

How to Deal With Work-Family Dilemmas

Most of you know I am CEO of the National Center for Fathering as well as a husband, father and grandfather. Those are not my only roles in life, but they are the main ones. And sometimes those roles don't get along; quite often they create difficult dilemmas.

I'm sure many of you experience it too. As dads, we feel an ongoing tension just about every day. My family is a huge part of my life; investing in my wife and my children and grandchildren is a top priority, no question.

At the same time, I love my job! I'm busy doing things that matter. My job gives me a sense of purpose.

And I'm very aware that in many ways *I chose* these roles and this life. For the most part, I wouldn't change it.

But often there's some tension. That purpose and drive that I feel at work isn't easy to turn off every day when I get home. There are always more things I could be doing at the office that could make a difference in some way. Those things are good, and they often *seem* more urgent than many other things in life.

Not long ago I came face-to-face with this dilemma in some powerful ways.

My daughter and her children, who live in another state, were visiting and staying at our house. Also, it was a very busy time at the office. At home, there were all kinds of shenanigans going on with the grandkids: running around the house, playing games, eating meals—all that great stuff I get to experience and enjoy as a granddad.

One of those mornings, none of the grandkids were up yet when I was about to walk out the door to work. I stood there thinking about the possibilities—the things scheduled for that morning at work, and the grandkids that would soon be waking up and bouncing down the stairs. I just had to call the office and let them know I'd be a few minutes late.

Then one evening it all became clear. People were calling and texting about different work things, and I looked over into the next room and saw the rest of my family “doing life” without me. I was convicted!

Those grandchildren needed my attention; I thought of them like lumps of clay, being molded into adults. They have great parents, but I also have a role to play.

So that evening, I silenced my phone and put it in the other room. I decided that those moments at home are more important than the work demands, which really never go away .

Dad, I don't know what your work and home schedules are like. I suppose all our situations are different in some ways; some workplaces don't allow a lot of flexibility. So I can't make suggestions that work for everyone.

But I would urge you to really consider how *present* you are when you're home from work ... or maybe the issue is that you *aren't* home very much because of work. We all need to provide for our families, but I hope you're not missing those priceless family times that can happen any evening or morning.

Be sensitive to what things are getting your time and attention, and choose to give your best to your family .

Dad, how do you navigate day-to-day work-family dilemmas and make sure your family gets your very best?

Action Points

- Create regular rituals to connect with your family members, whether it's phone calls from the office, special "daddy" time when you walk in the door, or other weekly events that keep you in touch.
- Try viewing the work/family tension as a *positive*. It's good to regularly re-evaluate your values and priorities. We need to always be improving as employees *and* as fathers.

Carey Casey *is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering (NCF), as well as a husband, father, and grandfather. He is author of Championship Fathering and general editor of The 21-Day Dad's Challenge. See more about Carey here.*