

Peace vs Productivity Confessions of a “Workaholic”

Carrie Gosch Early Learning Center

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Background Leading to this Inquiry

- ▶ The mini-action research, that was completed in September, revealed an area that needed improvement. Over the course of 3 days, I found that about 6% of my time was spent on personal needs.
- ▶ Before AR I experienced anxiety about not completing deadlines. I spent about 10 hours per day at work. I did not eat breakfast or lunch on a regular basis and often took work home for completion. I experienced bouts with insomnia. During these times I would work on my laptop and send emails to staff and other co-workers. My weight was steadily increasing. I spent little time during the week with my family and would 'crash' on the weekends. The majority of my time was spent working.

Purpose of This Inquiry

- ▶ Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to determine how I could achieve work/life balance.

My Wondering

- ▶ I wondered what strategies could be adopted so that I could be intentional about achieving work/life balance.

My Actions

- ▶ Initially I began this AR cycle by wondering if spending 1 hour on an activity of personal interest could increase productivity. I logged my activities during the day and kept 1 hour reserved for a 'leisure' activity.
- ▶ After analyzing my logs in February, my focus changed to analyzing how much time I spent taking care of my needs at work, such as eating lunch. I also analyzed the time I devoted to my family and friends.
- ▶ A month prior to data collection for AR, I decided to adopt a lifestyle change and started meal planning for each week. In February, I decided to incorporate the eating plan into my AR project. I also made a journal entry twice per week. The journal was used to record my feelings as I worked through the process. I read 1 book about strategies to support/work life balance.
- ▶ At the end of my action research some of my co-workers and family members were invited to share their observations about my progress toward achieving work/life balance.

Timeframe

- ▶ I began the healthy eating plan on December 3, 2018. I tracked work and leisure time from January 7, 2019 until March 15, 2019.

Data Collection

- ▶ I kept a time management log on an Excel sheet from January 7 to March 15. I started out with only using 6% of my time taking care of personal needs. By the end of AR, I found, I ate lunch 78% of the time. I weighed myself at regular intervals and have lost 18.4 pounds.
- ▶ During the weeks of January 7 through March 15, 2019, a journal was kept twice per week to reflect on what was experienced and learned. My journal entries revealed that I am feeling less anxious, although my feelings vacillate. I understand that I can take control of that I do with my time.
- ▶ My colleagues and family have noted that I am not working at home as much, I have lost weight and am getting home earlier. I am delegating more, but I still need more work in that area.

My Discoveries

- ▶ Learning Statement One: Developing autonomy supports making choices that lead to work/life balance.
- ▶ Learning Statement Two: Focusing on tone development and losing weight has inspired me to start exercising regularly.
- ▶ Learning Statement Three: I don't have to work extra hours to keep up. Things will get done if I prioritize, delegate and manage my time.

Where Am I Heading Next

- ▶ I understand that I need to delegate even more activities and get support from my staff.
- ▶ The Carrie Gosch staff is willing to share leadership and support our school.
- ▶ In order to be an effective leader, wife and mother, I need to take care of my health.

Bibliography

- ▶ K. Blanchard, D.W. Edington, M. Blanchard. (1986) *The One Minute Manager Balances Work and Life: A Healthy Lifestyle Is the Key to Success*. New York London Toronto Sydney: Harper



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Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide #2)

During our mini action research cycle, I charted how I spent my time during the school day. When I finished the mini-cycle I noticed that I only spent 6% of my time taking care of my personal needs while at work. I am the sole administrator in my building and I experienced anxiety about not meeting deadlines or completing all the tasks necessary to properly serve my school community so I thought that I could accomplish more if I didn’t take breaks during the school day.

Initially I began my action research with a wondering about productivity and work life balance. However, as I worked on my project, I realized that my focus needed to be on work life balance. I found that I was working approximately 10 hours per day. During the day, I did not eat breakfast or lunch on a regular basis. I had bouts with insomnia, during which I would work on my laptop and send out emails to staff. My weight was steadily increasing. I also noted that I was spending little time, during the week with my family. I would ‘crash’ on weekends. When analyzing my early data I gathered that I was spending too much time working.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide #3)

Therefore, the purpose of my action research inquiry was to determine how I could achieve work life balance.

My Wondering (Slide #4)

With this purpose, I wondered what strategies could be learned so that I could be intentional about achieving work life balance.

My Actions (Slide #5)

I learned from my annual doctor’s visit that my weight gain placed me in the obese category. I decided to begin a meal planning process. I commissioned my sister to cook meals for me. In January, I started my action research. My original wondering was, “How can productivity be increased by spending an hour per day on a topic of personal interest?” I used an Excel spreadsheet to track what activities I performed every ten minutes of the day. I also started journaling on Tuesday and Thursday of each week.

When I reached the month of February I realized that I needed to change my focus. My Excel sheet data showed that I am productive at work. I noted that the use of the meal plan forced me to spend time eating lunch every day. I found that I began feeling better and noted that I immediately started losing weight. I shifted my focus to maintaining work life balance. I began weighing myself each month and decided to revise my wondering to, “ What strategies can be learned so that I am intentional about achieving work life balance?”

Data Collection (Slide #7)

I continued keeping a journal and logging my activities, during work hours, on an Excel spreadsheet throughout the action research process. When I changed my focus, I began weighing myself at a clinic each month and continued making arrangements for my meals to be prepared each week. I attempted to consistently take time out each day for lunch and ending work hours at 4:00PM.

My Data (Slide #7)

I kept quantitative data in the form of Excel Tracking Sheets. I included the percentages of time spent taking care of my personal needs at work i.e. eating lunch. I also went to the Wellness for Life Center each month and was weighed on the InBody machine which analyzes muscle-fat ratio and my current body composition. I lost a total of 18.4 pounds between December 4, 2018 and March 3, 2019. Originally, I ate lunch about 6% of the time. This data was collected over the course of 3 days. By the end of this action research project I ate lunch, at work, 78% of the time. This data was collected from January 7, 2019 through March 15, 2019.

I kept qualitative data in the form of a journal. I noted that I felt less anxious about completing tasks. I began to understand that I could take control of how I spent my time. I still vacillate with my mindset. There are times that I struggle with anxiety about completing tasks, but I have noted that I have been sleeping through the night and have not had insomnia since early February. I also found that I was able to spend more time with my family on week nights.

My Discoveries (Slide #8)

I have learned the following:

Learning Statement One: Developing autonomy supports making choices that lead to work life balance.

Learning Statement Two: Focusing on tone development by losing weight has inspired me to start exercising regularly

Learning Statement Three: I don't have to work extra hours to keep up. Things will get done if I prioritize, delegate and manage my time

I know that developing autonomy supports making choices that lead to work life balance. What I mean by this is, I can take control of my schedule by setting limits for work. I learned this by leaving work before 5:00 PM and my journal showed that I was spending more time at home with my family and consistently making choices to do things that allowed me to rest and refresh my mind. Doing this is my choice and within my control, just as not doing this is a choice.

Working on tone in my body yielded many positive effects. I began to sleep through the night after I lost about 10 pounds. I also had more energy due to my new diet. I noted weight loss every month and that inspired me to continue taking time in the day to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner with snacks in between. It was a great feeling to put on clothes that I hadn't been able to wear and they actually fit! I began thinking I could accelerate progress to my target weight if I started exercising.

I also kept track of the way I spent my time on Excel worksheets. I can clearly see that I am productive at work. I am also still productive if I take time to take care of myself by eating during the day. Prioritizing has been a skill that allowed me to accomplish tasks during this action research project and I would like to explore strategies to support successfully delegating more tasks to my staff in my next action research project.

Where I Am Heading Next (Slide #9)

My focus for this action research journey was to take control of my schedule and balance work and life schedules. I have learned that my staff is willing to help me when I delegate tasks to them. I also learned that they will support our school and share leadership roles. I learned this at the end of my action research because I started experimenting and wondering about delegating more tasks and sharing leadership. I have already tried a few new ways to share leadership. My plan is to do more of this in the fall.

Additionally, I learned that in order to be more effective as a mother, wife and principal; I must take care of my personal needs and monitor my health. I have been enjoying more family time and doing things that I like to do. I have not had insomnia in months and I didn't attribute its onset to working so much coupled with my eating habits. I hadn't realized that I was out of control, by working so many hours. It seems like a simple concept, but it was not apparent to me prior to this project. I thought that I was doing a good job by not stopping to take care of anything personal at work. Now I am in control and more purposeful about how I spend my time.

My next wondering is how to be more purposeful about delegating tasks. Also, I have started thinking about how to increase teamwork and I am curious to learn about developing our school culture.

Bibliography (Slide #10)

Books

- K. Blanchard, D.W. Edington, M. Blanchard. (1986) *The One Minute Manager Balances Work and Life: A Healthy Lifestyle Is the Key to Success*. New York London Toronto Sydney: Harper