

BALANCING FAMILY, WORK AND LIFE – part 2

You've discovered what your priorities are by doing the "100th birthday" exercise noted in last month's newsletter. Perhaps your top 5 list included memorable events like your college graduation, your marriage, the birth of your child or grandchild, buying your first home and figuring out how to repair your first car. Here, you would notice a pattern of personal perseverance and family ties. This pattern indicates part of your value system.

Now, look at how your daily activities contribute to living your value system. For example, if your marriage is in your "top 5", spending less than 15 minutes daily in quality conversation with your spouse (yes, that is what recent research revealed about American couples), is not following your values. You feel stressed.

Yet you whine that things need to be done. OK. Here are some suggestions:

- Delegate – children at young ages can help pick up, set the table, etc.
Teens can do laundry or get water boiling for tonight's pasta dinner.
- Reduce your obligations – you're involved in the PTA, church choir, coaching your child's sport, volunteering at the animal shelter, making the costumes for the community theater. Pick one, maximum two, activities and let the rest go.
- Help your children to reduce their obligations – soccer and school band, OK if their grades are good. But playing 3 or more sports, running the class magazine sale, president of the junior class, part-time job, advanced honors classes, volunteer at the hospital – it's overload and teaching them poor stress and time management skills.
- Learn short-cuts – that means that good enough is just that: good enough. Perfect isn't required.
- Learn to say "NO". Another gift you can teach your children.
- Share chores with other families – your child and the neighbor's child both play Little League. How about you drop the kids off at practice and the neighbor picks them up?
- Work smart. When cooking, make extra that can be frozen and used for dinners later in the week.
- Downsize – Be honest. Do you really need a house that large with all that property, or has the media sold you an unrealistic dream?
Maintaining a big home and yard takes time and money from other things

you might enjoy or need more. Talk it out with your partner and maybe your financial advisor.

- Know when to stop. When your body/mind says it's tired, believe it and stop; we are much more efficient when we're rested. Delegate what you can, save it for tomorrow or decide not to do it at all!

So, there you have a few ideas for making life easier and following your priorities. Life really is grand when you take time to enjoy the journey.