

Section 5: “Finding Balance: work and love”  
From *communion* by bell hooks

Our sustained longing for love has not been fully addressed, for fear that to name it would somehow undermine an image of powerful, self-actualized feminist womanhood. Without a sustained, inspired vision of mutual love, our culture revises again and again old stories. Denial is never the setting for lasting empowerment. Tragically, our silence about love strengthens the backlash.

By the beginning of the nineties, the mantra “What’s love got to do with it?” had become the accepted theme. A passion for love had to be kept secret—unstated. To speak one’s longing was to risk shame. Those who knew love enjoyed its delights in private, and those who did not know love suffered in silence.

No feminist woman ever proclaimed loudly that she was looking for love. There was no space for women to speak our disappointment. We could not say that work was failing to provide us a space of fulfillment or that we were unfulfilled in our private, intimate lives. We were afraid to talk about the absence of love. Publicly, most women acted as though power was more important than love. This untruth had to be unmasked for us to place love on the agenda again—and insist that there has to be a balance between work and love.