

# REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS

OCTOBER 2010

## Finding a balance in life

**D**id you miss your daughter's last soccer game? Want to volunteer for Meals on Wheels? Wish you could coach your son's Little League team?

You're not alone. Employees and companies alike have grown all too accustomed to long hours and hectic work environments. Today's market and economy make a saner, healthier work environment a strong selling point.

### **Take advantage of company programs**

If you need more flexible hours to spend with your children, volunteer with at-risk teens or care for an elderly parent, talk to your supervisor. Maybe starting earlier or staying an extra hour 2 days a week would accommodate your personal needs. Offer to try it for a month and then meet with your supervisor to re-evaluate the arrangement. As long as your supervisor is convinced that the same number of hours will be worked and the same amount of work will get done without overburdening your co-workers, he/she may be agreeable.

If more flexible time isn't possible, check out the resources your company may offer through the human resources department or its employee assistance program. There may be an after-school program or elder care agency that could help you relieve some pressure from your schedule.

### **"Employees and companies alike have grown all too accustomed to long hours and hectic work environments."**

When you get home from work, try not to vegetate in front of the TV. Spend time reading to your kids, helping them with homework, going for a walk, cooking a meal together or just talking around the dinner table. If you live alone, stay in touch with friends to avoid feeling isolated. Talking about a problem or sharing an accomplishment with a sympathetic listener can go a long way in reducing stress.

### **Find creative outlets**

Pursue a hobby or creative outlet to help you recharge your batteries. Whether it's sketching, woodworking, playing sports or singing in a choir, outside interests can be relaxing and re-energizing.

Take care of your health – watch your diet and get plenty of sleep. Take some quiet time to sit in the park and think or just to enjoy your backyard or garden. Be as serious about scheduling leisure and family time as you are about your work schedule. You'll find that you get more out of life.

### **Talking shop**

According to Ellen Galinsky, author of *Ask the Children*, only about two in five children think their parents like their work a lot, compared with 62.5 percent of parents who say they do. Comments like "I have to go to work" or "I wish I didn't have to leave," give children a grim picture of the workplace and the potential of their own future careers.

Teachers and psychologists say it's important for parents to think before repeatedly complaining about work in front of their kids. Instead, hearing parents talk about their accomplishments or sense of satisfaction for a project completed, can give children a more balanced view of the world of work.

*By Rosalyn Kulick  
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