

WORK/LIFE BALANCING ACT

Dads have trouble doing it all

- In a recent survey, 70 percent of dads said they should share the job of caregiving, but only 30 percent said they did.

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PLAYING HOOPS: Terry Frank and his younger son, Joshua, 7, share one-on-one time on the court before Joshua's recent game in Davie.

Terry Frank considers himself a realistic, ambitious, white-collar father who wants to climb the ranks at his company and be a super-involved parent. He cringes when he recalls the time he had to travel for work and missed his son's baseball game — the one when his 9-year-old son William pitched a complete game.

"I heard all about it from another dad and I felt bad that I wasn't there to see it," said Frank, father of two boys and senior vice president at BankAtlantic.

Today's dads want to do it all, rise up in their organizations, cheer on their kids, supervise homework and do the morning drop off. As an estimated 70.1 million dads prepare to celebrate Father's Day, new research shows that balancing it all is not proving as easy for many of them.

A significant majority of the engaged fathers see their responsibilities to their children as both caring for them and earning money to support them, according to *Caring, Committed and*

Conflicted, the study by Boston College's Center for Work & Family of 1,000 white-collar managers in large corporations with children under 18 at home.

Brad Harrington, executive director of the Boston College Center for Work & Family, said just a decade ago more fathers would have described their role as traditional breadwinner. This makes Harrington raise a question normally pegged to working mothers: Can men obtain professional growth in the workplace and equality in their home life?

Fathers may still be grappling with the definition of being a good father. Researchers discovered a huge gap between what dads think they should do at home and reality. In the survey, 70 percent of the dads said they and their spouses should equally share caregiving for their children, but only 30 percent said they actually do.

Most white collar fathers earning more than \$75,000 a year worked more than 45 hours a week, described job pressure as high and said they spend about 2.5 hours a day with their kids. When asked if they would like to spend more time interacting with their children on a typical work day, 77 percent of the fathers reported that they would. At the same time, nearly 60 percent want to climb higher in their workplaces.



BUSY DAD: German Navarro, who works at a factory in Opa-locka, shares precious moments with one of his seven children

“Women faced up 10 years ago that they have to make tradeoffs. Fathers haven’t confronted that dilemma,” Harrington said.

Frank’s situation mirrors that of working women who not too long ago began to face for the first time work/life balance concerns. Frank admits it is challenging to be a successful professional and involved dad. His wife works as a teacher and that means he has to take on responsibility at home, too. She has less flexibility than he has in his workday. He must prioritize what events he attends or tasks he takes on at home and at the office. “I can’t do it all, but I look at what’s important.”

Eddy Arriola, father of two, approaches work and family balance from a different perspective — entrepreneur. Having launched two businesses before turning 40, Arriola is a Type A, workaholic who runs Apollo Bank in Miami and still is incredibly devoted to his family.

Arriola says being a good father is not just about doing laundry and packing lunches — splitting day-to-day chores. “It’s also being a good role model and provider.”

He says an understanding workplace is critical for fathers who want to be successful at work and engaged at home. “I work 80 hours a week, but I define when. When you have control over your schedule, it makes a world of difference.”

In contrast, German Navarro, exemplifies the blue collar dads who research shows have more family time than corporate ladder climbers. “The reality is they’re doing the caregiving because their wives are working, contributing significantly to the household income and don’t have flexibility,” Harrington says.

Navarro, a father of seven, oversees the production line at the Earth Friendly Products factory in Opa-locka. When his shift ends at 4 p.m., he dashes home to do laundry, make dinner, iron clothes and help the three kids who still live at home with homework. He wife, Zuliana, who also works at the plant, gets home about an hour later. “Sometimes she cooks, sometimes I cook. I’d rather do the laundry. I like to iron clothes.”

For Navarro, work is all about earning enough money to support his family. “When I’m at work I think of my kids. I have a purpose.”

Going forward, Harrington says, a supportive environment will be critical for all fathers who want to align work and family ambitions. “This has tangible benefits for their organizations.”

Frank says a family-friendly corporate culture at BankAtlantic in Fort Lauderdale makes a difference in his job satisfaction. He has been at the bank for 11 years. “My boss has young kids and is family oriented. It makes it easy for me if I tell him if I have a conflict.” As a manager, Frank says he makes it just as comfortable for his staffers — moms and dads. “If they have something for their kids I want them to be there. It makes them more loyal.”