

The Secret to Work, Love, and Play

I was recently speaking with some of the amazing leaders I work with ...

Leaders who have been able to advance into positions of leadership while flexing or working reduced hours to create time for their lives.

As I listened to them describe their lives, once again I was struck by how much their organizations gain from their dual commitment to work and life.

One of the reduced hour leaders told us how she had found herself unexpectedly managing a half dozen new employees a few months ago. Today she was describing how she had pushed back at this temporary period of overwork to rethink things. Working with her team she had developed new ways to simplify work processes and reduce everyone's workload, including the time spent on fire drills - those last minute work demands that make everyone's life crazy.

Once again it was a person's commitment to both work *and* life that spurred the ideas for how to improve work. Lotte Bailyn taught us this truth over ten years ago in her book, *Breaking the Mold*. Yet it never ceases to amaze me when I see this powerful truth in action.

But this leader wasn't just doing things differently at work.

She was also doing things differently at home. She and her partner had always shared in the care of their children. They also work together to make sure they don't over commit to things - so they have time to recharge as a family.

Like the wisdom Asha Dornfest shares in her book - *The Minimalist Parent* - this leader was "keeping or adding the stuff that increases joy meaning and connection in life, and getting rid of the stuff that doesn't."

This was surprising gift #1

It turns out, when you seek more joy and meaningful connection in your life - even work improves!

Asha Dornfest is one of the authors who will be joining us this week for our Thursdays with ThirdPath call. Jim Higley, author of Bobblehead Dad will also join us. Both will be talking about the power of minimalist parenting.

Surprising gift #2

It also turns out, no matter what type of family you have, you can practice this "minimalist" approach. Asha is the primary parent in her family, Jim is a single parent of school age children, and the leader in my story is a shared care parent. But all discovered the same thing - holding on to what's important in life and letting go of what is less important - helps decrease our sense of overwhelm and create more satisfying lives.

Give yourself these gifts.

Read on for an excerpt from Asha's book and a list of other helpful books. Or laugh out loud from an excerpt from Brigid Schulte's* book.

Here's for making more time for the things that really matter.
/Jessica and the ThirdPath team

Towards Time Serenity ...

The wisdom in Brigid Schulte's book is showing us how outdated gender norms, or new norms around intensive parenting, all join together to contribute to our sense of overwhelm.

Her book also provides insights into the journey we must travel to push back and reclaim time serenity. As one [recent reviewer](#) noted:

"There is much wisdom here. Schulte points out that the Greeks had two words for time. Chronos is the time that is lived by the clock. And Kairos is 'when time is not a number on a dial but the enormity of the experience inside it'.

"Kairos time - is the time that makes you stop short, look at someone you love or at the glint of dew on the grass - and feel gratitude. The powerful message here is to seize that time, breathe yourself into peacefulness and say: 'Here is the best place to be.'"

This reviewer goes on to say how the book is a "masterly combination of social observation, interviews, statistics and riveting human stories." But it is also Brigid's personal insights that make it so readable. Here's one from her chapter on the stalled gender revolution.

"It's 2pm Thanksgiving Day. In three hours, eighteen friends will arrive for the feast we've been hosting for years. In the previous days, while I worked full time, I'd looked for recipes, planned the menu, put together a shopping list, and gone to the grocery store three times. I'd obsessed on finding a tablecloth and raced around on my lunch breaks to find one. I'd hauled folding tables and chairs from a friend's basement one evening. I'd baked pies with all the children who would be coming over. I'd stayed up late several nights in a row chopping vegetable and prepping for the elaborate dishes I love to cook and get around to only once a year ... The twenty-pound Turkey is still pink and raw, waiting to go in the oven. The table is still not set and the kitchen, covered in pots and pans, mounds of vegetables, spilled flour, and all manner of foodstuff, looks like a bomb has gone off.

"Tom strolls over to the refrigerator. I think he's about to start cooking the turkey. He pulls out a six-pack of beer. He announces, "I'm going to go over and help Peter cook his turkey." ...

"As Tom walks out the door, I am both livid and, deep in my bones, flattened by a crushing disappointment. When we got married, we promised to be partners. ... But our division of labor had become laughably, ridiculously, irrationally, frustratingly unfair.

Minimalist Parenting: Enjoy modern life more by doing less

"Part of the modern tendency toward overparenting seems to be driven by a fear of scarcity, whether it relates to material goods or spots at day care or enrollment in the 'best' school."

Authors Christine Koh and Asha Dorngeest don't buy it.

"We believe there's enough to go around. Sure, there's only one valedictorian and one first-chair violin. But the idea that your child's future success hinges on this detail is an illusion.

"We love our children so desperately that it's too frightening to accept that their futures are, in part, a result of circumstance. Their best chance for a happy adulthood lies in discovering and nurturing their strengths, cultivating flexibility in the face of obstacles, and developing the tools to forge lasting relationships ...

"Everyone can do less and still raise healthy, happy, intelligent, and responsible kids."

"The key lies in fine-tuning your filters so only the important stuff makes it onto your worthy-of-attention radar. The question goes from "How do I fit everything in?" to "What's most important to fit in?" The beauty of this approach: when you minimize your schedule, you have a shot at ending most days with the knowledge that you did most of the things that matter.

"Activities that are part of a balanced life means there is still time for play, chores, reflection, family togetherness and rest."

Shared Care parents have been long time supporters of this approach. Learn more by reading one of these great books about Shared Care:

- ***The Libra Solution, Shedding Excess and Redefining Success at Work and at Home***, by Lisa D'Annolfo Levey (2012)
- ***Equally Shared Parenting***, by Marc and Amy Vachon (2011)
- ***This is Not How I Thought It Would Be***, by Kristin Maschka (2009)
- ***Daddy on Board***, by Dottie Lamm (2007)
- ***How to Avoid the Mommy Trap***, by Julie Shields (2003)

Want to Learn More?

Overwhelmed, Work, Love and Play When No One Has the Time - is available in bookstores starting today!