

Foundations

Winter

Career in Confinement

Two children were playing house. The one playing the mother hugged the one being the child. “Have a good day at school, honey,” she told her. “I’ll be working from home today.”

Welcome to the current world of careers. Even before the pandemic, a shift toward working remotely had begun. Now the shift is seismic. Fewer and fewer people are walking out the door and off to a workplace. The new job landscape not only means that the atmosphere is different, it means the stresses are different too.

New Language

This new reality requires a shift in our language to match up to the current trend. “Working outside the home” usually referred to paid employment, whereas those who worked at home were usually moms whose unpaid work was taking care of their house and children. It was a way to honor the stay-at-home moms. Again, now there are many stay-at-home dads, as well as those that do their paid work at home.

Becoming a Zoom Expert

Another major change is the use of online video sites that connect us with our coworkers, among others. School by zoom, office meetings by zoom, as well as connecting with isolated relatives has led to phrases like “Zoom fatigue,” breakout rooms” and “mute yourselves” being part of everyday parlance.

Working Remotely-Downsides

Working from home has its drawbacks.



You are subject to all the distractions home affords. Every phone call that comes in from a salesperson or political party, every siren going by, has the power to distract you. Even the lure of the snacks in the kitchen or the basketball hoop outside can pull you away from your assigned task. And all the drawbacks are not those that pull you away from work tasks. Because the work is always there you may find yourself going back to it after dinner or on the weekend, time that should really be family time.

...and Benefits

Of course, look at the time (and money) you save on your commute. An IT worker that wanted to move closer to family calculated that for his daily commute he could afford to fly back to his home office once a month. Clothing is another expense remote workers usually find they save on. Even if you dress for

the work part of your day, you really only have to change your shirt – no one ever see you from the waist down! And often you can tailor your hours to fit in things like doctor’s appointments or family events. If you have children, it will allow you to monitor part of their school day if they are also in virtual school.

Effect on Your Marriage

On balance, how does this new reality affect marriages? Because the phenomenon is new, there are no general guidelines. But what each of us needs to do is develop the tools we need for the situation we find ourselves in. This issue of *Foundations* will try to take the broad view of careers and how to navigate the family/work balance no matter where you find yourselves working. The right communication tools, the right boundaries, the ability to be flexible and cooperative will be assets wherever you and your spouse end up.

Marriage, Work and Music

Do you like to listen to music while you are at work? Is it allowed? Lots of people enjoy having music playing in the background while they do their tasks either at work or at home. Some people enjoy listening to podcasts or talk shows at work and don't find it a distraction.

Adjusting the Volume

You might consider your marriage as a kind of background music to the rest of your life. Your relationship is often not the thing at the front of your mind as you go about your day's activities but it is there just the same. If your relationship is very good the effect on your work life is probably very positive. Happy people are more productive and not as easily distracted, while workers struggling with relationship issues are often less productive. It's like having really bad music playing while you are trying to concentrate.



A Question of Balance

Most couples don't spend a majority of their time thinking about their relationship or doing marriage enrichment activities. They are too busy earning a living, providing for their children, or working on meeting a deadline for a project. The problem occurs

when you lose track of what is most important –your love for each other. You are likely to have lots of different jobs over your lifetime but hopefully you will only have one great marriage.

Keeping it Positive

As you pursue your career and find the path to your earning a living, take a moment to bring the background music of your relationship to the front of your mind. Do you like what you hear? Does it bring a smile to your face? Do you need to make some changes so that your lives can be more positive and productive? What might some of these changes be? Here are a few, they are simple but that doesn't mean they are easy.

Small Change

Remember to tell your spouse that you love them. How often is hard to say but a general rule might be a little more often than you do now.

Make time for each other. It might mean getting up a little earlier to have a cup of coffee together or talking for a few minutes before you go to bed.

Ask your spouse for ideas about what would feel good to them. If you haven't taken the [Love Languages quiz](#), consider doing that. Then you'll know that you're speaking your spouse's love language.

And finally, treat your spouse with at least as much respect as you do your co-workers.

Well, pretty much the first thing you need to know about career advancement is to dress for the job you WANT, not the job you have.



4 F's for 2020



You both have jobs and they are important. They take a huge amount of your time. But the most important person in your life is probably not with you at work. And even if the two of you do work together, it's hard to be doing the work of your marriage while doing the work of your employment. What are the ingredients that will help you to keep your relationship on track despite all the time you need to spend at work?

FLEXIBILITY

The more you can be flexible about expectations, the easier it will be for the two of you to enjoy your time at home together. Be flexible about chores, about dinner time, about plans you've made. It will still sting if work gets in the way of a weekend away you'd planned, but being willing to shift the plans so that you leave later, come back earlier, or choose a different weekend is key. It doesn't mean, though, that it's okay for one of you to keep asking the other one to be flexible. That brings us to the second "F".

FAIRNESS

You both have demands on you, and so each has to be fair about what you ask from the other. You can't work

late every night without making some accommodation. When you work late, you've taken away from the common time your spouse expects to share with you, and likely from your share of the household tasks. How will you compensate for that? If you earn more, will you take her to dinner next week? Will you buy him headphones he wanted but couldn't afford? And the loss of your presence should be acknowledged.

FUN

Make sure to keep some fun in your life. With both of you working and a household to maintain, you'll need times to look forward to. It's tempting to fill the non-working hours with chores, and make fun time a low priority. But those relaxing times, even if they are brief, are so good for you! It is easier to get out of bed when you know that sometime during the day there is a coffee break you'll

share, a show you'll watch, a walk before dinner - something you promise each other that's enjoyable to both.

FAITH

This doesn't refer to religious faith (although it could encompass that as well). This is faith in each other, the belief that the work each one does is meant to build up your common life. It is a belief that neither will make friendships at work more important than your friendship with one another. That faith is the rock bottom of all your marriage, and it is so important to have that faith as you each go off to work. You may leave with an unresolved conflict, but you go with the faith that you'll figure out your problems together. A day is a long time to have to live with an unresolved disagreement. A business trip is even longer. But if you believe that your spouse makes your relationship a priority, you'll work it out.

This is the only report card where you'll be happy to get straight F's, but if you're able to keep all these elements alive in your relationship you'll be honor roll students in the school of marriage.

KNOW SOMEONE
PREPARING FOR A WEDDING?

*personalized
online zoom
sessions available*

Steve and Kathy Beirne, experienced Catholic marriage prep leaders, offer six one-hour sessions. Premarital inventory included. For more information or to register go to snkpublishers.us/marriagepreparation



Interfaith Holiday Advice

The holiday season is a particularly sensitive one if the two of you come from different religious traditions – particularly if they are not both Christian traditions. The great to do about Christmas in our culture may leave your Jewish or Muslim spouse feeling left out

How will you handle your differences around the holidays? The answer lies in how you handle your differences when it is not holiday season. Hopefully, with respect and conversation about the needs of each of you.

Scripture Guides Us

In the book of the prophet Zechariah in the Hebrew scriptures is a section that talks about the coming together of people from different places and with different beliefs.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: there shall yet come peoples, the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall approach those of another and say, “come! Let us go to implore the favor of the Lord”; and, “I too will go to seek the Lord.”...In those days ten men of every nationality, speaking different tongues, shall take hold, yes, take hold of every Jew by the edge of his garment and say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard God is with you.” (Zechariah 8:20-21,23)

If we can remember that our customs are meant to express our beliefs and that they are not just about the way our family always celebrated, then we will have come a long way along the



path of respect for one another's beliefs.

The Corner of Two Cloaks

A Catholic wife of a Jewish husband once wrote, “ I have taken hold of the corner of two cloaks, the Jew Jesus and the Jew with whom I am sharing my life.” Her efforts to honor her own beliefs and those of her husband have led her down a path that helps create a more respectful climate in our culture for all of us. We need to find within our different traditions the voice of the Lord calling us together, and to see the richness that this union provides.

Nursery School Rules

A number of years ago, a woman was writing about how she and her husband handled their dual career marriage. She said that her 18-year marriage in which both she and her husband have worked, is a healthy, vital marriage that includes two grade school children. Use the nursery school rules, she advises: Play nice, be fair, and take turns. That means taking turns being the point person at home, or take turns earning the bigger salary, play nice by staying faithful to your spouse no matter what temptations present themselves at work, and be fair by taking on tasks that benefit the family. She gives the example of her husband handling the taxes and vacation planning, while she handles home repairs. She says that the key to having a healthy marriage when both people work is to continue to adapt. Giving the example of the way

a woman's body changes through pregnancy, she says that both spouses have to be willing to grow and change in order to keep the marriage growing.

In the current situation, where there are many homes where both adults are either working out of their home, or both home because they've been furloughed from their jobs, it is vitally important to the relationship to remember the nursery school rules. What are the issues that come up for you? How do you make time for each other? How do you keep work (or looking for work) from spilling over into home time? The take home message is that recognizing how work impacts your home life and being respectful of your partner's feelings will help you negotiate this very important task.

Exercise

I know:

What I would like to do for work.

I might be unemployed in the next year.

A new job might involve moving.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I understand:

That cell phones, tablets and other technology makes it hard to separate work and home time.

That problems at work can cause problems at home.

That each person's work is important.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I believe:

That we need to talk to each other about the way our work affects our home life.

That we support each other's career goals.

Being married has changed some of the ways I think about my job.

You help me by talking with me about work.

We could figure out how to save money if one of us loses our job.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I will:

Balance my work and family obligations.

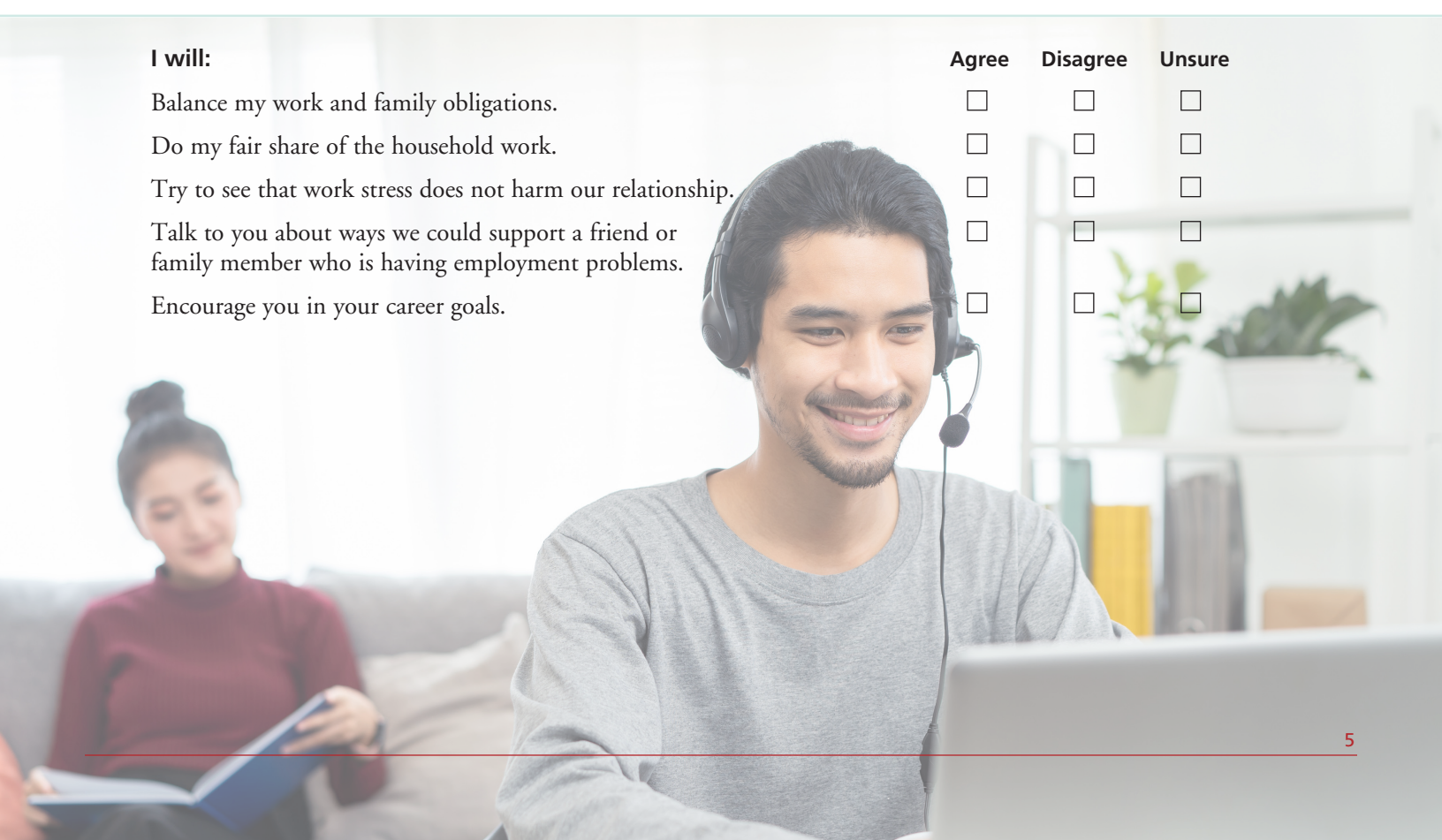
Do my fair share of the household work.

Try to see that work stress does not harm our relationship.

Talk to you about ways we could support a friend or family member who is having employment problems.

Encourage you in your career goals.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Spirituality

“Hands to work, heart to God”

You may remember this story of the talents from the Bible. A man went on a trip and gave some money to three servants – five “talents” to the first, two to the second, and one to the third. When he came back the first one had doubled the money and so had the second. To each of them he spoke an often quoted saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

The buried talents

The third one was timid, scared of his master who had a reputation for being a hard man. He did nothing with his money, but buried it so it wouldn't get stolen. The master was furious! He accused his employee of being wicked and lazy. He told him the least he could have done was put it in the bank so some interest would have accrued.

Our Talents

How does that parable relate to our work life? We all have talents that God has entrusted to us – brains, personality, abilities. The work we do is the way we invest those talents. And our work may not be just the way we earn a living. Moms or dads caring for their kids are also working, caring for and nurturing their children. Those folks building homes with Habitat for Humanity are working, not for a salary but for the good of others.

Being Faithful

Using the gifts we have been given is a way of being faithful to God and to God's world. We are meant to work for the betterment of others, not just take care of ourselves. We have a responsibility to get out and “flex our muscles,” whether that means using our strength, our creativity, or our financial resources, to make our community a better place.



Hands and Heart

Sister Ann, founder of the Shakers, had a motto, “Turn your hands to work and your heart to God.” When we believe that all constructive activity is our work, then that saying includes shoveling for our elderly neighbor, helping our sister with her computer, doing our paid job as well and kindly as we can – using our talents, doubling God's investment in us.

Relationship Work

Finally, we have the work of maintaining our marital relationship. Keeping your marriage alive and healthy may mean finding a balance with it and the work you do for a living. Know that by finding that balance you are indeed turning your mind to God, the author of your story of love for one another. You are increasing the value of the gifts given to you so that God will one day say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

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A NEWSLETTER FOR MARRIED COUPLES

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