

Social Issues in Management and Business Ethics: Exercises and Activities

Exercise/Activity Title:

Work-Life Balance

Exercise/Activity Explanation (150 words or less):

The developmental psychologist Erik Erikson complemented Aristotle's conception of happiness by noting that happiness is achieved through the appropriate balancing among work, love (family), and play. Students share answer four questions assessing these three factors, share them in small groups, and discuss how they could integrate more love (family) and play into their busy work schedules.

Assignment is linked here.

Optional – Contact Information:

If interested in additional information, please contact Professor Denis Collins, School of Business, Edgewood College, Madison, WI; dcollins@edgewood.edu

Work-Life Balance

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- In Book I of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle surmises that "happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence". Happiness is the only thing human beings desire for its own sake. All other items of desire – such as wealth, prestige, and love – are pursued in hopes of achieving happiness.
- Employees need adequate time off from work to care for their families and participate in civic organizations. **Work-life balance** refers to achieving the appropriate balance between time spent working and one's personal life.
- Long working hours contribute not only to poor health conditions and emotional exhaustion, but also less time for family activities and civic engagement.
- The developmental psychologist Erik Erikson complemented Aristotle's conception of happiness by noting that happiness is achieved through the appropriate balancing of work, love, and play. As paraphrased by the historian Doris Kearns Goodwin:

"The richest and fullest lives attempt to achieve an inner balance between three realms: work, love and play. To pursue one to the disregard of the others is to open oneself to ultimate sadness in older age, whereas to pursue all three with equal dedication is to make possible a life filled not only with achievement but with serenity."

ACTIVITY: Small Groups – Read and reflect on Erikson's "Work, Love, Play" quote, share your answers

1. How many hours do you work a week?
2. How do you integrate love (family) into your life?
3. How do you integrate play into your life?
4. How can you integrate more family and more play into your life?

