

## HOW DO YOU MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS AS A WORKING MOM?

A major part of my job as a Senior Consultant at BHI involves building competency models for my clients. Competencies are a collection of behaviors, skills and knowledge, that when demonstrated on a regular basis, drive success. As a consultant, I know how to measure my performance and success – I know where I excel and where I need to continue to grow. But I also have another very important job: MOM. With everything I have going on at work, I started wondering if I was being successful as a WORKING MOM. Some people just “know” they are doing it right, but not me – I need a measure! So, I started a list of WORKING MOM COMPETENCIES. I tried to think of all of the things, that if demonstrated consistently and effectively, could help me establish that so-called work-life balance and be successful as a working mom. These are just my ponderings, not the answers. I would love to hear what you think!

### Working Mom Competencies

#### 1. Presence of Mind

- When you are at work, you are at work; when you are at home, you are at home. Determine where and how you will allocate your time so that you are not allowing work to interfere with home and vice versa. Of course there will always be those lingering worries (I hope her fever doesn't come back... Did I send that email?) but I try to address them quickly (make a phone call, write a reminder note) and move on so that the issue isn't a distracter to what I really need to be focusing on.

#### 2. Be the Example

- Make sure you consciously try to do the right thing – all the time. Little eyes are watching every move you make and little ears hear every word you say (even if you think they aren't listening). We have a dog that becomes a real pest during dinner time and as much as I would like to pop her in the nose when she tries to steal my chicken, I try to reinforce our “hitting is not nice” lesson and tell the dog to go lie down instead.

#### 3. Physical Well Being

- We need to take care of our own health and well-being. Nobody is going to make sure you eat three square meals and take your vitamins (unless it's your own mom – see, the job never ends!) For some, this can mean scheduling a regular workout into your daily routine. For me, it's just making sure that I am outside, moving around, working in the yard, doing some sort of physical activity. I hate working out (I'm not real fond of veggies either!) but I want to make sure that I am taking care of myself and making sure that my daughter is active and healthy too. The drive-thru dinner is often unavoidable, but we do try to make the healthy choices.

#### 4. Patience & Understanding

- Believe me, I struggle with this one. My daughter is good 90% of the time, but unfortunately the other 10% usually falls between 7:30 and 8:30 at night. After a long day at work, I come home excited to see my kid and I often get the whining, demanding, “nothing is right in this world” version of her. Sometimes I swear she is just punishing me for being gone all day. But then I try to squeeze into her shoes and look at it from her perspective: she's had a long day too. She's tired, strung out and low on patience so we try to find ways to unwind together. That's where the next competency comes into play...

#### 5. Creative Thinking

- I think this is one of the most important competencies. Sometimes we get in such a rush, that all we think about is getting things done, not about the process of getting them done. Creative thinking can be as simple as thinking of ways to make mundane things fun, like making dinner, cleaning up, grocery shopping (I highly recommend reading Llama, Llama Mad at Mama!) to as complicated as figuring out how to get a

project completed and still make it to your kid's softball game. Either way, it requires out of the box thinking and doing things differently than you may have normally. And often, it requires you to be just downright silly!

6. Tough-mindedness/Accountability

- I hate it when I come home from work and the first thing I have to do is discipline my daughter because she is doing something wrong. But, if I learned one thing in my Developmental Psych classes, it's this: the key to effective discipline is consistency. Many of my co-workers will tell you that my tough-mindedness has increased since motherhood. I think it's because I want to have a well-mannered kid and I know that if I am consistent and firm with her about what is right/wrong and what she can/can't get away with, we'll be on the same page.

7. Networking

- All moms need resources, but I think working moms need them even more. I am definitely not good at this one! I really need to branch out and build my networks beyond just a "Hi! How are you?" interaction so that I am *really* connected with other moms, teachers, church groups, babysitters, etc. It is so valuable to have good people to go to when you have questions about a behavioral issue or the best place to take swim lessons, etc.

8. Communication

- Effective communication with your spouse, family, child-care provider, teachers, supervisors, etc. is vital. You need to let people know what you have going on, what you need and when you need it. My husband and I both travel in our jobs which makes communication even more critical to keep our lives coordinated. We review what's on the agenda for each day and make lists of what needs to be addressed and who will take care of it (heaven forbid our daughter be the only kid at school on Thursday without a show and tell!) The same goes at work, you need to let your team know what you have going on. The more you share, the more understanding you'll get from them if you need some flexibility in your schedule.

9. Continuous Learning

- I strongly believe that as a family, we need to be continuously learning. I want to know that my daughter has learned as much from me as she has learned from school. I also want her to know that I am learning about the things that interest her the most (even if, at the current moment, it's bugs.) If we don't know, we find out together (What is that green bug with six legs and a horn? Let's look it up!). It is so amazing to see a kid's mind at work and sparks such animated conversations.

So, upon review of my competencies, I've made a list of my own strengths and opportunities. I've got some room to grow, but overall, I think I may be doing alright. My perspective, however, is limited to parenting a toddler – I have no idea if these competencies will hold true for the teenage years! Guess I'll refer back to Competency #9!