

Work-Life Balance: Finding What Works for You

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AAAS/*Science*

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I'd like to meet somebody who doesn't have problems with work-life balance.

- Nancy Costikyan, Director, Harvard University Office of Work/Life Resources

Wives, children, houses, regular hours are the bane of
committed laboratory research...

- H.F. Judson, *The Eighth Day of Creation: Makers of
the Revolution in Biology*

Traditionally, companies have viewed personal life as competing with work life...many people equate long working hours with loyalty and productivity. Scientists, in particular, often measure dedication to their work by how single-minded they are, which may be gauged by what they sacrifice to their experimentation. They tend to view overworking as a badge of achievement.

- C.G. Edwards

What is Work/Life Balance?

Work-life balance is about effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and the other activities that are important to people. It's not about saying that work is wrong or bad, but that work shouldn't completely crowd out the other things that matter to people like time with family, participation in community activities, voluntary work, personal development, leisure and recreation.

- New Zealand Department of Labor

Defining Balance

- Finding time for life outside of work
- Tension between demands
- Not just about parents
- Not just about women
- Varies over time

Balance Issues for Scientists

- Demands of science
- Timing of a science career

Why is it a problem?

- Leads to dissatisfaction
- Expectation of a full-time caregiver
- Increasing demands
- Disproportionately affects women

What can you do?

- Looking for family friendly workplaces
- Time management strategies
- Working with Your Family
- Setting Priorities
- Other strategies

Family-Friendly Workplaces

- Types of accommodations
 - Family leave
 - Elder-care support
 - On-site child care
 - Part-time options
 - Flexible work schedules
 - Dual career support
 - Telecommuting
 - Tenure-clock extension
 - Support programs for individuals with personal crises
 - Informal arrangements
- Motivation for policies
- Problems using policies
- Finding a family-friendly workplace

While the assumption may hold that the flexibility of a faculty career provides the perfect opportunity for work and family balance, research has demonstrated that this flexibility blurs the boundaries between work and life and typically results in less time for the personal lives of faculty.

- Kate Quinn, University of Washington

Historical Examples of Scientists

- Absent-minded professor
- Some women scientists
- Males with stay-at-home wives

Time is not just the future, it is not something to fight against – it is a resource you must work with and manipulate to achieve your goals.

- Kathy Barker, *At the Helm*

How do you fit [everything] in? This is where time management comes in.... Not only will you get more done, but you'll feel more in control of your life. ... Time management involves two main things: Deciding what you want to do, and making time to do them.

- *The Chicago Guide to Your Career in Science*

Time Management

- Limit time spent at work
- Average hours in a work week
- Transition points

Organizing Your Intentions

- Set goals for yourself
- Make a timeline for your goals
- Break down tasks
- Write your to do list

Weekly To Do List

Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - out of office - make phone calls - gym - reading 	Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costco - 3 – phone call - tissues - reading
Tues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organize email addresses - email Laura - 12 – phone call - 2:30 – talk re: marketing 	Fri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pack boxes to mail - 10 – phone call - 1:30 – phone call - call Jim, email Renee - time sheet due - 8 - movie
Wed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 – weekly meeting - 11 – phone call - email Ben - 6:45 dinner - work on May event 	Sat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - polish shoes - 12:30 lunch - pay rent
		Sun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - yoga

Schedule Your Days

- Best time for certain tasks
- Leave some free time
- Limit interruptions
- Keep up with ongoing tasks
- Set time limits

Prioritizing Tasks

	Not Important	Important
Not Urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gossip - March Madness pools - Some e-mail - Some phone calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading journals - Relationship building - Lab meetings - Ongoing experiments - Recreation and relaxation - Next month's grant deadline
Urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interruptions, some calls - Some e-mail, some reports - Some meetings - Many administrative tasks - Inquiring colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crises and pressing problems, personal or professional - Deadline driven projects - A lab fire - Tomorrow's grant deadline - Inquiring boss

Other Time Management Tips

- Focus on one task at a time
- Evaluate how you use time
- Use timers
- Organize your desk
- Learn about resources

“There is no job that comes with the requirement that you should have no personal life.

– Kathy Barker, *Navigating the Helm*

Working with Your Family

- Communicate with your partner and family
- Prioritize what needs to be done at home
- Consider hiring help
- Keep commitments
- Integrate work and life
- Compromise
- Relax!

Childbearing

- No right time to do it!
 - Or maybe there is...
- Do your research
- As productive?
- More efficient?

Other advice

- Set priorities
- Don't do unnecessary things
- Just say no
- Protect private time
- Accept help
- Plan fun
- Remain flexible
- Communicate openly
- Find mentors

Invest in your personal life. Burnout is intensified when
the job that is bothering you is all that you have

- Kathy Barker, *Navigating the Helm*

Mental Health

- Finding balance helps
- Coping strategies
- Take breaks
- Seek help as needed

Dual Career Couples

- Common in the sciences
- Job search issues
- Compromise
- Role of science at home

Questions?

Slides will be available at: sciencecareers.org/outreach