

Work-Life Myths Debunked!

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When I embarked on my career, I was ready to conquer the world, make a difference, and leave my mark. Work was an all-consuming preoccupation that continued even after marriage to a husband just as prone to workaholicism as I was.

Then baby came. And I was forced to relook and relearn everything I thought I knew about work-life balance.

MYTH #1: WORK NOW, GET A LIFE LATER

We tend to set up a false dichotomy between work and life. Whether it's work, family, play or personal pursuits, all of it makes up what we call "life".

Life doesn't wait for you to finish a season. Life is now. What you are doing now is how you are spending your life. The danger, though, is that it can happen without you being aware that it is happening. Whether you're a 20-something, hardworking single; a 30-something dad with little kids; or a 40-, 50- or 60-something empty nester, you are having your life right now.

Here's the clincher: We have no guarantees about tomorrow. Now, it is my sincere hope that we all live long, healthy lives, but none of us have that assurance. Sometimes it's a good practice to pull back for a minute and ask ourselves, "Is this the life I want to live? Is this the legacy I want to leave?"

TIP #1

There's nothing wrong with working long hours. But in Focus on the Family's "The Heart of Success" work-life programme, we caution against becoming money-rich but time-poor. If several people have expressed concern about your work schedule, maybe they see something that you can't see. Sit down with a mentor who can honestly tell you if your priorities are out of whack and hold you accountable. The ones that

live with you and see you operate would be the ones most likely to help you stay on track.

MYTH #2: WORK FOR PAY OR PASSION, NOT BOTH

We all know that our job takes up a large portion of our lives, yet work-life surveys indicate that less than 40% of us actually enjoy our work. Work is often perceived as draining, particularly if we are in a job more for the lifestyle it affords rather than out of interest. Typically what then happens is that we strive to buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we may not necessarily like in the first place! This also prevents us from fully enjoying our work and puts stress on our families.

In the charity sector, the opposite is expected – passion is pursued at the expense of pay, which can never match corporate salaries. In my 15 years of non-profit work, there were times I wondered if I was missing out in terms of what my peers were getting and where they were heading. Ironically, friends have marvelled at the fulfilment I have in my job. And while I may not have all 5 C's (cash, credit card, car, condo, club membership), I have sufficient to afford the occasional family getaway or self-indulgences.

TIP #2

Work-life balance is about finding your stability between passion (that keeps you going on the job) and finances (that sustains that passion). You can start by examining your life through these 3 laws from "The Heart of Success" programme:

- **Believe that the Job You Do Makes a Difference** – find someone who can tell you the value of your contribution to the organization and/or society at large.
- **Play to Your Strengths** – find a job that capitalizes on what you're good at.
- **Believe in the Power of Dreams** – allow possibility thinking as dreams keep us alive and give us perspective.

MYTH #3: WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS FOR THE SELECT FEW

Can a person really "have it all" – well-paying job, meaningful career, vibrant social life, intact relationships, happy family, time for self...? Perhaps that is for the lucky few who have been endowed with a strong support network and/or inherent wealth. Or is work-life balance relevant only to the family types who are juggling a household of kids, care for the elderly and a demanding and ceaseless job but not for the single?

Rob Parsons, a successful lawyer who gave up his law practice to found UK Charity, Care for the Family, remarked, "I meet successful men and women everyday who have often achieved beyond their wildest dreams. These are men and women whom others would love to emulate and yet they would give all they possess if only they could change the past. Their great regret is almost always in the area of relationships."

TIP #3

Some careers keep us on the run, travelling all over. If we're not careful, all of that running around can serve to unplug us from the relationships that matter. In striving for "success", those who matter most to us are often the first to be squeezed out as there is little or no time for them. Unwittingly, we end up missing our kids growing up, having no friends to speak of, and nursing a body that is wrecked from overwork.

And if you are single but want to have a family (which social research indicates most do), you simply can't afford to put it off until after you've achieved all your career goals. Your body won't let you. A professor at a top-10 U.S university tells all her women students, "Don't be afraid of letting go of a half-built career. Career opportunities can be recaptured. Don't live to regret not having had a child."

In a nutshell, work-life balance is the complementary pursuit of work and personal

goals, so that we can be and do our best, both at work and at home. Address the toll your busyness may be taking on your relationships.

As the saying goes, "Busyness begets barrenness". Finally, keep the big things the big things, and prioritize what really matters in life – NOW!



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SMS & WIN!

After reading this article, how do you think we should live our lives?

- A) Focus on our work and enjoy life later when we retire. After all, money can buy everything.
- B) We only live once. We should be clear what we want at different stages of our lives, and focus on what really matters e.g. family, friends, personal growth – not just our careers.

Please SMS your answer (either A or B), in the following format to 79777:
FED<SPACE>SUT<SPACE>NAME<SPACE>IC
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