

The "New" Me

By: Destiny Rutzel, South Ripley Junior High School

Contact: drutzel@sripley.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

Over the last two and half years since leaving the classroom and becoming an administrator, I have not been able to find balance between work and home. Prior to this position, I was able to find time for exercise, hobbies and family. My family and I knew the time that would need to be put into being an administrator, we knew that I would miss things with our kids, and we knew it wouldn't be easy.

In the past three years, I have put everything that I have into my job. Sometimes, that is at the cost of my health and family time. I love my job and my students, but there has to be balance in my life. Since I have taken this position, my health has declined. I have put on twenty-seven pounds, my A1C diabetes numbers are borderline diabetic, and I had an eye opening scare with what was thought to be cancer.

Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to make a change. It is time for me to put myself first sometimes and remember that if I can't be healthy for myself, I can't be healthy for my staff, students, and family. As a result of this observation, I have devised a plan to focus on balance in my personal and professional life.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered....

- Could I find balance between work and home?
- How would my new balance affect my family, my job, and me?
- Could I become a better, healthier, version of myself

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I began a health and wellness plan for myself that would help to balance work and home. I began tracking my food, tracking my activities and hobbies, journaling and reflecting on Sunday, and creating a weekly "to do" list to plan my week.

In November, I created a calendar in which I would record any daily activities that I did outside of school time such as exercising, hobbies that I enjoyed, and family activities. This calendar allowed me to track the information that I was doing that I have not made time for and see any patterns with balance with work and home. I journaled each Sunday about my week and planned my "to do" list that I broke down by day.

In December, I decided that I would like to use my fitbit to begin recording my data with exercise (steps) and my food intake. I printed a half marathon training schedule out for a beginner and created a visual calendar that hung in my room on my mirror. I am a visual learner and therefore wanted to see each day what my exercise expectations were that day. My family was a huge support system for me. I met with my family and told them about my project and how they could support me in my endeavor. My kids and my husband would

look at my calendar each week and hold me accountable. If there were circles, they knew I had not made my goal of exercise that day.

The family piece to my project was crucial. My family missed me at home and wanted to see me more than I was home. They were able to see it from the beginning to the end. My daughter and son began to workout with me on certain days. My husband was supportive making sure that I had time to workout by helping with the kids each day and encouraging me along the way.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things I learned include:

- I cannot go from nothing to Superwoman and expect to be successful. It's okay to say no sometimes.
- Small changes are most effective over time.

The first thing that I learned was that I cannot go from nothing to Superwoman and expect to be successful. I began my project with this big picture that I was going to completely turn things around and it was going to all happen in the next few months and all would be perfect by the end. I hit some bumps along the way because I took on too much at one time.

The second thing that I learned was that small changes are most effective over time. A month into my project, I was tired and felt a bit overwhelmed from taking on too much to change to get to where I wanted to be during this project. I sat down and re-focused all of this and realized that I cannot expect things to change overnight.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

In conclusion, this project has made me take time to reflect on my first three years as an administrator. As I entered my first year as a principal, I was ready to hit the ground running and have continued that for the last three years. In that three years, I lost myself in my work. I worked countless hours and continued to strive to go above and beyond not realizing how it was affecting my health, my family, and my overall wellness.

I have learned that I need to take time for myself in order to be able to be "present" for my family and my school. I have realized that if I take time to keep myself healthy and active, I am a happier and healthier me. I am able to find time for things that I love and things that I have missed for the past three years. It has been empowering to see the changes that I have made in the last 6 months.

I plan to continue on this journey of health and wellness for my family, my students and staff, but most of all for me. I have learned that life is too short. I want to look at my kids each day and show them that I can be successful at being a mom, wife, and principal and start and end each day with a smile feeling blessed with all that life has given to me.

References:

N/A