

ENTERPRISING RURAL FAMILIES: MAKING IT WORK BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY ASSESSMENT

Balancing work and family is an individual, couple, and family issue. It's much like trying to juggle balls of many different colors and sizes. Often a person isn't sure how many are up in the air, or what color or size they are, or which to catch next.

If families are going to be a nurturing place to raise children, if individuals are going to be successful and/or satisfied in their careers, and if people truly are going to introduce some balance into their lives, everyone needs to periodically assess what and how they are doing.

The following are some questions to ask yourself as you strive for balance. Think carefully and answer honestly: **Most of the time = 4; Some of the time = 3; Not as often as I should = 2; Rarely, if ever = 1.**

To what extent:

- _____ Are you currently creating a balance between personal, couple, family and career goals?
- _____ Do you schedule quiet, rejuvenating time for yourself each day?
- _____ Do you exercise three-five times a week? (30 minutes each time?)
- _____ Do you regularly share affection with others in your family?
- _____ Do you regularly discuss the allocation of individual and family resources (time, money, skills, personal qualities, support networks) to most efficiently use them to meet individual and family needs and goals?
- _____ Do you take advantage of community resources, such as quality child or adult day care, flexible work schedules, support groups, personal care, or religious and spiritual support?
- _____ Have you learned to communicate and manage conflict skillfully?
- _____ Are you able to use a collaborative, family-oriented problem solving plan when problems arise?
- _____ Do you have a "family time" schedule that works?
- _____ Do you schedule time, daily and weekly, separately for significant other and/or each child?
- _____ Do you have a flexible and responsible household chore schedule?
- _____ Do you leave your job worries at the office and your family worries at home?

Scoring:

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| 42-48 | You are doing extremely well. |
| 36-42 | You are coping okay. |
| 30-36 | You are muddling along. |
| 24-30 | Oops! The imbalance is getting greater. |
| 23 or less | No balance in your life. You need some help. |

The consequences of not being able to achieve a balance between the worlds of work and family are serious. Individuals are faced with the difficult task of maintaining a sense of identity, while permitting themselves to nurture and develop a sense of teamwork and cohesion with both partner and children. The demands of work pull them away from the family while the demands of family pull them into it. Either extreme can be problematic for individuals and their relationships.

Variation:

1. Have each appropriate member of the family complete this assessment on themselves, then meet as a family to compare and discuss.
2. Have each appropriate member of the family rate the family as a whole on each question. Then meet to compare and discuss.

(Adapted from: *Work and Family: Today's Juggling Act*, Herbert G. Lingren, Family Life Specialist, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, August 1998.)