

A Life Committed to Shared Care

In our new 24/7 workplace you could work anywhere all the time. Instead, Shared Care parents clarify what they want time and energy for outside of work and then look for *win-win* solutions at work and home. What's a *win-win* solution? It's a solution that is good for work *and* good for you! Men and women who learn this approach apply the skills throughout their lives, creating benefits for themselves, their families and their workplaces. They also help challenge outdated gender norms at work and home.

Triggers for Traditional Roles

< The Baby is Born

Although many families are satisfied using full time infant care, many others feel ambivalent about this choice. For families who prefer partial or full time parental care, most often mothers are the ones to flex work or temporarily drop out of work.

< Sick Child Care

< School Closings

< After School Care

Parents with school age children must arrange for after school care as well as planned and unplanned changes in school schedules. Mothers often become the ones who flex to accommodate these changes.

< Summertime Care

How families solve care needs over the summer is another example of where there can be wide differences of opinion on what is the "right" solution - some believe in creating full year schools, others value having summers as a time for families to "slow down" and engage in activities that are different from the rest of the year. For most families, summers take an enormous amount of planning and coordination, often disproportionately organized by mothers.

< Norms Around Pay and Promotion

For too many organizations, employees who put work before all other responsibilities enhance their chances of pay increases and being promoted. Often this means parents "reduce their risk" by having only one parent make changes to reduce or significantly flex their work hours. Consciously or unconsciously, couples often do this in a very gendered way.

Opportunities for Change

< The Baby is Born

Parents committed to Shared Care, work together as a team to meet the needs of their infant by setting boundaries at work and/or by flexing or reducing their work hours. Many parents do this in combination with paid child care, some get help from extended family, others provide all of the care themselves.

< Sick Child Care

< School Closings

< After School Care

Shared Care parents often rely on a combination of paid, informal and parental care for after school care. In addition, their growing competency finding win-win solutions increases their skills in managing planned and unplanned changes in their children's schedules from illness and school closings.

< Summertime Care

Unless a spouse has a job that follows the school calendar, shared care parents find summers just as complex as other families. However, they learn to address these challenges as a joint concern, and many even learn ways to make the most of the "extra" family time that becomes available over the summers.

< Norms Around Pay and Promotion

Shared Care parents face the same challenges around pay and promotions at work, but they work as a team to navigate past these challenges and focus on their long term combined success. Sometimes this even requires backing each other to leave an unsupportive workplace. Together they evaluate each new opportunity from a win-win perspective - how does this option enhance the work we do *and* our lives outside of work?

< *The Teen Years*

When children become teens, suddenly families discover children are “too old” for after school care, many also become aware that children will soon be leaving “the nest.” For professional families, this stage often corresponds with a point in their careers where they are promoted and have increasing responsibilities at work. The combination of these forces again too often results in couples adopting more traditional gender roles at work and home.

< *Manager and Leadership Jobs*

Most workplaces believe leadership jobs require a more than full time commitment to work. Therefore, in order to be considered for a manager or leadership job, most employees are asked to work full time, or return to work full time. In addition, because leadership jobs require a complex depth of knowledge and unique set of relationships, the complexity of this work can make redesigning the job of a leader to support a more integrated approach to work and life feel daunting. For these, and many other reasons, it’s not surprising that a great number of leaders fall into traditional roles at work and home – where one parent works more than full time and the other significantly flexes or decides to stay home. For some women leaders this may even lead to the decision not to have children.

< *Elder Care*

In families where there has been a long term pattern of mothers taking primary responsibility for “care work,” when aging relatives begin to require extra time and attention - even when the relative is related to the father - mothers often by default become the provider of this care. In addition, because many professional couples wait to have children until their late 30’s, it is no longer unusual to have elder care and child care responsibilities at the same time.

< *The Teen Years*

In contrast, Shared Care parents have been building a collective tool box to manage this new stage of work/family balance - both as parents and integrated workers. Working as a team, they have learned to redesign both work and family to meet the changes that come their way. As a result, they have a wide repertoire of solutions they can pull from to meet the needs of this unique and more fluid period of parenting, and even doing this while meeting increasing responsibilities at work.

< *Manager and Leadership Jobs*

Over the years ThirdPath has discovered that professionals who approach work and life in an integrated way, when promoted, bring unique skill to their roles as managers or leaders. We call these individuals “Whole Life Leaders.” Not surprisingly, these leaders’ commitment to both their families and their workplaces, bring benefits to both spheres. We also learned Whole Life Leaders succeed because they develop a team of people they can rely on at work. Therefore, out of their own best interest, Whole Life Leaders become a vehicle for promoting wider change - both as role models at work and home - and because they support their team in meeting their own work/life balance goals.

< *Elder Care*

Once again Shared Care parents re-apply the tools for finding win-win solutions as they share in the responsibilities of this new chapter in their lives. Many Shared Care parents have also developed ways to include extended family in different aspects of their child care needs. At this new stage, the close ties they developed often help as grown children navigate the new and uncharted territory of caring for aging parents.

Listed below are a few of our services – contact us if you’d like to learn more!

Work-Family Options Workbook and Coaching - Couples can purchase a stand alone work book or sign up for coaching to help “get on the same page” and create their own unique vision for balancing work and family. The cost of the workbook is \$15.00 + \$4.00 shipping & handling. To learn more about couples’ coaching, email us at: Time4Life@thirdpath.org . Couples’ coaching includes a complimentary copy of the Work-Family Options Workbook.

Services for Whole Life Leaders - Are you a “Whole Life Leader” – someone who has created a life that encompasses family, work, health, friends and personal interests in a meaningful arrangement? Or would you like to become a leader who has done this? Contact us to hear more about the special services we have available for you.