

CREATING TIME FOR THE ONES WE LOVE ...

Sunday I woke up thinking about the upcoming workweek. I had a big task to complete and less time to work on it because of a workshop I was conducting.

So I asked myself the following questions:

Did I really need to work over the weekend? Sometimes there is just too much work for one week and getting some of it done over the weekend is the best option.

Was immediately jumping into the next big project the best use of my time? Yes, my upcoming week looked a little challenging, but if I carefully limited my weekend work to strategic thinking, then maybe I could start the work week with fresh ideas for how to get the big task done in less time.

Was working over the weekends becoming a pattern for me, and if so, why? If you assign a group of 10 people work that actual requires 15 people to complete, they will end up "flexing" work into the evenings and weekends just to try to get it all done. Was this "weekend work" a sign that my team had taken on too much work? Luckily this didn't seem to be the case.

In my household - like many households - weekends are an important time for us to relax and recharge. They are also an important time for all of us to invest in the people we love.

I decided to spend a short amount of time quietly reviewing my work. I had a couple of good ideas around how to approach it more effectively. I then spent the rest of the day enjoying my family.

It turns out, both our families and our workplaces benefit when we set limits around work.

We can see this in Tony Schwartz's excellent article, [Why You Hate Work](#).

The book, [Mating in Captivity](#), also underscores the importance of my decision, and the value of investing time in our relationships to support long lasting love.

Read on for a sneak preview. You'll also get a chance to learn more about next week's Thursdays with ThirdPath call where we will explore the connection between flex and love.

Happy almost Valentine's Day!
/Jessica and the ThirdPath team

The Real Story Behind Gender Roles, Sex and Marriage...

*Esther Perel's book **Mating in Captivity** should be a must read for every couple. As it turns out, who does the housework doesn't really capture the whole story behind passionate marriages.*

If you ask Esther Perel what the challenges are for couples in the bedroom, she'd say *"when my patients cite the all-too-real stresses of modern life to explain why romance went south, I suggest there may be more to it."* (p88)

Sometimes the issue might be connected to "deeper problems in the relationship." With this in mind, her book provides helpful case studies couples can use to rekindle the flames.

However, reading this book you will quickly discover what Ms. Perel believes contributes most significantly to the lack of passion in marriages is: *our culture's deep ambivalence around sexuality, and in particular "eroticism in the context of family."* (p127)

The case study she shares in her chapter on parenthood highlights **Stephanie and Warren** - a couple where the father works full time and the mom cares for the children. The author explains how in some cases, our ambivalence around being parents while also continuing to enjoy our sexuality, means the energy once channeled towards the couple, is now channeled only towards the children. She observes:

"There are regular playdates for Jake but only three dates a year for Stephanie and Warren: two birthday and one anniversary. There is the latest in kids' fashion for Sophia, but only college sweats for Stephanie. The couple rents twenty G-rated movies for every R-rated movie. And there are languorous hugs for the kids while the grown-ups must survive on a diet of quick pecks." (p131)

To avoid this problem, she advises couples:

"Eroticism in the home requires active engagement and willful intent ... We must unpack our ambivalence about pleasure, and challenge our pervasive discomfort with sexuality, particularly in the context of family."

Yes, couples will benefit from reducing the stresses they feel at home. But she also reminds us, "the couples who maintain an erotic connection are, above all, the couples who value it." When these couples sense this shared priority is in crisis, they make intentional changes to "keep the spark alive."

To learn more about how to balance work, family and love, go to the "Meet the Pioneers" section of our website and listen to a few of our Shared Care couples reveal their secrets.

Everything you wanted to know but were too busy to ask about sex and housework

Below is an excerpt from an article Brigid Schulte wrote for the Washington Post to set the record straight about the controversial New York Times article, Sexless but Equal.

Brigid Schulte begins the article she wrote exploring the connection between sex and housework by highlighting the research of Constance Gager, a researcher who used the very same data set referenced in the NY Times piece - Sexless but Equal - but Gagner's research came to a very different conclusion than what was reported in NY Times article.

When measuring the total amount of housework completed, Gager uncovered that **men who did more housework had more sex...** "When our study came out, people kept fighting us, they couldn't believe that if men did more housework they'd have more sex. Nobody wanted to hear it."

However, as Schulte then points, **the data set that had been used for both of these research projects was 20 years old.** A lot had changed over this period of time. For example, Schulte references Pew Research that found in 1990 "47 percent of adults said sharing household chores was an important factor in a successful marriage. Today, 72 percent do, ranking chore-sharing as the third most important factor in a good marriage, just behind faithfulness and sex, and ahead of income and having adequate housing."

Schulte then goes on to make the point, with so many people "working long hours and spending so much time with kids, never mind cooking and cleaning, **people don't have much time for sex anymore - they're too exhausted.** A roll in the hay can instead become just another nagging chore to be checked off the To Do list."

As she digs a little deeper, Schulte learns, "the National Health and Social Life Survey estimates that **one in every five marriages in the U.S. are what it deems 'sexless' - engaging in sex less than ten times a year.**"

What is the cause of this troubling statistic? Schulte discovers, "**we don't know as much about sex as we think.**" She quotes the author Natalie Angier, who wrote, *Woman: An Intimate Geography*, who challenges the "the long-held assumptions that women just don't want sex as much as men do, and have to be pursued, won over with chocolates, wowed by manly wood chopping or obligated after a grudging bout of vacuuming."

In it Natalie writes, "How can [women] know what is 'natural' for us when we are treated as unnatural for wanting our lust?"

Schulte concludes: "Rather than mourn the supposedly sexier unions of the past ... why not begin to imagine something entirely new - not only a fairer division of labor, but a more honest expression of our human sexuality? Now that's something to fantasize about."