

Work/Life Balance Discussion

November 18, 2012

Women's Lounge, Annual Meeting in Chicago

Approximately eight women attended, mainly but not only graduate students. There were two assistant professors, a psychotherapist, and a woman who had been a pastor for many years and was returning to graduate school.

Personal Issues

Women's double job; shared housework is a sine qua non of equality

Equality is not a reality

Work and family care necessitated postponing schooling

Needing to make ad hoc care child-care arrangements while working full-time

How do we empower each other to say, this is what I need?

Hard to maintain self-care when one is over-busy

Concerned about having children and finding a job in a supportive environment

Deep-seated gender role expectations are a problem

Even when the man is the primary care-giver, deep-seated gender stereotypes are still at play

Many senior women don't say no to anything

How do we respect the blood, sweat and tears of past generations without replicating their dysfunction?

Need to decide, what are you willing to do?

Negotiating new boundaries on moving from graduate student to faculty member

The fact that women are advised to ask for less in negotiating salaries, etc.

Personal Strategies

Eat right and exercise regularly (though it is difficult when you are always running)

Disconnect from technology regularly

Take a month off during the summer and do something to refresh

Make family time that's sacrosanct

Have lots of conversation partners—colleagues, a good therapist, 12-step group

Have a massage and turn off your mind

Mental self-care is important

Ask for more

Don't answer the phone during your best work hours

Map your own cycle, and make a schedule that works for you but is flexible, making times in the day for different tasks (including sleep)

Don't have children

We have to make space to be less than perfect

Claim your agency before you have to

Institutional Issues/Strategies

Maternity leave policy is essential

Institutions need to have clear, written policies in place

Men with young children are more open to hearing about family needs

Places on campus to pump are needed

Childcare/babysitting centers
Support groups in institutions
Connect junior faculty with senior women
Women-of-color-mentoring program

Meaning Questions

Balance means being able to access all parts of yourself
Americans have a serious cultural problem around work
Work is an important part of life and identity but becomes a problem when it is all in all
The life in work/life balance is physical health
Balance means work/life integration rather than compartmentalization
A job should allow for teaching, research, and time to explore other parts of the self
The ideal is work that doesn't feel like work, that *helps* with balance and enhances life