated because I couldn't figure out what kind of message I wanted to share that would also promote my business. I finally stopped and asked myself what kind of information I just really wanted to share, and with whom. I looked back on my own life and experience and realized I wanted to help moms. I'd been a desperate "abandoned" sort of mom, living in a foreign country with no family and few friends and my youngest cried for what seemed like 5 ½ months straight. I learned some key coping skills through that, and also just some great tips and tricks along the way that I thought were absolutely life-saving for me as a mom. I wanted to share those. So, I dropped my business, and designed the mom-defrazzler to be a tool that would simply help moms go step-by-step from chaos to calm in 52 weeks. I launched that on Mother's Day last year, and it's kind of grown on its own since then.

9. On your site you speak about reducing stress, can you offer us some tips for moms to reduce stress in their lives?

There are a number of stress-busters that I use regularly:

Breathe deeply, often. I find in my stressful moments that I'm often holding my breath, and so I make a point of breathing deeply and slowly for a while before I continue with my schedule.

Walk outside for 20 minutes every day, preferably on your own. You get exercise, sunshine (great for controlling mood swings), deep breathing of fresh air, and a chance to just think a whole thought without interruption.

Be prepared for moments – keep a book or a magazine handy in case you end up in a traffic jam or waiting at a doctor’s office. Get some ideas from my “Delightful Defrazzlers” article and create little “defrazzling” kits that are ready to use at a moment’s notice.

A key one for me is to get up early to pray, meditate, think through my day, and get myself organized before the family gets up and needs my attention

Trade off with friends – take their kids one afternoon a week so they have time to themselves, and then switch. Do this with housework, too. I just found someone who likes to wash floors – bless them – but hates ironing. I love to iron and seriously despise washing floors, so we’ve switched jobs.

Most importantly, have a quitting time. My kids have always been told that I’m a mom from 7am to 7pm. Outside that time I’m no longer a mom unless someone’s bleeding. They’ve been great about respecting that, and that gives me a huge amount of release.

10.What is the most common issue that most moms face today?

Ridiculous expectations from “them” whoever “they” are. We are who we are, and have been given these particular kids because we need each other. We are individual and unique. No two families are alike. You need to find what works for your family, and not worry about what everyone else says is “necessary” in order for your kids to be fulfilled, your husband to be happy, and your best self to develop. It’s ok to be different.

People look at my life and they see a home schooling mom, who runs her own business, has a happy marriage and works part time outside the home and they ask me, How do you do it all. My answer, invariably, is “I don’t”. There’s always at least one wobbly side to my wheel of life. I will screw my kids up just like the rest of the moms out there. My goal is to simply screw them up as little as possible. I am not even trying to do it all, but with such an exciting world out there, I do want to be able to do many different things, and fully live life’s adventure, love my family, grow and develop as much as I can as a person and as a woman, and let the rest of it fall where it may.