



My Work/Life Balance Lessons

By Sarah Lippai

I have found that different positions within Turner require different methods of achieving a work-life balance. Being an assistant project engineer on a 35-story condominium posed the most difficult work-life balance issue for me thus far in my career at Turner. Working on a job site required me to be there by 7 a.m., often working into the evening hours and on weekends – all while planning our wedding this month and purchasing our first house.

My fiancée, who is also a Turner employee, works similar hours. To make sure we could spend time together, we tried our best to coordinate our schedules so we had the same evenings and weekends off.

A few weeks ago, I changed positions within Turner to the cost department, which will expose me to another aspect of the construction business. With slightly shorter work days and less weekend work, it is easier to schedule time with my fiancée. In addition, I have more time to do the things that I did not have time for previously, including working out in the morning before work.

When I decided to pursue a construction career after graduating from college three years ago, I knew that I would not have – nor want – a 9 to 5 desk job, so my experiences with work-life balance have not surprised me. I have learned a few things that have helped me maintain my work-life balance that might also help my peers:

Be flexible. Because of the nature of the business, there will be times when you have to work long hours, weekends, or an occasional night shift to get the job completed. This is usually not constant, but you will be less stressed if you can accept it.

Accept that you can't do everything so focus on what's important. Completing your work is a priority, but there are other

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“Don't Sweat the Small Stuff”

Don't Give a Five Cent Problem Five Dollars Worth of Worry

75% to 90% of all doctor visits, medical and psychological, are now recognized as worry and stress related. Coronary disease, psoriasis, ineffective brain functioning, reduced ability to learn and recall what you have learned as well as premature death are just a few of the effects that have been directly linked to worry. Here are two tips to avoid paying such a high price for worry. (Reading time 150 seconds)

Small stress and worry triggers abound in our everyday world. We have more commitments we can be late for, more technology gadgets that can malfunction, more traffic jams to get stuck in, more credit cards that can be lost, and more bills to be paid than any group of people that have ever populated our planet. On a daily basis you make over 100 times as many choices each day as your parents or grandparents did in the 1950's. That's a LOT more opportunities for worry. Don't do it. It's unnecessary and worrying over all those little things undermines your health, happiness and lifespan.

Instead create a personal mindset to better deal with minor things that can cause you anxiety. Start by recognizing that 90% of what you worry about never comes true.

You end up not being late at all, or if you are, nobody cares. The stress you felt because your regular hotel was booked was unnecessary because the new hotel turns out to be even better and less expensive. Nobody stole your identity when you lost your credit card and it only took 3 minutes to call and have it replaced.

I recently watched a friend stress much of her weekend away over a work scheduling conflict that by Monday someone on her team had resolved without a problem. The outcome would have been the same whether she had worried or not. But she had paid an unnecessary price in worry, as did her friends and family that were included in her worry sphere. She gave \$500 worth of worry to a penny problem.

Create a personal mindset that says the price of worry is too high to spend it on minor issues or irritations. Instead when you start to worry about something – decide ahead of time, how much worry and stress is it worth. 5 cents – 50 cents - \$5. If you feel you have to worry, cut it short. Don't get caught up in giving dollars worth of worry to a penny problem.

What about the bigger issues that worry you though? Well, the answer to that them is...

...NEVER WORRY about big problems or big stressors.

That's right; you should never get caught up in big time worry. Past a few bucks worth of worry you must take a different approach. Worry not only is useless when it comes to resolving big problems or concerns...it is a counter productive.

Dr. David Diamond a neuroscientist working at the University of Florida introduced rats into a water maze. After several tries the rats mastered their way through the maze to safety. Then he introduced a serious worry into the equation, allowing the rats to see a cat close up. The rats were then put back into the maze and they could no longer find

things in life that come before work. Identify the activities that are most important to you and use them to get the balance you need.

Take time off. Whether it falls in the form of vacation time, work holidays, or a few hours off when work is slow, enjoy and use that time to do the activities that you enjoy or need to do.

Have fun with your colleagues. Participate in after-hours activities organized by Turner, including sports teams and community service. They are a great way to do something you enjoy while learning more about colleagues in a different environment. I've gotten to know many of my colleagues better by playing on our business unit's March of Dimes Mud Volleyball team. Through these various activities, I have fun, develop important relationships, and get exercise.

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Quotes

When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.

Winston Churchill 1874-1965, British Orator, Author and Prime Minister

their way through it to the safety platform. Stress and worry prevented the rat's brain from functioning to solve the problem.

Studies in the human brain show a similar disconnect. When worrying the brain's hemispheres are ineffective at communicating and coordinating with each other. Worry results in an impaired ability to comprehend and reason.

Since worrying is not the answer to alleviating your big stressors you have to do something different, which is to...Think.

Worrying and Thinking are two very different things that produce two opposite results. Understand the difference. Here are the definitions.

Worry v. To feel or cause to feel uneasy or troubled.

Think v. To determine by a specific reasoning process; to reason to a conclusion.

Worry is a negative emotional state. Thinking is a rational process. One has a negative outcome, the other positive.

So if you have a big stressor or problem you are worrying about – STOP! Instead THINK about it. Block time in your calendar to think through your challenge and reason through to the best conclusion you can.

Now don't think that I expect you to go through life in an eternal state of bliss with no stress. An appropriate stress response is healthy and it is a necessary part of life. Stressors release chemicals into your brain that prepare you to react to dangers – to run away from the cat if it is about to get you. But once the danger is gone, or it is obvious it's not that big or immediate a danger or concern, we need to take control of our body through our brain, and get back to reasoning our way through life.

So remember, to be better balanced in life physically and emotionally, don't give a five cent problem five dollars worth of worry.

And when you have a really "expensive" problem or challenge, don't worry....Think.

Jim Bird
Publisher

E-Tip

When a worry or stressor pops into your mind, flip that worry on its back. Use each negative thought as a mental trigger to instead focus on a pleasant event, person or thing that has happened to you in the last 24 hours or is happening in front of you right now. Make worry a stimulus to look for or think of something pleasant – the robin digging worms outside your window, the flowers of spring, your vacation coming up. You've just used worry to trigger a mental judo flip, shutting down the production of stressor chemicals in your body and replacing them with a stream of calming, positive ones.