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Life Harmony: Helping Clients Find Peace in a Busy Life

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and

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Many clients struggle with overload from competing life demands such as work and family responsibilities. “Balance” has been the predominant metaphor advanced to cope with this zero-sum battle. A different, music-based metaphor, where the individual is the composer and conductor of his or her life symphony, is proposed. The goal then becomes the ability to provide for and nurture one’s family in harmony. Applying this harmony metaphor to both work and family relationships illuminates how one’s life at work can contribute to one’s life at home and vice versa. Eight specific suggestions are offered for counselors and therapists to help achieve life harmony: (1) create energy, (2) carpe diem: seize quality time, (3) bundling: do two or more things together in harmony, (4) focus on one thing at a time, (5) be flexible at work, (6) take care of yourself: eat, sleep, and be merry, (7) simplify your life, and (8) create harmony at home.

The topic of finding life harmony between occupational pursuits and family life is of significant personal and professional interest because it has been at the heart of my university and corporate research in 48 countries during the past 10 years. And it is of especial personal passion because my wife Juanita and I have shared the challenging responsibility to both provide for and nurture nine children for over a quarter of a century.

Juanita and I have tried many things to help us find peace as we busily attempt to raise our family. In 1990, I became one of IBM’s first telecommuters. For nearly ten years, I worked from my home office in Logan, Utah, located more than 2,000 miles from my business office in New York. Working electronically from home enabled me to live in a quiet community, forego the stressful commute into the city each morning and evening, and be with my family more than ever before.

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all while being one of the most productive members of my work team. However, working with so many children in the background sometimes made it difficult to maintain the boundaries between work and family life.

Colleagues often did not realize I was working from home, nor did my management want others to know that I was working most of the time away from the office. When co-workers and customers dialed an IBM number in New York, it rang in my basement home office in Utah. I tried to be professional, but sometimes this was a challenge. Let me share one humorous story that appeared in a Wall Street Journal article (Shellenbarger, 1997) on telecommuting:

One morning while I recorded my daily voice mail greeting, my wife Juanita was folding clothes in the laundry room across the hall. My six-year-old daughter Emily had just taken a shower upstairs and could not find the clothes she wanted to wear. She came downstairs draped in nothing but a towel. When Juanita saw her, she said in a loud, giggly female voice, "Look at you! You have no clothes on!" After several colleagues commented with a chuckle about my voice mail greeting, I listened to it and this is what I heard:

Male Voice: This is Dr. Jeff Hill with IBM Global Employee Research ...

Giggly Female Voice: Look at you! You have no clothes on!

Male Voice: I'm not available right now ...

(Shellenbarger, 1997, p. B1)

Before discussing Life Harmony, it is relevant to summarize some facts about Brigham Young University's School of Family Life. The School of Family Life (SFL) was founded in 1998. The SFL mission is to strengthen the family using The Family: A Proclamation to the World (Hinckley, 1995) as its charter. It is a multidisciplinary and inter-disciplinary academic division. One of the reasons I joined the SFL was to examine work and family issues using the tri-focal lenses of social science, business, and the Gospel. I have partnered with the SFL and the Marriott School of Management to create a Work and Family graduate class (OB 660R and MFHD 542), and also to produce a variety of publications and presentations in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. The SFL also publishes Marriage and Families magazine (see <marriageandfamilies.byu.edu>) every quarter with peer-reviewed, yet readily accessible, articles geared to professionals and lay people on many aspects of family life. In addition, Dave Dollahite (2000) brought together 100 LDS scholars to write Strengthening our Families: An In-Depth Look at the Proclamation on the Family. This has been the basis of Family Life 100, an exciting new class which exposes more than 1500 students each year to the best of scholarly research and revealed truth supporting principles of the Proclamation.

**Life Harmony: Helping Clients Find Peace in a Busy Life**

This presentation will first consider some of the background behind why the topic of work-family harmony is so important to counselors and others in the helping professions. Then a music composition metaphor, where the individual is thought of as the composer and conductor of his or her life symphony, will be suggested as a better approach to deal with the topic than the predominant metaphor of work-family "balance." Eight specific suggestions counselors might use to help clients adopt this metaphor as they struggle to find harmony among competing life demands.

**Time Famine in America**

Individuals and families around the world are experiencing what has been called a "time famine" (Hochschild, 1997). The realities of a global economy, extensive downsizing by large corporations, new work-facilitating technologies, and the advent of e-commerce have all combined to lengthen the work week for many employees. This trend is particularly pronounced in the United States. A recent survey documented that between 1992 and 1997, the average U.S. work week increased from 43 to 47 hours, equivalent to an additional half-day of work per week (Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998). Last year, a United Nations International Labour Organization Study (International Labour Organization, 1999) revealed that the United States passed Japan as the developed country with the longest work hours, now averaging 1,966 annual work hours per capita. More time at work means less direct parenting time for children.

Compounding this parenting time challenge is the steady increase in the proportion of households with
children where both parents are in the workforce. In the United States, the labor force participation rate of married women with children under six years of age increased from 19% in 1960, to 45% in 1980, and then to 62% in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Not only are parents working longer hours with mothers more likely to be in the workforce, but Americans are also working in a way which appears to be more intrusive to family life. Robinson & Godbey (1999) report that what they call “time density” is increasing. That means people are doing more things, more quickly, in the same amount of time. In hi-tech global companies, employees are often provided with cell phones, pagers, fax machines, and lap top computers to enable instant communication anywhere in the world. These portable communications devices can interrupt the flow of precious family processes at any time, on any day, and in any place. David Lunsford at Dell Computer summarizes, “More and more, the boundaries between work and life are being blurred by technology – pagers, cell-phones, e-mail”; consequently, many are compromising the quality of their time off by being tethered too tightly with the “electronic leash” of these technological implements (Hill, 2000).

In addition, individuals and families have less opportunity for rejuvenating non-work activities. Vacations are often interrupted by checking e-mail, phone-mail, and participating in other activities which decrease the value of the rest. Sleep deprivation is of epidemic proportions in the United States (Brink, 2000). It is estimated that the ideal amount of sleep for the typical adult is 8.2 hours per night. In a recent study, I found that the average BYU Marriott School graduate alumni averaged 6.7 hours of sleep per night. That amounts to a deficit of 1.5 hours per night (Hill, Baker & Anderson, 2002). What leisure time we have is increasingly used for sedentary activities such as watching TV, movies, and surfing the Internet (Robinson & Godbey, 1999). This means less rejuvenating exercise and recreation. To illustrate how important this topic is to Utah marriage and family therapists, a study in process at Utah State University (Schramm & Belnap, 2003) is studying a random sample of all newlyweds in Utah who have been married 2-10 months. “Balancing job and marriage” is rated as the top problematic area for both wives and husbands, ranking ahead of problems such as communication, conflicts, birth control, and expectations about household tasks (see Table 1).

Thus it appears that conscientious counselors and therapists would do well to add to their repertoire tools to help clients find harmony between their work and family lives. The metaphors we use to think about the interface of work and family in our individual and family lives can be some of these vital tools.

**Life Harmony: Work and Family Metaphor**

Let me introduce this metaphor with a personal anecdote (Hill, 2001). My wife and children all love music, and really like to sing and play diverse instruments. The other day, after a hectic day at the office, I opened the front door and was overwhelmed by a loud cacophony of sound: Abby boisterously fiddled away in the laundry room, Aaron blared out jazz on the trumpet in his bedroom, Hannah enthusiastically bowed her way through a beginning cello book in the living room, and dear Emily turned up the volume of our electric piano as she raced through the hymn “God Speed the Right.” The dissonance was ear-splitting and increased the intensity of my headache. Leaving the scene was the only way to find some peace.

A few days later, in a radically different experience, the children joined several others to sing and play Handel’s great “Hallelujah Chorus.” This time, Abby’s violin coordinated perfectly with Hannah’s tenor cello line and

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**Table 1**

Top Ten Problematic Areas among Newlyweds in the State of Utah (source: Schramm & Belnap, 2003)

<table>
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<th>Wives</th>
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<td>Expectations about household tasks</td>
<td>3. Husband employment*</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Communication with husband*</td>
<td>4. Expectations about household tasks</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Wife employment</td>
<td>5. Birth control*</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Resolving major conflicts*</td>
<td>6. Frequency of sexual relations</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Frequency of sexual relations</td>
<td>7. Bickering*</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Financial decision making</td>
<td>8. Wife employment</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Decision about when to have children</td>
<td>9. Financial decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>In-laws*</td>
<td>10. Decision about when to have children</td>
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* Unique problem areas
instead of playing the piano, Emily sang a pure alto voice. As Aaron’s trumpet punctuated the grand finale, tears flowed; the perfect harmony of this experience brought us all closer together.

For many years, “balance” has been the predominant work and family metaphor. Struggling to juggle jobs and home life, it seems more like “walking a tight rope” while being involved in a “balancing act.” So often, we often feel “out-of-balance” like the first example given above, sense dissonance in competing between the aspects of life. We grapple with working late on an important project or leaving early to attend a daughter’s soccer game. We agonize about whether to postpone a family vacation because a business deal is looming, or an unexpected but important meeting has been called. With a “balance” metaphor, work is the irreconcilable nemesis of family life.

Maybe there is a better way to think about this. Stewart Friedman has come up with a fresh idea. In an intriguing Harvard Business Review article “Work and Life: The End of the Zero Sum Game” (Friedman, Christensen & DeGroot, 1998), he and two colleagues maintain that work and family life are actually complementary, rather than competing, priorities. Success at work often contributes to success in one’s family and vice versa.

Instead of “balance,” perhaps a music metaphor of “harmony” may more richly capture what successful individuals do to effectively manage the demands of their work and families. It may be empowering for clients to think of themselves as the composers, lyricists, orchestraters, and performers of their lives. It may give us inspiration to help clients find a way to bring together many challenging aspects of life into the great symphony of mortality. Using the harmony metaphor, the work and family questions for clients are not necessarily (as the balance metaphor asks), “how can you limit your work time so that you can balance you family life?” or, “how can you get out of the house more so you can have more time at work?” Other, more helpful, questions come to mind, like: “what are you learning at work that can help you have a better family?” or, “are there possibilities for overlapping work and family time with harmony?”

Let’s now look at eight specific suggestions to help clients find peace and harmony in a busy life.

Create Energy

Recent research indicates that it is the depletion of energy, as much as the time spent at work, which explains the dissonance between work and family (Carlson, Kacmar & Strepina, 1995). When you feel like your job is sapping your energy, you have little vigor left for your family. An erroneous assumption is that by simply cutting back hours, you will create more balance or harmony. However, it may be more helpful to look at how to increase energy rather than decrease work time, to focus on the tempo rather than the length of your life symphony.

One suggestion to increase your energy without cutting hours is to make a list of all the things you do at work that either drain or energize you. To create more work/family harmony, see if you can arrange to do the energizing things right before you go home. Then when you go home, you will carry more energy into your family.

Another thought is to use commuting time for renewal rather than depletion. Instead of racing home, darting in and out of traffic lanes, and tuning the radio to depressing news; relax and enjoy the journey, and listen to inspirational books, music, or scriptures. You may even want to sing. After the incessant staccato of many jobs, we often need a peaceful larghetto for renewal before walking in the door.

To explore this concept with clients you might want to ask questions like:

1. What kinds of activities energize you at work? At home?
2. How could you arrange to do more of these activities? At home?
3. What kinds of activities deplete your energy at work? At home?
4. How could you do fewer of these activities?
5. What might you do on the job, right before your go home, that would enable you to bring more energy into the family?
6. What might you do at home, right before you go to work, that would enable you to bring more energy into the workplace?

“Carpe diem” - seize quality time

All time is not created equal. In our life’s symphony there are recurring measures when work should phase out and let family take the melody, and vice versa. At IBM, I taught employees to “optimize the mix” of their time; that is, do work at “high quality” work times and be with family during “high quality” family times. One father at IBM reported to me that the time when his kids were most willing to interact with him positively
was when they came home from school in the early afternoon. This time was also low energy time for him at work. He found that if he left the office for home a couple of afternoons a week, he could miss rush hour, take a half-hour break with his children, and then productively finish up his work day on his laptop at home.

Another telecommuter told me that he did his best IBM work in the early morning hours, before either his family or his customers were awake. He estimated that between 4:30 and 6:30 a.m., working without distraction, he could get the equivalent of four hours of work done. That freed up 6:30 to 8:30 am for quality family time: getting the kids up, dressed, fed, having a family devotional, and getting them off to school. That is an example of “optimizing the mix.” Bedtime can often be a high-quality family time. Few children really want to go to bed at night, and so they will encourage their parents to read to them, tell them stories, or sing songs to them for as long as parents are willing. The tender interaction with a parent as they fall asleep may stay with children throughout the night.

A few questions you might ask your clients in this regard:
1. When do you do your best occupational work?
2. What are high-quality family times for you?
3. How could you arrange your schedule to be more available to your family during high-quality family times, and more available to work during high-quality work times?

**Bundling: do two or more things together in harmony**

There is a concept in time-use research called “shadow time” (Robinson & Godbey, 1999). Shadow time captures the time spent in a secondary activity that is occurring simultaneously with another primary activity. Sandholtz, Derr, Buckner & Carlson (2002) use the term “bundling” to capture this same concept. There are many opportunities to bundle work and family activities without dissonance. For example, I recently brought my 12-year-old daughter Hannah to the BYU campus for the morning. While I engaged in my primary activity of writing a boring scholarly article, she enthusiastically organized all the books in my office library. Every few minutes we interacted briefly, and then at noon I took her out to lunch. Using bundling, I got a full morning’s work done, had my library organized, and made a memory with my daughter, all at the same time.

The same concept occurs when running errands around home. For example, when you need to go to the store, one way to promote harmony is to take a child along with you. While doing your primary activity of shopping, shadow time can help you connect with a child one-on-one while you travel to and from your destination. At the store, you can teach your child how to comparison shop. In our home we have modified a famous credit card slogan to say, “Children: never leave home without them.”

After being sensitized to this concept, there are a plethora of options available. For example, you might choose to get your individual exercise while on a walk with your wife while you strengthen your marriage by resolving a family problem while pushing your one-year-old in the stroller and walking your dog, all while getting Vitamin D from the sun.

A couple of questions about bundling you might ask clients include:
1. What are some activities in your life that make sense for you to bundle together and do at the same time?
2. What are some activities in your life that do not make sense for you to bundle together?

**Focus on one thing**

Notwithstanding bundling or shadow time, there are other instances when it is better to set firm boundaries and not let work’s *basso profundo* overpower the gentle soprano melodies of family life. My experience is that keeping the Sabbath Day holy is a key to focused harmony. Bob Egan, an IBM executive, told my work and family class that he made a promise never to work on Sunday, and he never has. He said it feels good to tell his children, “Sunday is a special day, a day different than other days of the week. Daddy doesn’t go to work on Sunday.”

Family vacation may be another time for muting work completely. In today’s wireless world of laptops, palm pilots, and pagers, it is easy to let work bring dissonance to the delicate tunes of vacation renewal. A few years ago, I took my wife and three of our children to enjoy the Big Island of Hawaii for an eight-day vacation. I brought my laptop with the thought that I could log on a few minutes each day and keep up with my e-mail. However, the few minutes turned into a few hours each day. It seemed that even when playing with the kids in the surf, I would be thinking about a work project or...
seething inside at my manager's latest insensitivity. On the second day of vacation, my boss firmly demanded (via e-mail) that I join an important 9:00 a.m. conference call the next morning. After replying that I would attend, I realized that the 9:00 a.m. call in New York would be at 3:00 a.m. Kona time. Sitting in on that tense conference call in the wee hours of the morning, as the sound of the surf resonated in the background, was the straw that broke this camel's back. I asked myself, "What am I doing? I'm supposed to be on vacation!" So after the call, I locked up the lap top, put away the calling card, and crawled back into bed. I made a resolution that from then on, I would throw off my "electronic leash" whenever I went on vacation. My manager was concerned about my lack of availability, but she would have been concerned regardless of what I did (Hill, 2000).

There are other daily and weekly times when it is best to disconnect from work entirely. Some families have a devotional time dedicated to daily spiritual renewal through prayer and reading the scriptures. Some set aside an evening for a family activity and don't allow anything to interrupt this weekly strain of the family symphony. It is also important to focus when there is sensitive communication to be shared among family members. One of the ways work can negatively affect family life is when the worker is emotionally unavailable to the family and is unable to focus empathetically on responsive family communication.

Here are some questions for clients about work-family focus:
1. What are some ways your work distracts you from focusing on your family?
2. What are some ways your family distracts you from your work?
3. How might you better set boundaries between work and family to minimize these distractions?

Be flexible at work

Recent research indicates that those with flexibility and control in when and where they do their work are much better able to find harmony between their work and family life (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001; Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996; Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). Given the same number of work hours, these flexible workers report both higher productivity and greater harmony in their family lives. Flexible work arrangements include flextime, part-time employment, job sharing, occasional telecommuting, regular work at home, compressed work hours, the virtual office, and leaves of absence.

Sharing my own experience with telecommuting might be instructive (Dollahite, 2000). For 13 years I struggled to juggle a demanding IBM career with the needs of my family. In 1990, I started working from my home office, instead of from an IBM facility. The difference in my life was immediate. Instantly, I gained an hour a day because I did not have to drive to and from work. Instead of dragging into work and needing to unwind after a "fast-lane" commute, I could roll out of bed early with an exciting idea and immediately key it into the laptop. Later, I could get the kids up for family devotional and breakfast. Because I was working from home, I could listen for baby Amanda while my wife Juanita went to aerobics, shopping, or ran errands. When Abigail had the lead in the fourth grade play, I could be there on the front row at 11:00 A.M. Or, when work got frustrating, I could put Emily in the jogging stroller and go for an invigorating run. The dissonance would dissipate and I could return to work refreshed. I usually took about 30 minutes off from work during mid-afternoon to visit with the kids when they came home from school. Jeffrey and I would often play a 10-minute game of one-on-one basketball. This was very fun and relaxing to me, at least until he started beating me.

On the work side, I found myself more focused, energized, and productive. Without the interruptions of co-workers, I was able to deliver higher quality products in less time. The arrangement worked so well that soon, four of my colleagues were working from home with similar results. Within four years, more than 25,000 IBM employees were working in what became known as the "virtual office."

Some questions you might ask clients in regard to flexibility:
1. What flexible work options are available at your job?
2. How have you used these options in the past?
3. What options might you consider utilizing that would strengthen your family life?

Take care of yourself: eat, sleep, and be merry

Taking care of yourself physically really helps you find harmony in your life symphony. It is important to eat well, sleep long enough, and maintain a positive outlook on life. Additionally, Carlson et al. (1995) found that
being “slightly, unrealistically, optimistic” was related to more life success.

The saying, "You are what you eat," is grounded in fact. Certain foods at certain times can enhance or diminish cognitive functioning. One study found that eating a small helping of complex carbohydrate (e.g., a half a piece of whole wheat toast) led to better sleep (Brink, 2000). Composing a life that includes moderate exercise is another way to generate energy to harmoniously deal with life’s demands. Moderate exercise has been shown to increase the blood’s capacity for carrying oxygen, resulting in greater energy and brighter moods (Ekkekakis, Hall, VanLanduyt & Petruzzello, 2000; Hughes, 1984). One estimate is that a half an hour or jogging or walking may be equivalent to creating an extra hour of energy.

Getting enough and the right kind of sleep is also important to life harmony. Our study of MSM alumni revealed that those who slept 7-8 hours per night reported significantly higher marital satisfaction than those who slept 5-6 hours per night (Hill, et al., 2002). Being refreshed has a positive influence on family functioning. A study finds that reflexes of those who have been awake for 18 hours straight are equivalent to those with a blood alcohol content of .15 (Brink, 2000). To put that in perspective, in most states of the U.S., the legal blood alcohol content limit ranges from .08 to .10 (Megalaw.com, 2003). Clearly, if we are to be at our best in any aspect of our lives, we need to insure that we get sufficient rest.

What you do the last 30 minutes before retiring often determines how restful your sleep will be and how much in harmony you will feel in the morning. One father tells the story of when he was heading up a high-profile work project with an incredible workload. He would go to sleep only when he was utterly exhausted. Then it seemed he was wrestling with images of his problems even in his dreams. If he woke up in the middle of the night, his mind would start whirring and it would be difficult to go back to sleep. His life was dissonant and its tempo was out of control. Then he started taking a break to put his kids to bed with prayers, stories, and songs. It felt very peaceful to do so. Even though it was only 9:00 p.m., he often would fall fast asleep and rest peacefully all night. It was not uncommon for him to get up at 4:00 a.m. and be rested and productive. Both his work and his kids were better off because of it. (Dollahite, 2000).

A few questions you might consider asking your clients about this are:
1. What changes in your diet might be helpful to you and your family?
2. What changes in your sleep routines might be beneficial to you and your family?
3. How might you begin to implement a regular program of moderate exercise to increase your energy levels?
4. What recreational activities might be beneficial to you and your family?

Simplify your life

Voluntary simplicity – deliberately choosing to accumulate fewer possessions and engage in fewer activities than possible – is a key to finding harmony in a busy life (Brophy, 1995). With fewer voices in the score, it is easier to produce harmony. We live in a materialistic society where we acquire many gadgets and toys. These things have a high cost in time as well as money. When we have too much, we run the risk of obscuring the simple but powerful life melody we hope to compose. One easy way to moderate materialism is to stay out of debt. My father always told me, “There are two kinds of people in the world: those that pay interest and those that understand interest.” He also taught me, “Pay 10% to the Lord, 10% to your own savings plan, and live on the rest.” Buy less, do less, and do fewer things at the same time. Look for a way to compose a life of modest means and focused time.

One strategy is to simply reduce the number of activities. In conference a few years ago, Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1994) challenged every member of the Church to find an activity they didn’t need to do anymore, and then stop doing it. If we really want to focus on those activities with value, then we need to learn how to say, “No,” kindly but firmly. Too many of us are pleasers, and we write too much dissonance into our score by agreeing to do too many things that are not part of our primary mission.

Sandholtz et al. (2002) also recommend outsourcing as a means to simplifying. If you have the material means to purchase services to create more harmony, then do it. For example, one family chose to purchase ready-to-eat food for Sunday, so they could spend more time in what they considered to be Sabbath-day activities.

A few questions you might ask your clients about simplifying are:
1. What is one non-family activity that you could give up to make more family time?
2. What is an activity you could choose to do with less intensity?

Create harmony at home

To write a powerful symphony, it is important to keep the theme and melody clear and present before the listener. To compose one’s life symphony, it is necessary to clearly invest time, energy, and personal commitment into family and other enduring relationships— to make them primary in our life priorities. We human beings are social creatures, and studies have shown that having quality family relationships is related to better health, longer life, and greater life satisfaction.

In recent months my wife and I have struggled with a trial that has highlighted the importance of putting family relationships as the primary melody of our life symphony. In October 2001, Juanita was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. We were told by our oncologist that this mother of nine children would have a 50% chance of living for five years if we went through nine months of chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation. If we did nothing, she would have about a 25% chance. With this devastating revelation, our perception of time was radically altered. Now, moments together became of much higher value and every day of life became precious.

My wife’s cancer has taught me many things. I have learned that it is not worth it to fret over little frustrations with children or spouse. It is not worth it to harbor a grudge or leave undealt with unfinished business with friends and loved ones. I learned to make time and energy for family and loved ones first. I am much less likely to let the occupational line on the score dominate the melody.

Juanita survived the grueling treatment and we are so blessed that she is now in remission. But our lives are not back to normal. We now take advantage of opportunities that beforehand we might not have taken advantage of. For example, over the holidays Juanita and I and five of our children spent two months volunteering in orphanages in Cuenca, Ecuador. We would have never done that, had Juanita not had cancer.

Some questions you might want to ask your clients:
1. Imagine that you had only one year to live. What would change in your life?
2. How could you change the way you spend your time that would strengthen family relationships?
3. What could you do to bring “unfinished business” to completion in your personal life?

Harmony: Living the Real “Good Life” Now

I would like to close with an interesting story that I heard recently, and that I found on the internet (Yen, 2002):

An American businessman was standing at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish.

“How long did it take you to catch them?” the American asked.

“Only a little while,” the Mexican replied.

“Why don’t you stay out longer and catch more fish?” the American then asked.

“I have enough to support my family’s immediate needs,” the Mexican said.

“But,” the American then asked, “What do you do with the rest of your time?”

The Mexican fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a siesta with my wife, Maria, and stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor.”

The American scoffed, “I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing, and with the proceeds you can buy a bigger boat, and with the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats, eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats...”

Instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you would sell directly to the consumers, eventually opening your own can factory. You would control the product, processing, and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA, and eventually NYC, where you will run your expanding enterprise.”

The Mexican fisherman asked, “But señor, how long will this all take?”

To which the American replied, “15-20 years.”

“But what then, señor?”
The American laughed and said, "That’s the best part. When the time is right, you would announce an IPO (Initial Public Offering) and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich; you would make millions."

"Millions, señor? Then what?"

The American said slowly, "Then you would retire and move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take a siesta with your wife, and stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos... (Yen, 2002)

In summary, if we use harmony for our metaphor instead of balance, it may be more possible to compose a magnificent symphony of life where we find peace and shout “hallelujah!” Instead of “struggling at juggling,” maybe we can seek for harmony as we provide for and nurture our families.

References
Brink, S. (2000, October 12). Sleepless in America: In staying up half the night, we may risk our health. U.S. News Report, 63-72.