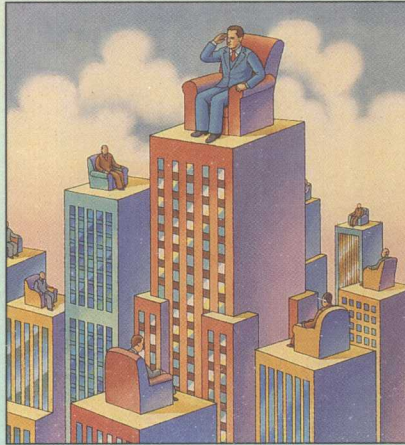


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Skills

EXPRESS SERIES



MANAGING THE DEMANDS OF WORK AND HOME

Carol R. GALGINAITIS

Managing the Demands of Work and Home

CAROL R. GALGINAITIS

Business Skills Express Series

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About the Business Skills Express Series

This expanding series of authoritative, concise, and fast-paced books delivers high-quality training on key business topics at a remarkably affordable cost. The series will help managers, supervisors, and frontline personnel in organizations of all sizes and types hone their business skills while enhancing job performance and career satisfaction.

Business Skills Express books are ideal for employee seminars, independent self-study, on-the-job training, and classroom-based instruction. Express books are also convenient-to-use references at work.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE

Most of us lead lives jam-packed with deadlines, meetings, and social obligations. Children and parents, bosses and friends, neighbors and committee chairs all make continual and persistent demands on our time. It's often difficult to figure out what to do first and what to simply ignore. This book can help you find a way through the maze of your commitments. It will enable you to decide what really matters to you and to give these priorities the time and attention they deserve.

You won't be able to meet every challenge alone. It is important to recognize when you need assistance and to develop effective strategies for seeking it. *Managing the Demands of Work and Home* will show you where and how to ask for help so that you can find real, sustaining balance in your life.

Achieving a balance between the demands of work and home is a lifelong challenge. Like walking on a tightrope, you must periodically pause, recalibrate, redefine, and then proceed. Reading this book and putting some ideas into action represent the first steps in an ongoing, immensely rewarding journey toward finding greater joy and satisfaction in your life.

Enjoy the journey!

Carol Galginaitis

Self-Assessment

Is your life out of sync? Is work so demanding that you have trouble coping at home? Are family pressures interfering with your concentration on the job? By completing the following Self-Assessment, you will begin to understand the complexity of finding true balance in your life.

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I give my family the attention it deserves.	_____	_____	_____
2. I nurture my friendships.	_____	_____	_____
3. I feel comfortable in my home.	_____	_____	_____
4. I feel physically fit.	_____	_____	_____
5. I resent my household responsibilities.	_____	_____	_____
6. I say yes when I am asked to volunteer for a worthy cause.	_____	_____	_____
7. I worry about money.	_____	_____	_____
8. I am competent at my job.	_____	_____	_____
9. I am productive at work.	_____	_____	_____
10. I enjoy my work.	_____	_____	_____
11. I worry about losing my job.	_____	_____	_____
12. I spend too much time at work.	_____	_____	_____
13. I spend time alone on activities that are personally important to me.	_____	_____	_____
14. I am making progress toward reaching my life goals.	_____	_____	_____
15. I am content with my life.	_____	_____	_____

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Walking the Tightrope

This chapter will help you to:

- Develop a definition of career and home balance.
- Recognize how pressures at work can intensify family problems, and vice versa.
- Identify the connection between change and imbalance.
- Examine common causes of career and home imbalance.

Bob has worked for a major high-tech company for 17 years. The company's bottom line doesn't look good (it hasn't for months), and in response, upper management has just finished its third series of layoffs. Bob still has a job, but he wonders for how long.

There are days when he thinks he'd be better off if he did lose his job. At least then he'd have to look for something else. Under the new management team, he's become more and more dissatisfied with the company's increasingly short-term orientation.

In addition, his immediate boss just doesn't seem to like him. Bob suspects his boss is looking for an excuse to get rid of him; and the boss just might find one. Now that Bob's wife Anne is trying to get her business off the ground, Bob has taken on increasing responsibility for the kids. Bob wonders how many more times he can leave the office early before his boss calls him on it.

Bob resents his wife for putting him in this position. He also resents his boss for his inflexibility and the company for its instability. If the economy were only better, he'd just move on. . . . ■

Maria rushes out of the building after finishing a proposal that has to be in San Francisco by morning. As she races down the turnpike toward her son's day care center, she hears the 6:30 news on the radio. This is the third night in a row she's been late. She dreads the scene when she arrives; she's worried that the center's director will tell her that her son is no longer welcome.

Maria is a single mother. She was lucky to find this day care center. Many places are much more expensive, and have impossibly long waiting lists. She simply has to find a way to leave work earlier to protect his place in the center. How could she come up with more money for someplace else? For the first year after her divorce, her ex-husband was pretty reliable about sending support checks. Now that he's remarried, with two stepchildren, the checks have been coming late—if at all. ■

Gwen's father has been seriously ill with Parkinson's disease for over two years. At first he was able to manage quite well in the improvised apartment in her house, but now he needs constant supervision. Gwen hates the thought of sending him to a nursing home, so she has taken a six-month leave of absence from her job to care for him and to put together a long-term solution acceptable to them both.

She's had a hard time adjusting to her new, although temporary life. She's lived alone for years, and the presence of another person in her home has tested her patience and tolerance. And now that her father is so sick, Gwen has to provide a lot of physical care.

Today Gwen ran into someone from her office who told her that another co-worker, someone with less seniority and less direct experience, just received the promotion Gwen's been hoping for. Gwen is furious. ■

You may know people in Bob, Maria, or Gwen's situation. You may have had similar difficulties when the demands of work threw your private life into disarray. Or when pressures at home made it difficult, if not impossible, to meet the challenges of an exacting job. At these times, finding a balance seemed beyond your reach.

Sometimes it's easier to find answers for someone else. What advice would you give Bob, Maria, and Gwen?

1. What is Bob's main problem? _____

Maria's: _____

Gwen's: _____

2. How would you solve Bob's problem? _____

Maria's: _____

Gwen's: _____

3. What resources and/or assistance would you require to help Bob?

Maria:

Gwen:

4. As a result, what would you expect to happen?

Bob:

Maria:

Gwen:

WHAT IS A BALANCED LIFE?

Everyone has an idealized notion of what life should be like: You wake up refreshed, looking forward to a day spent doing meaningful work in comfortable surroundings among peers who cooperate with and respect each other. After a productive and focused eight hours, you return to your home to devote 100 percent of your energy, concern, and sympathies to your children, spouse, friends, and interests.

In this fantasy, the strength you gain from spending time with your loved ones feeds your creativity and energy at work. The success you experience

on the job builds your confidence and fosters a sense of well-being that enables you to respond lovingly and enthusiastically at home. In this imaginary world, your life is in perfect harmony.

The reality is frequently quite different. More often than not, people find that the inevitable stresses at work, such as job instability, time pressures, and demanding and unappreciative bosses, have a way of seeping into interactions at home. You probably can recall easily a time when you've vented your work frustrations on an innocent spouse, friend, or child.

Anxiety outside your professional life can inhibit your effectiveness on the job. For example, when a family member is sick, some people actually have to quit working until the crisis is over. The effort required to maneuver through the health care system, preserve family relationships, and manage the emotional upheaval can simply be too great. Marital difficulties,



drug or alcohol abuse, and financial troubles are just a few other personal stresses that can adversely affect job performance.

Given the multitude of stresses in our culture, it's hard to imagine, much less achieve, real balance in our lives. Perhaps the first step is to define it.

The Balanced Life

1. Think of someone you know who seems to lead a balanced life. What aspects of his or her life give you this impression?

2. What factors (external and internal) make it possible for this person to achieve balance? External factors include resources such as money or the presence of extended family. Internal factors include such factors as strong religious beliefs or self-confidence.

3. Based on this person, provide a brief definition of balance between home and career.

Definitions of balance will vary from person to person. Most will agree that in a balanced life, home and work complement each other, creating a sense of confidence and competence. We all strive to reach this ideal. So how do things get so far off track?

CHANGE: A MAJOR SOURCE OF STRESS

Change: A six-letter word that wields a great deal of power. Change is frightening. It stifles enthusiasm. It destroys a sense of well-being. Despite everyone's efforts to hold it at bay, it is a constant presence. The sooner you accept this and shift gears from avoiding change to learning how to control its effects, the sooner you will be able to achieve a meaningful balance.

As a first step toward this acceptance, look at some of the major sources of change today.

Changes in the Family

Divorce. Everybody knows the sad statistics: One in two marriages ends in divorce. As a result, almost one-fourth of American children will live in single-parent households for at least part of childhood.

From the inside, this translates into parents who feel torn between working harder to provide a better life for their children, and spending more time at home to ensure their children's emotional well-being. It translates into children who feel isolated or neglected while their parents—often out of necessity—hold jobs outside the home. It translates into thousands of families living in poverty, or nearly so.

Remarriage presents its own difficulties. The fantasy of blending two families into one loving supportive whole can vanish in the face of competition for parental attention, lack of privacy, and differences in parenting styles.

Mobility. Many families pack up their bags with alarming frequency, often relocating hundreds of miles from parents, siblings, and close friends. It's hard to get established in a new community, and the first few years can be quite lonely. So when they're in a pinch—needing someone