



Time-Management and Work-Life Balance: Some Perspective(s)

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W PAUL G. ALLEN SCHOOL
OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & ENGINEERING



Me

- Rice undergrad 1993-1997
- Cornell grad student 1997-2003
- UW faculty 2003-???
 - Assistant Professor 2003-2009
 - Associate Professor 2009-2015
 - Professor 2015-???
 - Vice Chair/Director 2017-???

1st date with my partner: Spring 2012

Bought a house: May 2013

1st child: December 2013

2nd child: September 2015



Dan Grossman

January 16 ·

Allowed on timeline

The next time I'm asked to describe in what ways I've grown over my time as a faculty member, I'm going to respond that the most noticeable growth has been to my forehead.

Time-management



Let's go straight to some tips and tricks

Key perspective

Micro:

Have productive days

Macro:

Have productive years

Despite correlation, neither implies the other!

Micro tips

- If you have 90 free minutes, do *not* do 9 10-minute tasks
- Take searchable notes for next time:
 - 10% longer now for 50% shorter next time
- Don't tweak the pretty pictures until you know you'll use them
- Respond promptly and in a way that takes the item off your list
- Have a to-do list and figure out how often to check it
- Don't do 80% of a paper review and walk away for 2 days
- What tasks can you do when you're tired? (e.g., washing dishes)

Macro tips

- “The urgent vs. the important”
- If a 5-year-plan is too hard (hint: it is!), go for a 6-month plan
- Choose 2-3 things / year you’re going to do *really* well
- Choose 2-3 long-term research thrusts
- Re-teach classes and do better each time
- Work with the right (and right number) of grad students for you
 - Lead with hope, not with fear
 - Kindness and firmness both help

More tips?

- No shortage of time-management advice out there
- Most of it isn't bad
- Wasting time is part of life, but make sure you're *enjoying* the time you spend being unproductive

But how can I optimize the next 5 years of my life for the singular goal of getting tenure?



Tenure: Perspective from the other side

Tenure is not the goal!

- Derive happiness and value from solving important problems and educating others
- Focus on that + rest of today's advice -> you'll be fine
- If previous implication is false, you shouldn't *want* tenure [!]

Okay, tenure *is* nice

How long would you endure misery to get tenure?

- Probably > 1 day
- Probably < 5 years

You're in computing: The worst-case is not so bad!

Real-talk about the other side

Very unlikely you'll slow down after tenure

- Evidence: vast majority of your senior colleagues

I've heard 3 good theories on why:

1. Inertia / used to the hamster wheel [h/t L.S.]
2. Colleagues know your passions [mine]
3. Whole system selects for those aiming for peer recognition [h/t A.A.]

*What do you want people to say about you
at your retirement party?*



Life and work-life balance

- You *do* have time to do *anything* you want
- You do *not* have time to do *everything* you want
- Successful work-life balance occurs if *you* are happy, even if your life doesn't look so balanced from other people's viewpoint [h/t M.H.]

My old life



Quip

*The reason I don't miss my 20s more is that
I made the most of them for 19 years*

My new life

- Was: bottles, naps, diapers, sleep deprivation, first steps, ...
- Is: birthday parties, swim lessons, playgrounds, Legos, Tooth Fairy, ...

[4 extremely cute pictures of my kids
redacted for public posting of
these slides. 😊]

When to have kids

- When you want them!
 - This is the most important decision of your life
 - It might take a while
 - There's no going back and it's the hardest + most rewarding thing
 - All times are "incomparably good/bad" from a work perspective

Juggling work + kids

- I can't believe I used to say I was busy
- Figure out a plan for you
 - Academia is flexible outside of your lectures and some faculty meetings
 - I walk off campus at 4:30 95% of the time
 - But I work 80% of the time after the kids are asleep at 7:15



Anticipate tough decisions

- Two careers – who handles the next fever or stitches?
- I regret not chaperoning a field trip last year
- I pulled off making it to a save-the-whales pre-school breakfast last month
- 17-hour day tomorrow so I'll be home when kids wake up Saturday

[A cute picture
after a kid got
stitches redacted
for public posting.
😊]

What will matter 5 years from now?

Gender bias and allyship

My department is mother- *and* father-friendly

- Yours should be too!

But our society has work to do:

- People laud me for missing a meeting to pick up my kids
- Nobody has asked me today who is watching my kids back home
- When I talk about my kids in class, it humanizes me without hurting my credibility

I can do little things to help

- Example: First to decline a 5:30 meeting and state why without grandstanding

Encore slide...

What is money for?

- Basic necessities
- Luxuries
- Safety and security, including savings
- Effecting change, including philanthropy
- **Buying time**
 - Recognize where time/money can and cannot be swapped
 - Decide what your exchange rate is
 - This is for both work and life



Thanks!

Discussion!

