



Developing Positive Work/Life Balance

December 2011

"I've learned that you can't have everything and do everything at the same time."
Oprah Winfrey

HOW DO YOU KEEP IT ALL TOGETHER?

College students today are busier than ever. In fact, we are all busy. All too often, the answer that comes up when someone asks us how we're doing is, "Busy!" This time of year is no exception. Whether you're the one grading the papers, writing the papers, or listening to students vent about all the exams and papers, it seems that there is never enough time in the day to get it all done. This is why our topic this month is so valuable and relevant. Finding balance is a unique process for everyone – especially women! We hope this month's discussions are constructive conversations that provide encouragement and positivity as we finish up 2011!

Mentor Discussion Guide: Developing Positive Work/Life Balance

Thanks again for your participation in the Advancing Women Mentoring Program! We hope that your first meetings have been a great start to your mentoring relationships. Here is the next discussion guide for the month of December. The questions below focus on catching up and the monthly topic. The discussion topic is timely for our mentees—the semester is almost over, they are likely overwhelmed with finals, and any semblance of balance is likely dwindling. Our mentees likely will have very diverse experiences in this area, so we encourage you to adapt these questions or simply use them as a starting point for conversation. Additionally, if you have any suggestions for future discussion points and questions, feel free to e-mail hitandy@iupui.edu.

Discussion points:

- **Follow up/check in (these first few questions are basic, but hopefully serve as a reminder to check in about items you have discussed in your previous meetings):**
 - Check in with each other—what has happened since you last met? Any updates?
 - Where are you with your goals? Have you made any progress/had any setbacks?
 - What is your plan for the rest of the semester? If you haven't yet, try to schedule at least one meeting in January so it is on already on the calendar before the holiday break.
- **Work/Life Balance Discussion Questions**
 - How are you doing in this area?
 - What roles do you play in your life? Do you find it difficult to balance these roles and responsibilities that come with each role?
 - Where does being a college student fit into your work and life balance?
 - What items in your life seem to get neglected when you're beginning to feel burnt out and stressed? How do you respond when you begin to feel burnt out?
 - What is one celebration and one challenging piece for you in the area of work/life balance?
 - As you look ahead to next semester, how can you incorporate time for self-care as you strive for balance? This could be a good time for both of you to share one thing that you would like to do in Spring 2012.



A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

- Four in 10 Americans often feel stressed.
- One in five Americans reported only rare stress. And a lucky (or less honest) 3% said they're never stressed.
- Those who report frequent stress include:
 - 44% of 18- to 29-year-olds, and 46% of 30- to 49-year-olds
 - 47% of parents with children under 18
 - 43% of full-time workers and 46% of part-time workers -- but only 29% of unemployed Americans
 - **40% of women** and 35% of men
- 55% of people who say they do not have enough time to do things they want to do

SOURCE: Carroll, J. *The Gallup Poll*, "Stress More Common Among Younger Americans, Parents, Workers," Jan. 24, 2007.

Reducing Stress and Achieving Better Balance in Your Life

Determine What You Value

The disconnect between what you value and what you're spending your time on is a source of stress. Given that time is limited and that few people have time to do ALL the things they'd like to do, gaining clarity on what you value most can help you to set priorities and motivate you to identify the obstacles (your/others' expectations too high, lack of team effort, lack of organization, etc.) to maximizing available time.

Get Organized

Even if you say you don't value cleanliness and organization, taking time to get better organized is often a good starting point. Why? Because if your working and living spaces look like a burglar came in and "tossed" them, you are likely raising your stress level as well as wasting time getting ready in the morning, looking for misplaced items, etc. instead of being able to calmly focus on the things you value. In addition, decluttering and organizing can be therapeutic partly because, unlike much of the other work you do, you have something tangible to show for your work. Here are some ways to better organize:

- Get six large boxes labeled "trash," "donate," "move to another room," "fix," "recycle/tox drop" and "sell" and set in/near the space you plan to declutter that week/month. Each day, spend a few minutes going through a part of that room/closet/cabinet until it's done.
- Reduce the amount of "stuff" that comes into your space by getting off "junk" mail lists, cancelling catalogs, refusing unneeded conference and restaurant giveaways, using electronic bill paying (check security of site), etc.
- Involve others who share your spaces by coming to agreement on expectations and sharing chores.
- Rethink WHERE you store items – Are all the coffee items near the coffee maker so that time/steps can be saved?
- Change HOW you store items – Could you electronically scan some of those paper items? Would bookcases, pegs/hooks, baskets, wall-mounted file boxes, filing cabinets, cabinet/closet organizing systems, bike ceiling hooks, etc. help you reduce stress, save time and aid your ability to find what you need when you need it? There's a reason that the adage, "A place for everything and everything in its place," has been around since the 17th century. 😊

Overcome Forgetfulness that can Come with Stress

It is easy to become overwhelmed by all the things we have to do, especially when we're feeling stressed. Use a paper or electronic calendar to note class times, meetings, deadlines, etc. and also mark off time for doing things you enjoy to ensure a better balance in your life. Setting dates for steps leading up to completion of a major project are also helpful. For example, if the big essay is due on March 1st, you might set a deadline of January 27th for gathering information sources and February 15 for completing the first draft, leaving you with two weeks to polish up the final paper.

Yes, all these things take a bit of time/attention and, in some cases, money, but the long-term results in time savings, frustration/stress reduction are worth it. So, during these long, winter months when you're more likely to be inside anyway, clarify what you value, set priorities and get organized!

For a copy of a form and instructions to help you clarify what you value, identify obstacles and come up with a plan, as well as more details on organizing and time savers, e-mail Maggie Stimming (mstimmin@iupui.edu) and put "organizing tools" in the subject line.

Maggie Stimming

IUPUI Work/Life
Human Resources Administration

Additional Resources / Tools for you as you continue your journey with work/life balance:

- <http://main.uab.edu/Sites/student-success/resources/33052/> Check out this calculator for allocating how you spend each hour of your day. Do you have time to spare? You may be surprised at what you find!
- <http://www.wbfinder.com/home.aspx> Gallup has done a lot of great research in this area, including an online assessment where you can track your "wellbeing" on a daily basis.

"Being busy does not always mean real work. The object of all work is production or accomplishment and to either of these ends there must be forethought, system, planning, intelligence, and honest purpose, as well as perspiration. Seeming to do is not doing."

Thomas A. Edison