

Chapter 1 Exercises

1. Articulating Priorities

First, place a number between 1 and 10 to indicate the degree to which work and family are central to your identity. Then, rate the time and energy you put into work and family on the same 10 point scale.

| Work Priorities | Work Actions | Family Priorities | Family Actions |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
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Looking at your results should lead to the following questions;

- Where are your actions consistent with your priorities?
- Where are you not aligned?
- How can you get back to the balance you want?

Further, this is a good opportunity to reassess priorities. Take some time to think about your over-arching priorities for work and family, and how these priorities inform the choices you can make in your life. After some reflection, here are mine:

- Being a present husband and father is my first priority. As long as we can still afford the basics, family time comes first
- Amy's career is as important as mine
- I want a career in which I can pursue a variety of interests, have control over my schedule, and feel like I'm having an impact. I'll make a financial trade-off to do so

- Provide for my family to the level to which we are secure and comfortable, but I do not need to be rich, and am not prepared to make the sacrifices need to do so

Now, please take some time on your own to consider these issues. When you are ready, write them down here. Please remember to look at this list a few times a year, to see if anything needs to be reassessed and as a reminder to make choices that are aligned with your priorities.

| Priorities: |
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2. Detailed Work and Family Analysis

Relatedly, we should take time to identify what helps bring us closer to the work-family balance we want, what gets in the way of achieving that balance, and what can be reasonably changed to help make the situation better.

By reasonable, I mean what things could realistically change. So, please no wish-casting. Yes, winning a big lottery would solve a lot of problems, but how realistic is that? Similarly, your wife agreeing to quit work and staying home with the kids may help you feel less conflicted about your frequent business travel. However, if her career is important to her and it is unlikely she would ever agree to do quit, don't list it.

On the other hand, if we think flexibly, I bet we could come up with a lot of realistic changes we can make, even in the short term, that would help get us closer to a workable balance. For example, maybe negotiating for a one-day-per-week work-from-home arrangement would really help. Maybe throwing money at the problem and hiring a two-times-a-month lawn service or house cleaning service would free up time for family while helping you and your wife avoid tasks you dislike (and fight about).

Finally, under each category is space for a long-term fix that would make life easier, but would require significant forethought and planning, and may even prove disruptive in the short-to-medium term. Things to include in this category are changing employers or career paths, moving to an area closer to extended family who could help you out with childcare, or significant financial simplification. For example:

I had what most people would call a great job- I made a great living and got to work and interesting, cutting-edge projects. But, the hours were just killer, and even after 5 years, I finally had it, as I knew I wasn't spending enough time with my girls or living the life I wanted.

So, my wife and I sat down and we came up with a two-year plan to manage our finances and build up our rolodexes, so that we could, a few years down the road, start up our family business. Years later, we're so glad we did, even if the two years were financially difficult. We're living a lifestyle we want and have never looked back to my days in the corporate world.

Obviously, for long-term fixes, you would need to discuss these with the important people in your life and decide whether such disruptive changes are worth it. But, at this point, it is helpful to explore all possibilities. You can probably start right away with some of the short-term fixes.

As an example, I'll give my answers and some commentary about my choices. Then, there is a blank assessment form for you, and additional blank forms can be found at <http://WorkingDadsSurvivalGuide.com>, so you can regularly re-assess your priorities and goals.

| Category- Work | |
|---|---|
| <u>Gets Me Closer to Balance</u> | <u>Gets in the Way of Balance</u> |
| Flexible work. Can do ½ of work from home or other places Supervisor tries to accommodate my schedule requests Freedom to choose projects | Lack of structure sometimes means I work in "boom or bust" cycles I juggle many work, family and side-projects |
| <u>Short-Term Fixes</u> | <u>Long-Term Fixes</u> |
| Be more disciplined in managing my time, creating more differentiation between work and personal time Set up no-smartphone time each day | Developing online classes would open up more work from home, freeing up time for family and side-projects Create criteria for selecting among available projects, so saying 'yes' or 'no' to opportunities is easier |

To-Do List (things I can start doing this week)

1. Use iPhone calendar function to schedule work hours during days/times Nick is in school or at activities, creating more structure.
2. Buy a good six-pack of beer. Reward myself with a bottle or two on Friday- only if I adhere to weekly work hours
3. Stop carrying phone around with me in the house- Leave my phone next to the key bowl in the entryway. This way, I'll be less tempted by it
4. In next two weeks, set up a meeting with department chair about possibly shifting one or more of my classes into an "blended"(part in class, part online) format

| Category- Family | |
|---|---|
| <u>Gets Me Closer to Balance</u> | <u>Gets in the Way of Balance</u> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amy is understanding and supportive of my career We are financially ok Just one kid, who is now in school, plus everyone is healthy Have a good set of neighbors and friends who can help with watching Nick | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Her career has weird hours and she is often "on call" - I need to flex around her In-laws and other family live 2-4 hours away Nick's gymnastics getting to be a bigger time commitment- Little league, school plays and computer classes mean his schedule is becoming a big juggle Lack of child-care options on evenings and weekends or those with odd schedules |
| <u>Short-Term Fixes</u> | <u>Longer-Term Fixes</u> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish family calendar to better coordinate with Amy's work and Nick's activities Talk with Nick about prioritizing activities when baseball season begins and may conflict with gymnastics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See work fixes |

To-Do List (things I can start doing this week)

1. Sync iPhone calendars with Amy so planning around each other becomes easier
2. Ask parents at Nick's activities about carpooling
3. Schedule a visit from my mom

Now it's your turn. What aspects help you in balancing work and family? What do you struggle with? How can you get started improving your situation?

| Category- Work | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <u>Gets Me Closer to Balance</u> | <u>Gets in the Way of Balance</u> |
| | |
| <u>Short-Term Fixes</u> | <u>Long-Term Fixes</u> |
| | |

To-Do List (things I can start doing this week)

| Category- Work | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <u>Gets Me Closer to Balance</u> | <u>Gets in the Way of Balance</u> |
| | |
| <u>Short-Term Fixes</u> | <u>Long-Term Fixes</u> |
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