



Input and Panel Discussion: Work-Life Balance

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Panel discussion: Prof. Dr. Beatrice Beck Schimmer
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Work-life Balance" is a relatively NEW term for an old concept of what makes life worth living. For centuries before individuals have lived and worked with their families to survive. Life was work and work was life. However, now with more leisure time, individuals are asking about having more free time—leading to the thought that life is leisure time and work is work. However some life is work—care giving to children and elderly parents, shopping, and cleaning. AND some work is life—as physicians we are privileged to participate in the healing of the individuals. The word balance makes one think there are only two choices—work or life, while perhaps reframing this term would serve us all better. We need to think of ways that work integrates with our lives and our lives integrate in our work. Douglas LaBier has suggested that we should consider the “Inside out solution.” He suggests that we pay attention to our “outer” lives—things that are scheduled on the calendar including duties at work and home and our “inner lives” which are our meaning, thoughts, emotions, values, spiritual thoughts and feelings (since this is often where our energy lies). Academic medicine with teaching, research, and administration challenges us all. Even more how do we fit all of this into a day and leave time for sleep!

Some questions to ask yourself:

1. Why is Work not "life"? (Is "life" what you do at home? In which case it includes a lot of stuff for which one might not have any passion Is "work" what you do outside your home? Why isn't it the activity for which you have the most passion ?)
2. What does a "meaningful life" look like?
3. Why do you want to be a mother? Why do you want to be a father? (if you don't, why not?)
4. What does the ideal "partner" need from you?
5. What part of your "work" are you **not** passionate about (and maybe could give up some of that). What part of "life" (meaning home life) are you **not** passionate about and could give up or outsource.

In this course we will hear how successful professors with families have balanced their lives. You will hear many tips on keeping balance within your life.



For further reading see:

The Inside out Solution: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/13/AR2006021301533.html>

Websites: Stanford: <http://wellmd.stanford.edu/healthy/work-life-balance/>

University of Virginia <http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/administration/faculty/faculty-dev/wordofmouth/balance-page>

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Engrossed late and soon in professional cares ... you may so lay waste your powers that you may find, too late, with hearts given away, that there is no place in your habit-stricken souls for those gentler influences which make your life worth living.

—Sir William Osler (1849-1919)

However dimly conscious it might be amid the chaos and complexity of our lives, there is a need in almost all of us for a sense of connectedness and purpose in the events of our outer lives, and a deeply rooted desire for our inner lives to have a harmonious connection to a higher source of meaning and value.

- C. Michael Thompson