

Feeling overwhelmed? There is something we can do about it ...

Starting in October, combating overwhelm is the theme for this year's Thursdays with ThirdPath calls. But before we can make headway on this topic, we need to first agree that it as a problem that can only be changed by men's and women's combined effort.

We're not just saying this because we're experts in helping [Shared Care families](#) and [Integrated leaders](#). ***We're saying this because we truly believe the only way we can create a more humane pace of life - that is both good for business and good for our families and communities - is by having men and women work together to make this change.***

However, over the last 14 years we've also learned that the path towards helping men follow more integrated lives is complex - with multiple forces vying to derail the process. But let's not get on OUR soap box about this issue - instead we'd love to hear from YOU!

Do you think combating overwhelm requires men's involvement and what is the biggest hurdle men face to make change - is it:

- a) Work norms that reward people who work the longest hours?
- b) Colleagues and bosses who believe "real men" like working long hours?
- c) Norms at home - gate keeping spouses, impossible financial demands?
- d) Is it lack of supportive public policy? (By the way, what would that look like?)
- e) Or is it all of the above?

Have you faced one of these barriers? Email us and let us know what you've experienced and what you learned.

Or, read on to see what other prominent thinkers have recently said on the topic:

- **Joan Williams** - helps us understand how the "the hours problem" reinforces gender norms
- **Tim Mauer** - reports on families who have pushed back at this "hours problem" in non traditional ways
- **Scott Behson** - provides great examples of the steps men can take to push for more change

Or, see the visual depiction of this issue in an inspiring cartoon by [Gavin Aung Than](#).

Let us know what you think. Is it critical to include men in the change process and what's the biggest barrier they face?

We look forward to sharing some of your answers in our next email update!

/Jessica and the ThirdPath Team

The Hours Problem ... and more

In **Joan Williams** [HBR Blog post](#), she argues: “the long hours problem ... is a key reason why the percentage of women in top jobs has stalled at about 14 percent, a number that has barely budged in the past decade.”

Why do mothers, and increasingly fathers, refuse to work 50+ hours a week? She jokes, “They have this one little hang-up; they want to see their children awake.”

She then continues, ***“If institutions are serious about advancing women, they’ll have to address the hours problem — that’s the only way to get a critical mass of women poised for leadership. But we’ll never address the hours problem until we open up a conversation about what drives it.”***

Joan makes the case that the drivers are linked to how we define success - both by class and masculinity. She also speculates that these drivers are much more powerful in keeping us stuck in our old ways than all of our combined efforts to prove how a different approach would be “good for the bottom line.”

So how do we push back at these deeply entrenched narratives? The method, we at ThirdPath have found to be most successful is to focus on the men and women who are already doing things differently.

For example, [click here](#) for **Tim Mauer’s** recent article where he describes two families who have pushed back in non-traditional ways at the hours problem.

Or, [click here](#) to listen to two dads talk about how they’ve shared in the care of their children by switching roles with their wives – one now works 1 day a week, the other 20 hours a week. Both tell how this change has positively impacted them as men, fathers, and husbands.

In contrast, one dad describes the challenge many men (and women) face when they try to push back at the hours problem in the following quote:

“When the boss needs something and you know the desired timeline is Right Bloody Now, even if it was your fondest desire to be home in time for dinner, or bedtime, just once this month/year, the reality is that you do what your boss desires. The reality is that in this economic environment, there will be someone else to replace you once you’ve established that you are not entirely the property of the company. Of course the precious few years with your kids as they grow up, or with your spouse before you grow too old, are irreplaceable. But these days, a job is irreplaceable too, and houses, food, college, etc., are not free.”

Yes! This might be the case in too many workplaces - ***but the progressive fathers, mothers and leaders we’ve been working with would argue there is a better way, and collectively we can make it happen.***

Steps Dads Can Take to Change Our Workplace Culture

By Scott Behson (Previously posted on *Fathers Work and Family*)

You know what? I'm tired of waiting (waiting) waiting on the work-world to change. In fact, I worry that unless my generation of busy involved dads don't start making change happen, company cultures will remain unchallenged, and more and more dads will have to struggle seemingly alone.

So how can we start making changes? I'm glad you asked. I have a few ideas ...

Be the change you wish to see

If you have the security, flexibility, courage and inclination (I recognize some may have more ability to do this at work than others), here are a few steps we can take in our workplaces to make it easier for dads to discuss and address work-family demands at our workplaces. We can even make changes around the first step today.

1. Talk about your family and ask other men about theirs
2. Make sure other men in your workplace see you occasionally use work flexibility for family reasons
3. Take a paternity leave
4. Start a Beer Fire! Organize a group of male friends, or a group of male coworkers to discuss life outside of work

[Read more](#) ...

Mark your calendars ...

Our bi-annual ILA Forum - Friday May 2nd, 2014

ILAs are coaches, and career and couples counselors, who help ThirdPath expand our reach.

Our first ever Shared Care Reunion - Saturday May 3rd, 2014

A day for Shared Care parents and parents-to-be to meet one another and celebrate!

Want to learn more? Email us at Time4Life@ThirdPath.org