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Work-Life Balance Lessons

By Belen Verduzco

I am fortunate that the support I get from Turner makes it possible for me to be both a good employee and a good single mother to my 5-year-old son. My colleagues have always been willing to work with my schedule to make sure that I do both jobs well. For example, now that I'm an assistant superintendent and have to be at work by 6:30 a.m., I can't take my son to school, but I can leave by 4:00 p.m. to pick him up. I don't feel pressured to stay at work as long as those who come in an hour or two later than I do, and that helps.

It makes a big difference when your colleagues understand and support your family priorities. They help make my work-life balance possible. I've also learned to manage my time at work in a way that helps make sure I can be with my son when I need to be. Here are my tips:

Prioritize your tasks. I make a list every day and organize it according to importance so that I make sure the most important things get done first.

Don't rely on your memory. I use a calendar alarm so I don't forget meetings or activities. Mine alerts me a few minutes early so I have time to prepare or organize my thoughts.

Be prepared to make small sacrifices. So that I can leave on time at the end of the day, I often eat lunch at my desk while reviewing paperwork. I would rather do that than do work at home.

Build relationships with colleagues and others. When you take the time to connect with others, you have better relationships. Good relationships reduce problems and stress and increase productivity. It's easier for everyone when things operate smoothly.

The Power of the Human Spirit

There is a positive force that fortifies our lives and in its contagious form is responsible for redefining destiny. It infuses personal joy and meaning, transforms cultures, and has produced the most positive changes in human history. Connecting to it is the source of life's happiness and success. (Reading time 180 seconds).

You've experienced this force. When you are tapped into it, your life is good even when your surroundings are not. And when you are fortunate enough to find yourself in good circumstances, it makes life great. That force is the power and resiliency of the human spirit. It projects itself in good times and bad. It carries the hopes of all mankind forward during feast and famine.

I recently listened to Desmond Tutu comment on a trip he made to the refuge camps in Darfur. He had met with about 200 of the displaced persons. He recalled that, "All the descriptions you might have heard are no where near telling you about the reality. It is awful. The shacks where people live are flimsy, flimsy things made out of sand. They keep neither the wind or sun or cold out...yet at some point as we were meeting, someone or the other said something...and they laughed. They laughed! And you look around and say, how could they possibly still have the capacity to laugh."

He continued, "And that was the one thing I took away. The resilience of the human spirit is amazing. It takes a great deal to knock the stuffing out of any people. And you look around and you look at the squalor and the deprivation – just awful. And they could laugh. I mean human beings are absolutely incredible."

He also commented on the commitment of those who were volunteering to be there to help. He concluded, "We went away dark, devastated by the condition of the people, but also exhilarated by this example of what human beings are. That you and I are actually creatures who were created for goodness."

And so we all are, created and capable of goodness and greatness and laughter. We are blessed with an internal and external human spirit to tap into. It can renew us, energize us. Recognizing that resilient source helps us realize as we move on in our lives, even in what may seem like routine ways, we often are an important contributor to the creation of miracles. We add to and benefit from the amazing accomplishments of the human spirit.

Just look out the window of an airplane – or stroll by the 45,000 items available to you on your grocery store's aisles – or search the answer to almost any question in a fraction of a second from your phone. These everyday occurrences of today would be viewed as miracles by those who came before us on this earth. Where did they come from? How did they happen?

They resonate from the human spirit that drives reasoning, creativity, hard work, persistence and a celebration of life.

All this great stuff around us is too routine to make the news. But it makes up our life. A vehicle that with the turn of a key will transport us to work or across our continent at 70 miles an hour; a button on the wall that will control the climate in our home; a device in our pocket that enables us to speak to anyone anywhere in the world at any time. Think of all that had to happen for those things to be possible.

We each benefit from the cumulative know-how the human spirit has created across cultures and centuries. In the past 50 years in particular the strides in communication, medicine, productivity, have multiplied our individual ability to actualize our aspirations. But there are times, in all of our lives, when we forget or doubt, not only the world, but our own potential in it. I know - I've worn that t-shirt more than once.



Communicate. Make sure you tell others about changes in your schedule so they can adjust their work flow accordingly. For example, if I can't respond to something as quickly as I'd like because I'm going to be out of the office, I let the other person know. It helps manage expectations.

Make time for yourself. I played on the company's softball team this summer and mentor college students. These types of outside activities help me recharge and manage stress.

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Have you got the spirit?

Spirit – Boldness, eagerness, energetic, lively, essence, fervor, inner nature, life force, enterprise, essence, genius, meaning, pluck, heart, mind, breath of life, life giving, nerve, commitment, grit, toughness, backbone, mettle, fortitude, adventure, boldness, stand up spirit, initiative, push, drive, hustle, venturesome, gumption, spunk, eager, fire, spark, zeal, purpose, warmth, appetite for life, zestful, vital, vitality, ardor, sincerity, enthusiasm.

Synonyms from
Roget's International Thesaurus

Should you find yourself in that self-doubting mode, remember that inside each of us is a resiliency that is bigger and more powerful than almost any challenge we face.

Reflect back on the human history of turmoil and triumph, and realize that in the big picture of things, the world of today provides us the greatest opportunities ever to benefit from our own human spirit.

Be proud of the part you have already played – and the part your fellow travelers have played in providing these miracles and opportunities to each other. If you are one of the millions who help put a dozen eggs on my store shelf for 99 cents, or fly me from Atlanta to Seattle, or make my computer a source of the world's knowledge and my own productivity, I thank you for those and so many other miracles of the human spirit.

Make a renewed commitment to the strength of that spirit within you. Call on it. Concentrate on exercising your deepest capacities of resilience and positive expectations. And recognize that this spirit abounds in others around you. They will help you...and you can help them.

In today's challenging economic environment, there are those you know that are doubting themselves and their futures right now. Remind them that people can turnaround quicker than the economy. That from the sands and cities of every continent on earth, there is a turn around spirit that radiates around the globe in good times and bad.

And YOU ARE the source of this resilient power that makes the world a better place. It is there, within you. Tap into it this New Year to laugh more, love more, and be part of creating miracles.

Here's to the promise of our futures. Here's to your human spirit. The world awaits it.

Jim Bird, Publisher

E-tip

We all know from experience that physical exercise raises our spirits. We get a boost in morale through the release of natural endorphins. Starting and maintaining moderate exercise habits will help you to regularly reconnect with the power and resiliency of your own human spirit...and that of those around you.