

Developing Your Work-Life “Work of Art”

As the parent of a young athlete, you may already have a few key dates circled on your calendar: the first day of school, the first day of practice, and all the games, competitions, or matches that come along with along fall sport season. Throw in some important academic dates, such as open house or a parent-teacher conference, along with your own work deadlines, bill due dates, and soon your calendar can look like an overwhelming to-do list instead of an organized list of objectives.

When you hear the phrase “work-life balance” an image of a seesaw may come to mind, with work and life on opposite sides of the scale. This implies that everything comes at a tradeoff – that if work is “up” then life is “down” and vice versa. This is an archaic way of viewing things, according to Eric Greitens, author of *Resilience: Hard-Won Wisdom for Living a Better Life*. Rather, according to Greitens, we should view work-life balance as a work of art, such as a symphony or a painting. He explains:

Every element of a symphony has a role to play: sometimes loud, sometimes quiet, sometimes silent, sometimes solo. The balance we seek is not for every instrument to be played in moderation at every moment – that’s just a long, boring honk – but for a complementary relationship where each instrument is played at the right pitch and the right intensity, with the right phrasing and the right tempo.

The metaphor of all the elements of your life working together to create something beautiful is a more realistic and less outdated than the work-life balance seesaw of the past. It even implies that there are many “instruments” at play – not simply (1) work and (2) life. “Life” can be any number of things: coaching, attending sports practice, spending quality time with family, exercising, sleep, and so on. This view provides a more flexible, adaptive, and realistic snapshot of a day in the life of a busy parent, especially one with children in sports. Remember: there will be days where work is “loud” and your ability to be present at soccer practice or get some exercise in is “quiet.” Other days will offer opportunities for “loud” pieces devoted to attending your child’s sporting events or coaching and be completely “silent” on work – which will in turn allow exercise, sleep, and quality time to chime in.

Greitens, who is currently the Governor of Missouri, has a resume that few can rival; he is a former Navy SEAL, humanitarian leader, boxing champion, and Rhodes Scholar who earned his Ph.D. from Oxford and has been on *Fortune’s*



Developing Your Work-Life “Work of Art” (cont.)

list of the [World’s 50 Greatest Leaders](#). If anyone knows how to create a work-life work of art, it’s Eric Greitens. He goes on to say:

Yes, sometimes you’ll work through the weekend. Sometimes your family won’t see you. Other times your family will be first and your work will lie fallow. Sometimes you’ll live a solo, focusing on just one thing. Other days everything will work together. Give yourself the freedom to live a life that’s balanced – not like a seesaw but like a beautiful work of art.

As the fall semester approaches, rather than worry about which side of the “work-life balance” scale is up or down, focus on the challenge of creating your own work of art.