

What Is The Role And Importance Of Work In Our Life?

Our life is an odd mixture of different moments of action and inaction, work and rest. Work provides us with an inner creative joy. It saves us from the dullness and boredom of life. It puts our energies to a proper use. Unused energies create disorders in us. They make us physically unhealthy and mentally unhappy. Time hangs heavy on our shoulders when there is no work. It provides us with money for our life hood. It makes our life meaningful and peaceful. Idleness is more tiresome and painful than work. Even the most unpaid, unimportant and unpleasant work is better than no work. For a really useful and happy work, two things are necessary. They are skill and constructiveness. Constructive work is rather unpleasant in the beginning, but very pleasant at the end. For deriving maximum pleasure from life, we must consider life as a whole, a unity and a system. Good Work pays and evil work destroys at the end. Every man who learns some useful skill enjoys it till he improves himself completely. The element of constructiveness is an important source of happiness. When a worker builds up something new. He feels encouraged and elevated and thus gets pleasure from his creative work. Where there is no need, there would be no work. Where there is no work, there would be no joy in life.

Work is Our Life: Exploring the Thoughts of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno

Take a look at the world around you, and for the most part you will see that everyone's busy. Work is an important part of our lives, but has it come to a point where it has taken over our lives? Many of us no longer find the satisfaction in our daily work lives that people did 50 years ago. We have become slaves to what jobs we have, and when asked who we are, we respond in work related terms such as "I'm an accountant" or "I'm a sales representative". Could this be the effect of a capitalistic society? The German philosopher Theodor Adorno seemed to think so.

One of the basic ideas in Adorno's philosophy is that we have come to see everything in terms of its economic value. Everything we now do is tied in some way to work. Even painters, who normally find painting an exciting and stimulating activity which brings out their views of the world, call their paintings "works of art". Is this just one of many hobbies that is turning into a stressful endeavor, much like laboring 8 or 10 hours in an office? Many of the problems we face in life could be avoided by determining what we want out of life before throwing ourselves into, for example, a job that we don't really want. Adorno went as far as saying that capitalism rules us and makes us behave in ways contrary to our character. Indeed the world is focused on money, since more of it can lead to a better life. But that only pushes the idea of "self" into the background, when it should be the self that controls what one's life is to be.

We would do well to look into Adorno's philosophy and return to our cultural values. Too much emphasis these days is put on excelling in the workforce, making a lot of money, and looking professional. If we cannot re-discover the values that made our lives fun and worth living, then we are simply robots. I'm not saying that capitalism is bad in any way, but that people need to stop for a moment and take a look at what they are becoming. Adorno's philosophy was indeed ahead of its time, and it would be beneficial to read his writing in today's high-paced work world. It's time we started living the way we were supposed to: as mom's and dad's whose time with the kids isn't cut short because of work, as friends in the workforce who aren't competing to outdo each other, and as people who don't have to give up hobbies because there isn't enough time for one-self's well being.

A Balancing Act

Finding Balance Between Work and Life

After the illness, then death, of a close family friend within a much too short six week period of time, I began to ponder the fragility of life and the limited time we have here on earth... When faced with our own mortality, many of us wonder if we have made the right choices about our lives and what other paths we could have chosen.

Consider Options

It is important to take the time to consider our options and to evaluate the choices so that we have time to work, time to play and time to make sure our life is as fulfilling as it can be. After all, the time we do have to "get it right" is limited. Sister Jean C. Peters, CSJ says in the CSJ Newslite "I do not suggest that hard work has no place in our lives, but it cannot have the only place. A sense of leisure and a spirit of play need space in us as well".

Achieve Balance

How do we achieve balance in our lives? It takes planning and it takes action. A friend of mine recently downgraded her job, cut her hours (and her paycheck) so she could pick up her daughter from school several times a week. It wasn't easy, but, she set up a budget and, with planning, calculated how she could live on her reduced income.

Flexible Work Options

Flexible schedule is another option. Working some hours in the office and some hours at home allows for more time with the family. Spending some of my work hours at home has benefited my employer - we now have email coverage on evenings and weekends rather than strictly during office hours. For those of us who do work from home setting limits is important. For some telecommuters, designated office hours have helped manage their time. Job Sharing is another alternative - two people can often share one position.

Keep in mind that the worst that can happen if you ask your boss about flexible work options is that he can say no. If you don't ask, you won't have a chance. If you do, you may just be pleasantly surprised.

Make a Move

More dramatic measures are sometimes in order. Several years ago, Michael Landes, author of the Back Door Guide to Short-Term Adventures started a new life engaging in short-time work experiences. Michael recently told me that "It was all these short-term job adventures that allowed me to grow into this phase and open my eyes to what I really wanted - BALANCE in my career, life, relationships, and home. It's as if I came full circle I left my secure job, home, relationship, and community six years ago to explore the world (along with nurturing my dream and passion - my book, and everything that comes with that). The work component had really consumed my life. Now is the time to go back to what I left - but with fresh eyes and a new perspective... We will have phases through our entire life where one area will rise above the other - the key, however, is BALANCE."

Which reminds me of that classic Byrds song Turn, Turn, Turn:

To Everything (Turn, Turn, Turn)

There is a season (Turn, Turn, Turn)

And a time for every purpose, under Heaven

Balance is possible and well worth the effort sometimes required to achieve it. After all, we really don't have forever.

How to be an Effective Person while Managing Work and Life

Our lives are complicated - our responsibilities include work, family and community. We can't stretch the hours in the day, so we try to stretch ourselves thinner, but it doesn't always help us be more effective. Stress builds up and productivity decreases, but it doesn't have to....here are some tips.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions

1. Don't overextend yourself. You can't be all things to all people and be clear with yourself about how much you can do. Resist the temptation to add one more thing to your to do list because it is a 'worthy' project. Are people asking too much of you, isn't that unfair of them?

2. Get comfortable saying "No". You can say, "I can't do that now" or "I have too many other things to do, and if I take on something else, nothing will get done the way it should". Don't start to believe you can be 'superman' or 'superwoman' - projects or activities will suffer and then you will feel added stress.

3. Stop doing more than one thing at a time. In taking on more than we can truly handle we try to multitask. What occurs is really that we do a little bit of all the things on our 'to do list' without really completing any project.

4. Schedule time to take a break. Mark lunchtime on your calendar and leave your office. If you work from home, take time to run errands out of the house or just go for a walk. Make sure to schedule your workday, so you know when you are 'not working' and keep to it. You can't work 24 hours a day - you will resent it and feel added stress, will result in less productive activity.

5. Don't let technology run your life. Technology should help you be efficient. It isn't necessary to answer every email or voice mail the moment you get it. If you spend two hours before you arrive at work, answering email or returning voice mails it will lead to less effective daily results. Our culture has devalued personal time, yet balancing personal time and work time, truly helps us be more effective.

6. Keep fear from impacting your decisions. Don't be afraid to tell people you can't do something. People will respect you more for your honesty. At work make sure to tackle your core job responsibilities, but don't take on the responsibilities of others, that may negatively impact the performance of your own work.

Stages In A Person's Life

Throughout his entire life, a person undergoes physical and emotional upheavals. This transition starts from birth till death. The varied experiences and skill carry us from one stage to another. Opposites like good and bad, independent and dependent, leader or follower etc. govern the life. Erik Erikson divided the human life into eight stages from birth till death, based on the interaction of body, mind and ego. Read on to know various stages in a person's life.

Various Stages In A Person's Life

Psychologist Erik Erikson describes eight stages of development in human lives.

Stage 1: Infancy

Time Span: Birth to eighteen months.

Babies tend to put everything in their mouth, which made Erikson refer infancy as Oral Sensory Stage. This stage is characterized by the dependence of the infant on the mother for basic sustenance. The baby feels the world through the parents. When all the needs of the infant are met at this stage, a basic understanding of trust and confidence is developed. If the infant doesn't experience trust then a deep rooted feeling of mistrust and worthlessness is developed. In this period, the most significant relationship is with the constant caregiver. The psychological conflict in infancy is between trust and mistrust, and the basic strength ingrained is hope.

Stage 2: Early childhood

Time Span: Eighteen months to 2 to 3 years.

Though parents still remain the main objects of security, the toddler is on the process of mastering skills like walking, talking and feeding by themselves. The kid learns that he or she is independently capable of doing things. Learning skills gives more control over the body, in sense autonomy. The child asserts his/her will and increased mobility increases the self-esteem. Encouragements from the parents instill autonomy while demanding and restricting the child will develop shame and doubt. The development of 'will' is due to the ability of the child to use the word 'NO'. As in the first stage, the most significant relationship is with the parents or the caregiver. Here the conflict is between autonomy and shame, and the strength is will.

Stage 3: Play age or preschool.

Time Span: 3 to 5 years.

At this stage, the child learns to take initiative. They want to do the things on their own. He or she copies the adults, which is evident in their role-plays. The child also encounters guilt for the first time as a result of frustration and learns basic skills and principles. The child explores the world around it and the mind is full of questions. Conflict arises due to the conflict between initiative and guilt, and the child acquires the basic strength called purpose. Children at this stage develop courage and independence.

Stage 4: School age or childhood.

Time Span: 6 to 12 years

A sense of industry is developed due to the acquiring and creation of new skills and knowledge. The child is active socially and any serious problems in self esteem results in inferiority. Their worldview of the child also expands. At this stage, the child measures his or her success and worthfulness. They become aware of their individuality and work on doing the right things. It is the best stage for the development of self-confidence. Here, the psychological tug-of-war is between industry and inferiority. The strength or value gathered is competence. Now the significant relationship shifts from parents to schools and neighborhood.

Stage 5: Adolescence

Time Span: 12 to 18 years

The development shifts from “what is done to us” to “what we do”. Life gets more complex as there is a struggle to find the identity. There is also the struggle to come to terms with social and moral issues. The identity struggle is to find an individuality that is separate from the family but as a part of society. Here, the transition is from childhood to adulthood and so ‘role confusion’ comes into play, as the child ponders on the role he or she has to play as adult. The crisis is between identity and role confusion, and the strength learned is fidelity. The most significant relationship is with the peers.

Stage 6: Young adult

Time Span: 18 to 35 years.

Intimacy is developed as more trust is given on building relationships, either through marriage or through friendships. If there is failure to develop intimacy then the result is isolation. There is a feeling of love and of being wanted. Pain and rejection becomes familiar. The strength learned is love and the crisis is between intimacy and isolation. The relationships are with the spouse and friends.

Stage 7: Middle adulthood

Time Span: 35 to 55 years

Outmost importance is given to work and the person is devoted to creative and meaningful issues. Productivity and transmitting of cultural values and working for the betterment of society occupy the person. There is always the fear of inactivity and meaninglessness. The struggle is to find new meanings and purpose the failure of which can lead to self-absorption. The conflict is between generativity and stagnation and the strength that characterizes this stage is care. The relationship is with the family and workplace.

Stage 8: Late adulthood

Time Span: 55 years till death

Happiness and contentment for a life well lived gives a sense of integrity. There is a fulfilling sentiment that life has a meaning, and the person has contributed towards it. However, if they view their experiences as failure and still struggle to find a purpose then despair sets in. The strength at this stage is wisdom and the conflict is between integrity and despair. The relationship is with the entire mankind.