Basics of Balancing Work and Family
Strategies for achieving a balance between your work and personal life

Presenter:
Diana Converse, M.S. Family Life Educator
University of Florida Extension / Hillsborough County
5339 CR 579 Seffner, Florida 33584
Converse@ufl.edu

Lesson # 1
Establish Priorities
Three spheres of life, getting out of the box

Lesson # 2
Start with Yourself
Life stage, goals, energy levels, expectations, self-care

Lesson #3
Take Control
Management of time and energy

Lesson # 4
Seek Support
Communicate, nurture relationships

Lesson # 5
Find the Balance
Attitudes, perspectives, strengths
Lesson 1

This workshop is a collective overview of ideas and strategies to help you achieve a balance in your work, personal and family life. There are no magic answers because making changes to find a balance takes time.

Throughout this hand-out are questions and worksheets that we highly recommend you spend time on. Your answers to each of these questions can give you direction down a path that’s right for you and your family.

These strategies may involve changing your attitudes, thoughts, beliefs and habits. Not easy to do – but the potential for improvement is great. It’s up to you!

What will it take to find a balance in your life? ____________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Balancing is a self-management process of finding what works for you and what doesn’t work for you. What do you wish you had more time for?

If only I had more time for __________________________________________

Why don’t you have time for this now? _________________________________

□ Yes □ No  Have you made it a priority?
□ Yes □ No  Are you paying enough attention to what is truly important to you?
□ Yes □ No  Do you prevent other things from encroaching on your time?
□ Yes □ No  Are you willing to make changes so you can find a balance?

Knowing what you value is the first step to achieving a balance that can give you a happy, fulfilled, productive life!

Each stage of our life has priorities, which change as we reach our goals or move into a new stage of life. It’s critical that you spend time thinking about your priorities. Make a list of your priorities:

___________________________________________  __________________________________________
___________________________________________  __________________________________________
___________________________________________  __________________________________________
___________________________________________  __________________________________________
___________________________________________  __________________________________________
The three spheres of life

The **Work Self** gives a sense of mastery, focus and a place to contribute.

The **Social Self** is about relationships with family members and friends.

The **Unique Self** reflects our interests, talents, self care and on-going education.

We need all three spheres to feel balanced, although they do not necessarily have to be equal all the time.

Which of your spheres gets short-changed the most? ______________________

Why are you disregarding this area? Be honest! ________________________

________________________________________________________________

Getting out of the box

We sometimes get “boxed in” without realizing it. Finding a balance may mean finding ways to get out of the box by asking ourselves the right questions.

What issues and concerns do you have about juggling your life?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

What needs to change so you can achieve a balance and get out of the box?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Decide what your priorities are and how much time you will spend on them. If you don’t someone else will!

Harvey MacKay
Lesson 2: Start with yourself

Each stage of our life can help determine our priorities and our focus of time, money and energy. Do you know your life stage right now?

Where are you in your career? ____________________________________________

In what stage is your personal life? _______________________________________

What parenting stage are you currently in? ______________________________

Establish life goals
Make a list of your goals:

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Know your energy levels
My energy is high in: ___________ My energy is low in: _________________

Changes I can make to my day to capitalize on my energy levels:

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Adjust your expectations
What expectations do you have of yourself? _____________________________

________________________________________________________________

What expectations do you have of others? ______________________________

________________________________________________________________

What expectations do others have of you? ______________________________

________________________________________________________________

Are these expectations realistic? How can you make adjustments to these expectations?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
Take care of yourself – your body
It’s important to nurture your body with a steady supply of nutritious food throughout the day, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins and avoiding excess sugar, fat, caffeine and alcohol.
How can you improve your diet? ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Exercise is important in maintaining a healthy weight, decreasing stress and improving the condition of your body organs.
How can you get enough exercise? ___________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Sleep and rest are important for mending your body.
How can you get enough sleep? ______________________________
________________________________________________________________

Take care of yourself – your mind
Managing your stress is essential for balancing your life. Three ways you can reduce your stress:
_____________________    ____________________   ____________________

People who can offer you support include:
_____________________   ____________________   ____________________

List five things that are good about your life or that you do well:
1. __________________ _________________________________________
2. __________________ _________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________
4. ___________________________________________________________
5. __________________ _________________________________________

How can you take care of your mental health, such as managing guilt, offering forgiveness, letting go and moving on?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
Lesson 3: Take control

Managing your time and energy becomes easier when we know what our priorities are. This means asking yourself questions throughout the day that will give you guidance in how you spend your day. You are the one to decide how much time and energy you are willing to invest in each activity, responsibility or person. Questions to ask: What’s the best use of my time right now? How much time and energy should I invest in this?

What are your three major time wasters and what can you do to change this?

1. ______________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________

Plan, plan, plan
Be a list-maker of what you want to accomplish, purchase or grant time to. You have to make time for family and personal time – it won’t just happen.

Set limits and delegate to others
When saying “Yes” to a request for your time and energy, ask yourself if it fits your priorities, will help you reach a goal or will bring satisfaction to your life. Give yourself ten seconds to respond by telling the person that you will think about it and get back with them.

Delegating is an art and begins with the understanding that you can’t do it all. Everyone needs help. We just have to learn how to ask for it. Delegate to people who are capable of the task, teach them how to do it and then let go of it. Hiring help can also free up time for your priorities.

What can I delegate and to whom can I delegate to?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Organizing and creating routines
Organizing and clearing clutter helps you work smarter. Clutter simply represents an unmade decision. Creating systems and managing your tasks with routines and schedules can also help you feel more organized and in control of your space.

Goal for organizing: ____________________________________________
Stop procrastinating
Why people procrastinate:
- Poor work habits
- Trying to be perfect
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Would just rather do something else

If you procrastinate, think about how you can break large tasks into smaller ones.

Simplify
Simplifying by being smarter in how you accomplish a task can help you find a balance. Seeking a low-maintenance routine, schedule or environment can reduce time and labor. What ideas do you have for simplifying your life?

Lesson 4: Seek support from others
Spending time with others by establishing routines with people who are important to you contributes to life balance. What ideas do you have for connecting with people?

Communicate your needs to others
Effectively communicating with people can help you get your needs met. Tell them what you need while keeping the doors of communication open. Use “I” messages to send a message without blaming or criticizing. What would you like to communicate? For practice, complete these sentences:

“I need you to ________________________________________________.”

“I would appreciate it if you would ________________________________.”

“I would like it if you would ________________________________.”

“When you _________________________, I feel ________________________.”
Nurture relationships
Relationships with the right people help reduce our stress and provide us with the energy to maintain a career, household and family. Seek out people who make you feel happy and balanced. Avoid negative people as much as you can. Find ways to communicate with difficult people. Maintain a professional relationship with co-workers. If you are in a relationship that is not healthy for you, what can you do to change this?

Maintain your role as a parent
If you are raising children this role is a high priority because you are raising our next generation of citizens. Be prepared for each stage by learning as you go!

The family, as an organization, is important to society because it’s where we learn:

- To communicate with others
- The difference between right and wrong
- To develop a work ethic
- About morals and values
- To develop our own values
- To be productive adults.

What would help you enhance your role as a parent?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Lesson 5 – Find the Balance

Adopt positive attitudes and perceptions by limiting your negative self-talk and changing any negative perceptions you may have.

What negative self-talk do you give yourself?

________________________________________________________________

Turn those messages into positive self-talk:

________________________________________________________________

Focus on the positive by listing your accomplishments:

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
**Spiritual strength**

Spirituality refers to the inner part of us that provides meaning and purpose to our lives. Each person strengthens their connection or spirituality according to their own personal beliefs and values. From this, they can gain inspiration, strength, connection, morality and guidance, which can add balance to life.

People find spiritual strength in many different ways.
- Personal – a meaning and value in one’s own life
- Communal - quality and depth of inter-personal relationships
- Environmental – sense of awe for nature
- Transcendental – faith in a relationship with someone or something beyond the human level

**Be committed**

Remember, managing your roles is a process that changes as your life-stages change. This requires being committed to finding what works for you and what doesn’t work for you. Review your priority list, your goals and your behaviors to see where you can make a commitment to change.

**Give to others**

Volunteering (when you have time and energy for it) offers many benefits:
- Helps improve interpersonal skills
- Builds communication skills
- Increases one’s understanding of people
- Increases our knowledge of community issues
- Improves job skills
- Feels good!

Do you have time and are you willing to give to others? Ideas:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Seize the moment**

Each life stage has its moments. Understand that your life will not always be the way it is today. Learn to live each day to it’s fullest by seizing the moment. Instead of wishing things were better, make them better!

Five years from now, what will matter to you? ____________________________

Ten or twenty years from now, what will matter to you? ____________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Plan your life around your answer!**