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Work-Life Balance Lessons

By John Scheuer

Because all four of our children are out of school and pursuing their lives, my wife and I are essentially empty-nesters. I don't have the work-life balance issues that I had when the children were younger but having a good family dynamic is still a vital concern to my wife and me. Our family-based activities now consist of dining, art shows, theatre, and helping our children in their homes. It's a good life.

While my job (and making it go right) is a top priority for me, it is not an all-consuming activity. It would not make sense to have a job that would adversely affect your family life or health. Spending time with my family and keeping in good physical condition are part of a necessary balance for me and I make time for them. Here are some of the things that I do to help get balance and enjoy all aspects of my life:

Schedule. Just as I schedule the job, I schedule my workouts, family get-togethers, and enjoyable activities and I try to stick to these somewhat religiously. Although it is necessary to be spontaneous for that spice of life, for me, predicting and planning my future is a good way to make sure I keep to my major goals and purposes in life.

Be flexible. As much as I like to stick to my schedule, there are times when it has to change. Construction projects are always different and no matter how meticulously scheduled we are, there is always one certainty, and that certainty is change. One has to have the ability to know and adapt his resources to make things go right.

Do it now. And by "do" I mean the action that leads to a **done**. Doing is something different from talking and referring. Turner is a builder and that translates into people that do – which means that things get done.

The Comfort of Positive Predictability

One of the key comforts the holidays provide us is their positive predictability. Beneath the bustle they fuse the warmth of family, friends and traditions with the custom of sharing...all important in providing a calming respite from our world of constant change. Here are some thoughts on making the most of this soothing side of your holidays as well as carrying that sense of reassurance and well-being forward into your everyday life. (Reading time 180 seconds).

As we travel through a sea of exciting and challenging change it is important that we have predictable moorings. Those comforting safe havens in life, positively predictable people and routines, provide ongoing strength and motivation for each of us. The holidays offer the opportunity to make the most of annual traditions that can set the tone for such reassuring actions and memories over a lifetime.

The Thanksgiving celebration in America, like many others throughout the world, is such a holiday. It conveys a tradition of expressing gratitude for our blessings and sharing them with those around us. As the Pilgrims and Indians reached out to each other and shared the turkey, venison and crops they had hunted and grown, so today we cook traditional holiday meals and share their nourishment with others. There is a positive comfort in this predictability of sharing together.

Sharing the Nourishment of Body and Soul

The more uncertain the times, the more meaningful such sharing with others can be. As you go through the holidays you can enjoy the nourishment provided by both sides of the sharing equation. I know I certainly look forward to the comfort food that is part of our family's holiday traditions. But there are other nourishments that greatly benefit others when we share them. And the sharing to help others benefits us as well.

Scan testing of the brain has shown that when we reach out to share something of ourselves and do something good for others we are rewarded by an increase in our natural dopamine levels. This releases feel-good chemicals that trigger a surge in your physical energy. You feel healthier and happier as a result of positively sharing.

Share a Meal

During the holiday make the most of any regular meal event you have by sharing even more in the shopping, preparation, serving and of course the eating. In addition to any such traditional gathering you have, consider asking a friend or family member you haven't reached out to in a while to share a meal with you. In today's environment where many are cutting back out of caution or necessity, you don't know how meaningful such an invitation to share may be, in multiple ways, until you ask.

Spreading the rewards of sharing enriches not only the holidays but our everyday lives as well. So making dinner with shared conversation a regular event in your home can be a valuable life mooring. Even regularly watching a TV show together that you all enjoy can provide a comforting predictability to your day. Enjoy those safe harbors in your life.

On an everyday basis here are four other simple ways we can share a positive sense of life with those around us and release those positive brain chemicals for both the sharer's and sharee's benefit.

Share a Sincere Compliment

Last week I visited a new dental hygienist to have my teeth cleaned. In the close proximity process of her peering into my mouth, I noticed she had very attractive green



It's up to you. Responsibility is a key to living a good and productive life. Responsibility means being ethically and legally accountable for the care or welfare of another, whether it's a subcontractor, a member of your family, your company, your boss, or yourself. To ignore or withdraw from your responsibilities lessens the quality of your life and that of others.

We all understand that there's an ebb and flow with construction – there are times when you work like a fiend and times when the schedule is much less intense. You are responsible to make certain that you recognize those quieter times and take advantage of them to restore your balance.

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Quotes

“Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.”

“Always be a little kinder than necessary.”

“The praise that comes from love does not make us vain, but more humble.”

James M. Barrie (1860 – 1937) was a Scottish author and dramatist. He is best remembered for creating *Peter Pan*.

eyes. When there was a break in the action (a moment when no instruments were poking into my mouth), I told her how pretty her eyes were. This already pleasant woman beamed and thanked me. Remembering the sincerity of her response and ongoing smile is still a positive to me a week later. The people around you everyday have assets, character strengths, and things they do well that are ripe for the complimenting. It benefits everyone to pick that fruit – hand them a compliment.

Share a Smile

I am always amazed at how good it makes me feel when a complete stranger makes eye contact with me and gives me a big smile. It brightens my moment and often lifts me up for the day. You can make life more predictably positive by smiling at those you know and at strangers. Smile fully at them because of the wonderful beings they have the potential to be. Often you will get that big smile returned, which provides you a wonderful payback.

Share Your Ears

Focused listening is one of the highest forms of respect we can show to another person. A listener who is truly focused on what we are saying, and not what they want to say, is a rare individual. Whether it is listening to someone's description of a positive event to share their celebration, or to a difficult challenge in their life to give them some relief, your rapt attention is important.

Share a Thoughtful Word of Advice

Sharing good advice can be of great value. However, it is difficult to do. That is because even when people desperately want advice, they don't like to be told what to do.

So if you sincerely want to impact someone, try and make the sharing of your advice a two way street. Open up a bit about yourself or the experience of a third party you know. Rather than “This is what I suggest you do,” the listener usually responds better when you can say, “I was facing a similar problem and this is how I approached it,” or “What I was advised to do was...and this was the result.” Or “I have a friend who faced a similar challenge and...”

Sharing Positive Predictability Everyday

Continue to value and share your little and big traditions, those regular things that you take comfort in. By recognizing the importance of these everyday anchors it is possible to enjoy them a little more deeply than you may have in the past. Use them as rejuvenation points to energize yourself.

Whether as a boss, a co-worker, a friend or loved one, you can share the benefits of positive predictability with those around by being a steady positive influence in their life. Share a smile; a question; an interested tone. Share part of yourself. Share your insights, knowledge and wisdom. Everyone will be the better for it.

Smiles,
Jim Bird, Publisher

E-tip

Avoid Turning Fun Traditions into Stressful Tasks

Remember, your attitude, warmth and love are more important to enjoying the holidays than having everything turn out “just right.” Trying to make things perfect this time of year can quickly stress you out to where you aren't having any fun at all. Dinner tastes best when there is laughter in the kitchen, even if the dish is a bit overcooked.