

Our time spent at work consumes a considerable amount of our lives. Therefore, it is important to ensure that our work environments support our needs and that balance is achieved between career obligations and personal aspirations. Unique issues that can challenge our satisfaction with work/life can include family care responsibilities and gender differences in the workplace. Institutional and personal support can help navigate these complications and assist with achieving Work/Life balance. Additionally, seeking professional development opportunities can help maintain career satisfaction.

What is Work/Life?

Work/Life is a concept meant to combine the understanding of people's needs as employees and as individuals with unique obligations outside of the office. *Work/Life* reflects upon the type of environment that a workplace provides to its employees and the type of support employees receive to accommodate their personal lives. Ideally, employees will find that their work life and home life can coincide to avoid unnecessary stress or conflicts. If/when problems arise and there is no longer a copasetic relationship between one's work life and personal life, there are many departments at Michigan State University to help restore a positive *Work/Life* environment (*see reverse side for resources*).

What is Work/Life Balance?

Work/Life Balance is a common term which refers the effective prioritization of the hours and energy a person commits to their job/career/professional ambitions and the time they dedicate to their personal aspirations/interests outside of work. In modern society, the line between work and personal life can be blurred with the increased reach of technological advances; more people are responding to e-mails and work related calls when not "on the clock." It is important to find balance between work and pleasure—make time for relaxation, friends, family and hobbies when you are not at the office.

What is Child/Elder/Family Care?

Many professionals in today's workplace have considerable responsibilities in their personal lives. One of the realms of responsibility, that oftentimes disproportionately effects women, is caring for a family member. *Child Care* is required of individuals who have a young one at home—caused by a recent birth or adoption, or becoming a guardian for a child whose parents have entrusted them to that individual. For many, the financial cost of childcare creates a need to make difficult decisions about returning to work, or hiring a third party to care for the child while the parent/guardian is at work. Similarly, *Elder/Family Care* is a responsibility many individuals face when a loved one is no longer self-sufficient. The caregiver may face new roles managing a loved one's finances, medical needs, homecare, among others. Sometimes, these new responsibilities can be stressful. For guidance on *Child/Elder/Family Care*, contact the MSU Family Resource Center (*see reverse side for contact information*).

What is Professional Development?

Professional Development is the process of continuously improving your skills and seeking educational opportunities in your field. The workplace and technology are constantly changing, therefore it is important that one continues the education process within their field. Talking with your supervisor or seeking out seminars, workshops and trainings relevant to your career will assist with advancing in your field and can contribute greatly to your Work/Life satisfaction. MSU Human Resources and the MSU Women's Resource Center frequently offer professional development trainings and programs (*see resource information below*). Another excellent strategy for professional development is through creating a mentoring relationship with a knowledgeable colleague/executive in your department or institution. The guidance of a mentor can assist in achieving your career aspirations.

What are Gender Differences that Effect Work/Life?

Gender stereotypes and discrimination can cause *gender differences* in the workplace. These gender differences can effect our work environment and can, in turn, effect life outside of work as well. Although the pretense is slowly changing, ideas about women and men's capabilities and assets at work differentially influence the opportunities available to them. For instance, on average, women make 77 cents to every dollar a man earns in the workforce (*see Gender Discrimination Information Sheet*). This differential in pay is often referred to as the wage gap. Other gender differences in the workplace can include: the amount of paid parental leave new mothers receive versus new fathers; opportunities for career advancement (which can also be influenced by one's race, gender expression and known sexual orientation) - a phenomenon which is often referred to as the "old boys network," meaning that men are often taken more seriously in the professional workplace than women; that women have an increased likelihood of being sexually harassed at work, etc. Many of these factors contribute to the low numbers of women in CEO roles and positions of power.

Where can I find more information about these topics?

MSU Women's Resource Center

<http://wrc.msu.edu>

517-353-1635

332 Union Building

MSU Human Resources

<http://hr.msu.edu>

517-355-0183

1407 S Harrison Road, Nisbet Building

MSU Family Resource Center

<http://frc.msu.edu>

517-432-3745

225 Nisbet Building

MSU Employee Assistance Program

<http://eap.msu.edu>

517-355-4506

330 Olin Health Center

MSU Faculty & Organizational Development

<http://fod.msu.edu>

517-432-1185

308 Hannah Administration Building

WorkLife Michigan State University

<http://worklife.msu.edu>