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## Tragedies Call for Time to Put Life in Balance

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# Tragedies call for time to put life in balance

**T**oday your life could change dramatically.

- Your spouse or significant other decides life without you is better than life with you.

- Your child, your parent or perhaps even you discover a terminal illness has invaded your body.

- You lose your job where you've worked a minimum of 50 hours per week for the last five, 10, 15 or 20 years.

- You lose everything that is precious to you: your home, your possessions, your mementos. All you have left are your life and the clothes on your back.

Chances are any of the above scenarios would rock your world. Your life can change in an instant. Even if it's hard to imagine, that's the reality. Believe it can happen to you.

When tragedy strikes, you feel unsteady. Anger and fear become familiar emotions. The anger may come when you ask yourself: How could this happen to me? The fear when you wonder: What am I going to do now?

Now. This moment. Today. That's the only time we are guaranteed. So, in this moment, I'd like you to find a pen and paper and follow me on a journey, a journey of your life. Stop. Now. Find that pen and paper. Really, I'm not kidding. Go get them.

Write down the following words, perhaps in a column so you have room to write comments down after each word: Career. Family. Friends. Significant Other. Fun. Health. Money. Personal Growth.

Behind each word, score yourself on a scale of 0-10. Zero means this area is dead from neglect. Ten means your hitting a home run in this area. Be honest. This exercise is meant only for your eyes.

After you've scored that, go back again and think about it, really think about it. What do you want your life to be? Remove the "buts," the "can'ts" and the "if onlys."

Write down what you really want your life to be. Remember, be honest about your desires because only you will see this information unless you decide to share it with someone else.

As a life coach, I know that life is a series of choices. You choose your destiny with every choice you make. The challenge comes in helping you understand that indeed you do have choices.



**CARLA  
KIMBROUGH-  
ROBINSON**

One of the true challenges in our industry is life balance. That's my gut and my experience. But then, in researching the topic, I ran across a Poynter survey conducted in February 2005.

Some startling statistics: 47.2 percent of the journalists polled have thought about leaving the industry due to work-life issues.

The numbers are even higher for young journalists, ages 20-34, at 58.3 percent; for journalists of color, 54.5 percent; and for women, 50.5 percent.

For staff members, leaving the industry may not be your only alternative if you can figure out ways to do more of what you want or need to do in life. If you wrote down honest answers about how you want your life to look, you're a step ahead of many of your colleagues. If you still feel your answers are not substantial enough, think about what your regrets will be if you don't pause to smell the roses now.

Armed with that information, decide to work smarter, not harder. Manage your time by planning and leaving the newsroom when you're done for the day. Presence does not equate to productivity. Use the time you save to spend time with your family; to take care of your body and soul; and to pursue passions that will make you more engaged when you're back at work. Think it's impossible without hurting your career? Slip a copy of this column on your bosses' desks so they can understand the reality of not changing.

Top editors, the next time you're in the newsroom, walk outside your office, look around and imagine that nearly one in two of your staff members could leave, not just your newsroom, but the industry. They'll leave because they can't get the time they need to be with their families, to take care of their health and welfare, to take vacation so they can have a little fun.

You can lead the revolution of life balance by walking around and finding out about people on your staff. Are they missing a soccer game, a school play or an anniversary? Are they just hanging out because they are waiting for an editor to read a story they turned in hours ago, or are they working on yet another last-minute assignment? Are they suffering from stress that leads to health problems because you want them to take vacation only when you want them to do so or perhaps not at all?

Yes, top editor, you can lead the revolution of life balance by demanding of yourself and other managers that you focus on two things: planning and people. You can shoo people out of the newsroom. You can celebrate life after work by enabling staff members to honor family commitments without fear their careers will hit a dead end. You do have the power.

To our colleagues in the Gulf Coast, please accept our condolences for all you have lost. The depth of your loss is hard to imagine. Your courage and commitment are inspiring. Your greatest legacy, perhaps, may be what you teach us as you face these tragic times. From you, we may learn what is truly most important in life. No doubt, we will see the strength of an enduring spirit, the power of hope and the courage to start anew and rebuild. Show us how to rebuild a life that works for you, your families and our industry. Lead us and give us courage to follow.

*Carla Kimbrough-Robinson is a trained life coach with Inspire Higher International, LLC, a Denver-based personal development company.*