

SESSION 6

BALANCING THE PRESSURES OF WORK AND FAMILY

GROUP PROCESS:

1) **Brief check-in** at the beginning of the meeting – focused on these questions:

Focus Questions:

- a) *Do you have any thoughts or reflections related to the discussion we had in our last session on the topic of “Becoming a Mentoring Community”?*
- b) *In her article, Molly McDonald states: “I have also come to realize that within my profession I have chosen employers, specifically the Diocese of Monterey and, most recently, Santa Clara University, whose values are parallel with mine.” In what ways can you relate to this statement? In what ways, if any, did your choice to work at SCU have anything to do with its having values that are parallel to yours?*

2) **Quiet reflection** – Meditative Reading

The Gift

Mary Sue Crawford

Life is a gift

The Pain, the joy, experience it all

Let it wash over you completely

Reach out for it

The knowing and understanding will come eventually

We continue upon our pathway

Sometimes with heavy shoes

With daily exploration of what lies ahead,

Unknown treasures are placed with such care.

Pieces to a puzzle found in the corners of our lives

Woven together with sorrow’s thread

Ironed with kindness

Leaving the color of tolerance on the fringed edges

Don’t hurry past these searing gifts and miss your revelation

Stop, look, listen

Reach out to touch this moment

Specifically given

For you alone

Joy’s buttons shine brightly on heaving chests

Life’s good things somehow overshadow those painful hurts.

(Taken from Bannan Center “Book of Prayers.” This selection was contributed by Mary Sue Crawford, Heafey Law Library.)

Readings:

Explore Magazine , Spring 2004, Vol. 7. No 2. “Achieving a Balance with Work and Family.”

“The Flow of Activity,” *The One Who is Not busy: Connecting With Work in a Deeply Satisfying Way*, Darlene Cohen

3) **Discussion and sharing** – issues or thoughts that the readings stimulated in you or other items you want to talk about. Below is a series of quotes and focus questions taken from the readings for the day which may serve as reminders. If they are not helpful to you, please ignore them. (60 Min)

A) Moberg (p 4) - Some employees try to roll with such punches by compartmentalizing, i.e. by maintaining focus on work when at work and on family when at home. Yet, since what happens to people at work cannot help but affect their home life and vice versa, attempts at compartmentalizing are generally futile... it is far more productive to develop an awareness of how one develops and depletes personal resources. Each of us has our own ways of building and conserving the time, flexibility and control we need to sustain ourselves. For some, spending more time with family puts juice in the batteries, but for others it is a drain. Similarly, some find business travel exciting while others consider it a real downer. In short, there is no one optimal approach to allocating one's energy between family and work. However, a little self-knowledge goes a long way to help one deal with temptations and exigencies in ways that do not exhaust one's personal resources.

FOCUS QUESTION: *Moberg points out that “each of us has our own ways of building and conserving the time, flexibility and control we need to sustain ourselves.” A “little self-knowledge” in this area helps, he says. Are you aware of any “self-knowledge” you have gained over the years that allows you to allocate energy between family and work in a manner that helps you to keep yourself healthy?*

B) Ramos-Sanchez (p 8) To achieve a good balance that is satisfying to all, couples need to prioritize their lives so that the family career is given as much importance as each profession, that each parent become a primary parent and primary keeper of the household, rather than one parent being secondary, and that neither person's career is given more weight than the other.

(p 9) Ultimately the blending of relationships, children, and careers in a harmonious manner is more art than science. According to psychologists, couples communicating their needs and expectations were very important, but factors such as job flexibility and support systems also seem to play a role in the delicate balance.

FOCUS QUESTION: *Ramos-Sanchez explains that one of the most important tasks of a couple with two careers in developing a sense of balance in their lives is to develop a workable method of communication between the two partners. Describe the method of communication, if any, that you and your spouse or partner have developed to discuss your individual needs in achieving a balance between your family obligations and work obligations?*

C) Koch (p 12) - With the increasing velocity of scientific and technological progress and volatility of change, the ethos of the workplace has become sharply defined by the themes of productivity, speed, flexibility and, of course, constant innovation. But, the emphasis on speed, flexibility, and continuous learning in the workplace cannot be accommodated without personal adjustments outside of the workplace, and these same values have come to characterize the non-work related spheres of individual lives. In the process this has transformed the balance between work, family, and community life. With the exhilaration of participating in the most renowned knowledge-based region in the world we have lost the ability to maintain clear boundaries between work and non-work. Sadly, somewhere in the boom and subsequent bust of the nineties we also appear to have lost our sense of community.

FOCUS QUESTION: *Koch says that “with the exhilaration of participating in the most renowned knowledge-based region in the world (the Silicon Valley) we have lost the ability to maintain clear boundaries between work and non-work.” In what ways, if any, does our work culture here at SCU mirror the surrounding Silicon Valley culture of work with its emphasis on “speed, flexibility, and continuous learning in the workplace”?*

D) Potter (p 17) - I don't believe there is a “one size fits all” solution to finding and maintaining balance. I think that certain approaches – determining priorities based on values as well as needs, managing time more effectively, and developing goals – are essential in helping us exert some control in our lives. But, I have “decided to accept as true my own thinking,” to quote Georgia O’Keefe, that being present each moment as much as I possibly can, doing what I’m doing and not something else at the same time, and giving up my expectations for perfect balance are goals worth striving for.

FOCUS QUESTION: *Potter mentions in her article several different approaches for exerting control over your time: setting priorities based on values, managing time, and developing goals. How would you describe your particular approach, if any, toward achieving balance in your work and non-work life?*

E) Kerrigan (p20) - When a corporate reorganization and my decision not to relocate resulted in my leaving my firm in 2002, I had some hard questions to face: “What is maturity?” and “What is a life well led?” These are foundational and essential questions in life. I came to realize that whether life makes work better or work makes life better depends on which is more important. Elizabeth (my wife) kept asking me; “John, what do you want?” as she and I entertained over a half dozen different scenarios, ranging from jobs with a similar pace, to my previous one, to taking a year or more off.

FOCUS QUESTION: *In his article, Kerrigan mentions coming to a fundamental question in his life: “What is a life well led?” Describe a time in your life, if any, in which you faced such a fundamental choice between your work and non-work life.*

F) McDonald (p 23) From my perspective it is important to make a conscious choice to focus on what I value... most in my life in order for me to be successful. These areas can be broken down into five categories: 1) Family, 2) Profession, 3) Faith, 4) Mental/physical health, and 5) Solitary time. Running through each of these is the manner in which I strive to conduct myself; with integrity, respect for others, honesty, appreciativeness and trustworthiness.

I am extremely fortunate that these values were instilled in me at a very young age by my parents and the education I received from the Notre Dame Sisters, Holy Cross Brothers and from eight years of Jesuit education... each of these values has remained a constant in my life for several years

FOCUS QUESTION: *McDonald points out that the values she learned in early life were values that helped her establish priorities in balancing her work and non-work lives. Can you name values you learned in early life that help you in similar ways?*