



LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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How Can I Really Take Care of Myself?

Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)

The principal needs to find the balance between the demands of personal and professional life. Few individuals would say that they wished they had spent more time at the office. The “to do” list is never completed. Working long hours robs you of personal and

family time. Love your family by spending quality time with them; love yourself by maintaining your health; and love God by staying connected with Him.

Escape your office and enjoy the good things happening in your school. Walking around your school gives you the opportunity to interact with students and staff, shows that you care about what is happening, and reminds you why you’ve chosen to be the principal!

Curse of the Yes

Stephen Herr, Principal, East Pasco Adventist Academy

I love saying yes to an opportunity. When I was offered my first teaching job at my alma mater I said, “Yes!” When I was offered a principal job a few years later in Florida, I said, “Yes!” And when the school board was going to reduce staff and asked if I could survive without a secretary, I said, “Yes!”

Then it snowballed. Church positions, additional Conference responsibilities, community involvement—“Yes, yes, yes, yes!” was all I could say. I mean, what was I supposed to say, “No?”

I am a commitment-aholic, and if you also are a principal, you likely have the same disease. I love what I do and am passionate about every part of it. I also want to please everybody and don’t want to be the guy who lets anyone down. I thrive on staying busy. I love it, at least, until I don’t.

See, while everyone else says, “Good for you!” “Thanks!” “You’re the best!” my wife says, “You said what? Again? What about your children? They’re only young once! (1, 4, and 6 years old, by the way). Do you want to miss that for the sake of your career?”

Let me describe a real scenario that I’ll bet you’ve experienced more than once. I’m at work. My phone rings, and I don’t recognize the number. I immediately answer the call in the middle of the day from almost anyone because it may be urgent school business—a potential student, a disgruntled parent, a potential student, a school board member, and...did I mention, it may be a potential student!? Then, a few minutes later, my wife calls. But I’m in the middle of something else now. She can probably wait, and if not, she’ll just text me anyway. It’s undoubtedly just a reminder to pick up something from the store on the way home or to see what time I’ll be coming home today. I decide I’ll call her back when I’m not busy, which never happens.

I did that one day, or rather, dozens of times, and one night the question I got when I returned home was, “Am I really the least important person you talked to today? Because you returned all of their calls and even let other people interrupt those calls because they were important. But me, I’m so unimportant that I don’t even

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Balancing Act

Brent Baldwin, Principal, Collegedale Academy

Let’s take a reality check. My day includes more than being a leader of learning. Here is a sampling of my realities:

- Meetings that begin at 6:30pm (after a full day of work) and end at 10pm, then the inevitable after-meeting discussions?
- Attending basketball games, NHS inductions, fall festivals, going on class trips, vespers programs, music programs at multiple churches?
- Being pulled aside at church and told you handled a situation incorrectly?
- Late night phone calls to complain about the school?

Do any of these situations sound familiar? If so, you must be a principal at a Seventh-day Adventist school! How balanced are the lives of Adventist principals when the scope of work invades all personal time? Research shows that most principals generally love their jobs, yet in large numbers experience stress, anxiety and sleeplessness, to the extent that they may seek remedies from a doctor or from the drink or medicine cabinet (Fullen, 2000) - for Adventist’s like me it means stress eating.

As the average length of principal longevity in a North American Division Adventist school is under two years, stress and stress levels are concerns that need to be addressed by all of us in the business. Our education system flourishes when there is a wealth of educational leadership. Conversely, our system and/or school dies without a positive, healthy and experienced leader in our schools.

Obviously, this stress is first noticed by a decrease in family time and interaction. I distinctly remember calling my wife from the doctor’s office during a routine check-up to tell her they would not release me, as my blood pressure was at an extreme level. Unfortunately, this stress prevents a principal from providing the well-rounded, spiritual guidance that is needed on a day-to-day basis.

So what does an experienced principal do to relieve stress?

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Curse of the Yes

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get an answer or a call back! It would be nice to know that the person you married is at least as important as a random person at school!”

I rationalize it to myself and her, “Well, it’s just the phase of life...Time to advance, build a solid resume, take care of our future, and that takes a lot of time.” But, what phase of life am I talking about? What is this? Work trumps all else? How can I find the freedom of saying no?

The answer begins by admitting and committing to what’s really important. It’s not my career, my bank account, my ego—it’s people. The people God has put into my life first—my family, my friends. I’ve been called to minister to people in my church, in my community, and in my school, *but not at the expense of my family and friends.*

What should you say no to right now? If you’re not sure, ask your spouse. I bet you’ll get an answer. ☩

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Visit: www.leadingthejourney.org

Balancing Act

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School Time:

1. Find a before or after school prayer partner.
2. Take time to walk around school to observe the great things happening.
3. Set meetings so you can either take your kids home after school or can make it back in time for family worship.

Scheduling:

1. Include family time on your professional calendar.
2. Meet your family and/or spouse for a meal in between activities.
3. Schedule time for your family to be involved in school activities (my

The Power of No

*Murray Cooper, Associate Superintendent
Florida Conference*

No. A short two letter word, but don’t let the small number of letters fool you about its importance and power.

No is the tool that principals use to build the boundary fence between personal and professional life. Because *no* is a tool, it is used at the discretion of the principal and this is exactly where the challenge is: where and when does a principal say *no*.

As with any tool, the more it is used, the better the owner becomes at deploying it at the correct times in order to gain maximum benefit. With repetition, the principal becomes more confident and comfortable in saying *no*, and saying *no* is an EXTREMELY difficult thing to do. The sooner a principal comes to the realization that he or she can’t say yes to everything, the greater chance for success in building the fence between personal and professional life.

First, look at personal life, and more specifically, spiritual life. Success in both personal and professional life starts with spending time each day where the cares and worries in both worlds must be set aside in order to commune with our Heavenly Father. Take a moment and grab a copy of *Steps to Christ* and read the chapter “The Privilege of Prayer” and you will be reminded of the importance of coming to God in prayer. Saying yes to creating private prayer and devotion time

family loves going to all school musical events).

4. Schedule time away from campus with your family (boarding school principals).

Socializing:

1. Spend time with people not involved in the school.
2. Set aside “date” time with your spouse (always tough when you have a household of young children).
3. Spend quality time with members of your support group (in my experience, spending time with fellow principals at a Union/Conference meeting is cathartic).

Personal Life:

1. Set boundaries about your personal

means saying *no* to something else.

Saying yes to family also means deciding to say *no* on other matters. There is a saying that on one’s deathbed the regret is not that more time was spent at the office, but that more time should have been spent with the family. While it is likely impossible to always say *no* to professional requests and responsibilities, choosing professional responsibilities over family needs to be the exception rather than the rule.

My wife and I have just entered the world of “empty nesters”. Just the other day, we were talking about how we seem to have more time in the evenings now that we didn’t have when our kids were in middle and high school. The reason is quite simple. For the last nine years, we made the commitment to attend as many games and concerts as possible that our children were involved in. This commitment involved us saying *no* to various committee meetings at both the school and church, and I never regretted that decision.

In the professional life of the principal, there are so many demands of the principal’s time and focus that yet again, the successful principal must prioritize and be able to say *no*. The principal must realize there is always more to do and the inbox never empties out.

Saying *no* does not come easy and I believe it is a skill that needs to be practiced. In order to be successful in your calling as a principal, you must learn to say *no*. ☩

life (social media, church obligations, etc.)

2. Get rest and exercise (try your best, even though some days are 7am-10pm days).
3. Participate in household duties/chores.
4. Set time aside each day for personal worship and reflection (personally, I need time where I don’t have to talk to anyone).

Most important is that each individual find a balance between the professional responsibilities required and that of putting your family and your own health first. Christ has called us to look after and direct our families in Joshua 24:15, “as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Without a commitment to our families and our mental well-being, our professional lives will surely falter as well. ☩