DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 305 565 CG 021 576

AUTHOR Savickas, Mark
TITLE Work and Love: Life's Two Passions.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Counseling and Development (Boston, MA, March 15-18, 1989).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Development; *Career Counseling; *Careers; *Counselor Role; Family Relationship; Interpersonal Relationship; *Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Love

ABSTRACT

Counselors often deal with the meaning of work and love as they help clients to manage or modify their lives. This is especially true for counselors involved in career interventions such as career education programs, vocational guidance and counseling, work adjustment counseling, occupational health counseling, and retirement planning workshops. All of these interventions address the meaning of work and love, although they vary in emphasis. Explicit attention to the meaning of work and love can benefit almost every person in individual career counseling, group vocational guidance, or career development workshops and classes. Counselors should consider their client's views of work and love, helping clients to self-explore the meaning of work and love and how this meaning relates to the developmental challenges or personal problems which the client brings to counseling. This paper presents a rationale for asking people to examine what work and love mean to them. It describes various methods for eliciting the personal meaning of work and love, teaching the social meaning of work and love, and creating new meaning. To illustrate the approach used in creating new meaning, nine sample cases are briefly presented. A table illustrating Robert Sternberg's contrasts between work and love, and a list of recommended readings are included. (NB)

Work and Love: Life's Two Passions

Mark L. Savickas

Behavioral Sciences Program

Northeastern Ohio Universities

College of Medicine

Rootstown, Ohio 44272

Paper Presented at the

Annual Convention of

The American Association for Counseling

and Development

March 15-18, 1989, Boston, Massachusetts

Work and Love: Life's Two Passions

Mark L. Savickas

Counselors often deal with the meaning of work and love as they help clients to manage or modify their lives. This is especially true when counselors do career interventions. Although all career interventions address the meaning of work and love, they vary in emphasis. In career education programs, counselors represent common sense as they teach students about life in our society. They orient students to the social meaning of work and love as well as advocate balancing the two in life planning. In vocational guidance and counseling, counselors help clients examine their views about work and love before discussing vocational choice. Hopefully, counselors also fight occupational sexism by disabusing clients' gender stereotypes about work and love. In work adjustment counseling, counselors facilitate self-exploration about the meaning of work with clients who experience difficulties such as keeping a job, coping with "the failure of success", adopting the work ethic, relating to co-workers, maintaining productive work habits, adapting to a job plateau, and making a mid-career change. In occupational health counseling, counselors facilitate self-exploration about the meaning of love with clients who need to reduce the tension and repair the damage caused by work strain. In retirement planning workshops, counselors help clients review work and love as they have lived them and then help participants redefine work and love as they leave paid employment.

Explicit attention to the meaning of work and love can benefit almost every person in individual career counseling, group vocational guidance, or

career development workshops and classes. Thus before counselors proceed to facilitate decision making or skill development, they should consider their client's view of work and love. This may involve helping clients to self-explore the meaning of work and love and how this meaning relates to the developmental challenges or personal problems which they bring to counseling To do this, counselors may help clients express the personal meaning of work and love, compare it to the social meaning, relate any discrepancies between personal and social meaning to their presenting problem, and redefine work and love as a step toward resolving their problems. Before describing how counselors can provide this type of help, I will present the rationale for asking people to examine what work and love mean to them. The rationale will be followed by a description of methods for eliciting the personal meaning of work and love, teaching the social meaning of work and love, and creating new meaning.

Rationale

Animals are born with a full complement of instincts which animate their lives. In contrast, human beings are born with some innate drives but not enough to design their lives. Human beings creatively complete their life design with the guidance of society. Although we share with other creatures the drives to survive and to reproduce, human beings invest these physiological drives with psychological meanings. Animal aggression propels labor, that is, physical exertion to meet survival needs. Human beings add to labor a psychological component which we call work, vocation, or career. Although they consciously labor, animals do not self-consciously work. Animal sexuality is directly tied to reproduction. Human beings add to sex a

psychological component which we call love. Human love can be independent of reproduction because it depends upon cultural meaning, not sex. The meaning that we ascribe to work and love, to a great extent, is the meaning that we attribute to our lives. In fact, for many people the answer to the question "What is the meaning of life?" is simply "work and love." Tolstoy succinctly expressed the common sense of Western Civilization when he wrote that "One can live magnificently in this world, if one know how to work and how to love, to work for the person one loves, and to love one's work."

Because work and love are neither part of nature nor physiological drives, human beings are not born knowing what they mean. Society's cultivate the social meaning of work and love in new members of the community in order to preserve their culture. To function adequately in a culture, newcomers such as children and immigrants must (1) learn how their culture defines work and love, (2) integrate the psychological experience of work and love with the biological experience of aggressive and sexual drives, and (3) balance work and love in the sociological experience of daily living. Because people must learn the concepts of work and love, they may mistake them or fail to learn them. Some people mistake or fail to learn their community's interpretation of work and love because their families, role models, and educators do not teach them common sense.

Eliciting Personal Meaning

Usually the above rationale enlists people's willingness to say what work and love mean to them. Counselors may elicit this meaning in a variety of ways. One way is simply to ask people to define work and love and then contrast the two. Another way is to instruct people to use an adjective

checklist or card sort to indicate which adjectives describe work and which describe love. The Bem-Sex Role Inventory works well for this purpose. Still another way to elicit meaning is to use Landfield's construct pyramid procedure to help clients articulate their outlook on work and love.

In working with groups, counselors may present two incomplete sentence stems and have people orally complete the sentences. I ask people to finish the sentence, "When I work, I _____." I tell them that it need not be paid work, it could be washing dishes or cutting grass. I also ask them not to complete the sentence with words like happy or content because these words denote evaluations of work not the work itself. While individuals decide whether or not they like what they are doing, even if it takes only a moment, they are not actually doing. After people have completed the fist sentence, I present the second sentence stem, "When I love, I _____." I ask people to think of a person, place or pet that they love and then describe their psychological experience while they are loving that object. Another approach with groups is to ask them Fansell and Bannister's "construct implication question": If you know that a person is a hard worker, then what else would you know about that person? Having listened to an individual or group state their views about work and love, it is the counselor's turn to present the community's views.

Teaching Social Meaning

In our society, dichotomies are the basic unit of meaning. We recognize good as the opposite of evil; black as the opposite of white; and heaven as the opposite of hell. Unfortunately, we sometimes even think of male as the opposite of female, such as when we refer to the "opposite sex" rather than

the "other sex". Because people tend to think first in dichotomies (later we multiply dichotomies or convert them to continua), counselors often explain work and love by contrasting them as psychological experiences. For example, counselors can teach clients the meaning of work and love by using Sternberg's contrasts presented in Table 1. In teaching clients or students about the social meaning of work and love in our culture, I use three basic dichotomies: future vs. present, against vs. with, and individuality vs. mutuality.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Future vs. present. People know that they are working when they forgo present pleasures for future rewards. A future orientation gives form to work. Work involves the constructive use of energy to create or enhance the future. As Cabot (1914) noted, "Work is doing what you do not now enjoy for the sake of a future which you clearly see and desire." In contrast, love is timeless. Whereas work aims toward a goal, love exists for the sake of love itself. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote in her Sonnets From the Portuguese: "If thou must love me, let it be for nought; Except for love's sake only." Because work moves toward a goal, it should be efficient, planned, scheduled and maybe even hurried. Love loses track of time, it is spontaneous yet patient. Love turns into work if it is scheduled, planned, hurried, and impatient.

Against vs. with. Because it stems from aggression, work is against. In contrast, because it stems from sex, love is with. Work transforms the object whereas love transforms the subject. Work changes the world (for example, a person attacks a tree to transform it into a chair). Love changes

the lover. Love makes people more than they were because it extends them beyond previous limitations. To develop understanding of working against or loving with, counselors can elaborate the differences between: compete vs. cooperate, control vs. share, agency vs. union, achieve vs. affiliate, active vs. receptive, product vs. process, evaluate vs. accept, and detach vs. attach. Anecdotes and stories serve to elaborate meaning. For example, a counselor might discuss the old Viennese custom of asking a prospective bride and groom to cut down a tree using a two-person saw. Obviously, the couple must move together in completing the task. However, if one or both partners want to compete or control, then the task becomes overwhelming. Couples who failed to fell the tree encountered a momentous question: If we cannot co-operate for a short-time, then how can we cooperate for a life-time?

Individuality vs. mutuality. In our society work is the primary source of labels that we and other people give to ourselves. Through work a person becomes somebody in relation to other people. According to Cabot (1914), "To find one's work is to find one's place in the world." An occupation locates a worker in the social structure. If an individual does not work, then society does not recognize that person. Work provides objective identity ("I did it") whereas love provides subjective identity ("I feel it"). Thus, work is egocentric in that "I am what I do." In contrast, love is allocentric in that "we are what we love." Work solidifies an individual's boundaries and provides self-definition; love dissolves these boundaries and embeds the individual in a social matrix. The lover frees self from labels and crosses boundaries as he or she unites with people, places, and pets. The lover gets out of "I" and into "we". Work permits self-realization in the environment

whereas love permits self-transcendence beyond narcissistic limits as the lover fuses self with others. Accordingly, individuals with a weak identity fear love because they think they may lose the self. Therefore, they work hard to delimit self not give it up. Love turns into work when a person uses love to gain an identity or enhance the self.

After articulating the personal meaning of work and love, clients who learn discrepant social meanings of work and love often are disoriented. It is difficult for them to rethink and change ideas that have structured their daily lives for years. However, with help these clients can create new meaning for work and love and thus fundamentally change their lives.

Creating New Meaning

Freud asserted that mental health requires both love and work. Work brings success yet workers must love if they are to enjoy their success. Many problems presented by career clients derive from disequilibrium between work and love in their lives. One approach to helping these clients is to uncover the mistaken ideas about work and love that cause their imbalance and then clearly explain their distress as a symptom of work-love imbalance. I begin to help clients think about their lives by comparing their personal (private sense) meanings of work and love to social (common sense) meanings. Then I explain how their personal interpretations of work and love sustain disequilibrium and cause distress. The approach is the same whether counseling individuals or guiding groups. To illustrate this intervention, nine brief cases are presented. The cases are followed by two examples of groups designed to help people who live imbalanced lives.

An executive wondered why his work was a great success and his family life a great failure. He generously gave his family the fruits of his work.

His long hours of work provided his family with a beautiful house, fancy cars, fashionable clothes, and so on. He found new happiness when he changed his definition of love from presents to presence.

An university professor wondered why he felt so isolated at work and why his marriage had ended in divorce. He eventually understood that his compulsion to control could be the cause. Then he struggled to change his style of work and love from "my way or the highway" to "our way is the highway".

A school principal reported being liked but not respected by her faculty. They admired her patience, kindness, empathy, and flexibility. However, they disliked her disorganization, inefficiency, and lack of goals. In other words, they liked her as a person but not as a colleague. She wanted to improve her work habits and attitudes after learning that her job required "getting ahead" as well as "getting along". She began by participating in assertiveness training, taking a leadership course, and reading a book on time management.

A graduate student complained that no one cared when she had a scholarly paper accepted for publication. Her mother, boyfriend, and roommate all complained that she had become "hper" and was too busy to visit, date, or talk. After wondering about the value of success without people to share it, she decided to cure her "hurry sickness" and be more patient with those she loved.

A young mother who gave herself completely to the family cried because she felt drained. She later stated that she felt like a martyr because she thought love equaled giving. When she believed that love meant give-and-take, she felt relieved. For her, learning that selflessness must be balanced with selfishness was difficult but worth it.

A middle-aged mechanic complained that he did not enjoy weekends or vacations because parties, concerts, and hobbies wasted his time. Eventually, he agreed that the most precious time in life is the time that you "waste" on people and places that you love. He had to learn to forget about his goals and enjoy the present while he was playing.

A dual career couple were haunted by the problems of raising a family while climbing their career ladders. Their resolution had been to restrict their time at home to mother-father and wife-husband roles. They sacrificed their private time (personal hobbies) and their woman-man time. As a result, they felt that they worked all day on the job and all night at home. By clarifying their values, they gained the courage to make the painful comprises between work and love that decreased their career success yet increased their life satisfaction.

A graduate student consistently failed to help his counseling practicum clients. He could not understand why his clients did not improve because he worked so hard on his cases. He used great skill in cognitive therapy to work

against his clients' irrational ideas. When he learned that good counseling requires a relationship (love) dimension in addition to a communication (work) dimension he started to understand that he should work with his clients not on them.

A physician entered counseling to change careers. He liked the field of medicine but was disturbed by patients who wanted more from him than just biotechnical competence. Through career counseling he changed his goal from finding a field where he could work with things to developing the psychosocial sensitivity and skills which he had not learned from his alcoholic parents.

A woman said that she felt sad when she thought about her and her husband's impending retirements. They did not know how to play so she dreaded the thought of being home all day. She believed that they would not be able to cope with the loss of work. In joint counseling, they examined the meaning of work and love. This led to a mutual commitment to live the "last chapter of their lives" differently than they had lived the previous chapters.

Counselors may use the same basic approach to design group interventions. For example, people who suffer from "hurry sickness" may benefit from group intervention because they share in common too much work and too little love. Excessive devotion to work leads to a characteristic work style. To bind anxiety, reduce insecurity, or avoid liking and loving, one must exaggerate work's importance and overdo its behaviors. This style includes an excessive goal orientation that requires compulsive planning and worrying. Efficiency becomes time urgency and impatience. Constructive aggression detaches from "what is required" and attaches to "how good I am". Free-floating hostility emerges and serves to deflect any threats to self-esteem. Compulsive competitiveness about almost everything and with almost everyone causes the "successful failure" to view co-workers as challengers in a zero-sum contest for a limited supply of power, prestige, and possessions. Healthy productivity and self-evaluation yield to obsession with keeping score and winning the contest. Cynicism and distrust toward co-workers generate

unreasonable and dominating behaviors. Rather than using work to build an identity as a prelude to joint identity or intimacy, the successful failure uses work to maintain rigid identity boundaries and thus hold friendship and love at bay.

Taken together, competitiveness, time urgency, impatience, hostility, and overinvolvement in work have been called the "Type A behavior syndrome". As individuals with Type A style engage in daily combat with time and co-workers, their exertion places them at risk for personality deterioration, emotional exhaustion, and pathophysiological processes associated with coronary heart disease. In 1938, Virginia Wolf wrote about how people who are highly successful at work may lose their senses: "Sight goes. They have no time to look at pictures. Sound goes. They have no time to listen to music. Speech goes. They have no time for conversation. They lose their sense of proportion - the relations between one thing and another. Humanity goes. Money-making becomes so important that they must work by night as well as by day. Health goes...What remains of a human being who has lost sight, sound, and a sense of proportion? Only a cripple in a cave."

Programs to modify Type A behavior teach people to balance work with love, whether love be expressed through play, intimacy, or worship. The programs are founded on the assumption that life is better served by balancing goals with spontaneity than by overdoing a future orientation. Competition must alternate with cooperation, aggression with altruism, efficiency with patience, control with reciprocity, and individuality with empathy. Balancing work with love allows people to relax, repair the damages done by work, and re-create the self.

In Friedman's counseling program for Type A people, physicians teach patients seven beliefs: a) Type A behavior can be changed; (b) Type A behavior hinders never helps a career; (c) sweetness is not a weakness; (d) material things cannot ameliorate insecurity or inadequate self-esteem; (e) trivial errors of other people do not always require your preoccupation or correction; (f) things worth being excel things worth having; and (g) the means should justify the end. In addition, patients practice behavioral drills to employ wisdom and perspective, distinguish instances from crises, allot time for aloneness, cultivate friendship, verbalize affection to friends and family members, avoid polyphasic activities, substitute metaphors for numbers, and renew daily awareness of persons, pets, and plants.

Sometimes, spouses of Type A people present the complementary imbalance, too much love and too little work. They too benefit from learning to balance work and love. For example, group counseling with displaced homemakers does not usually emphasize living in the present, cooperating, and mutuality because these are already overdone in the lives of the participants. Instead, group members learn to be comfortable competing, controlling, deciding, setting goals, planning, and asserting self.

Integrating Work and Love

Greater enjoyment of life comes when one balances work and love. Flexibly alternating periods of work with periods of play, intimacy, and worship keeps the individual from overdoing either work or love. After people balance work and love, they may become even more complete by integrating work with love. Gibran poetically described this integration: "Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each also be alone, even as the strings of a

lute are alone, though they quiver to same music." The greatest enjoyment of life comes when one incorporates work and love into each activity rather than alternates work and love activities. Integration is an important challenge for counselors because effective counseling requires that counselors integrate work with love moment-by-moment. During a counseling session, the counselor may at one moment control the relationship or teach the client a new behavior yet in the next moment actively listen and share the client's world. This is why leading counselor education programs train counselors in work and love. Graduate students learn to diagnose, conceptualize, teach, lead, and manage while they also learn to listen, respond with empathy, facilitate, self-disclose, participate, and encourage.

Conclusion

Work and love are the primitive predicates of social life in our society. Although some people assume that everyone knows what work and love are, this is not true. People must learn how their culture defines work and love as well as how they can balance the two. Because these ideas are learned, they may be mistaken or not learned. Career counselors find many occasions in which the most fundamental help that they can offer to their clients is encouragement to balance work and love in their daily living. Counselors who wish to represent the common sense meanings of work and love to their clients may find that the books recommended in the attached list can stimulate their thinking about work and love as well as provide ideas on how to help their clients integrate work and love in daily living.

Recommended Reading Reading on Work and Love

Axelrod, R. (1984). The evolution of cooperation. New York: Basic Books.

Cabot, R. (1914). What men live by: Work, play, love, and worship. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Fine, R. (1985). The meaning of love in human experience. New York: Wiley.

Friedman, M., & Ulmer, D. (1986). Treating Type A behavior and your heart. New York: Fawcett Crest.

Hall, R. (1986). Dimensions of work. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Kohn, A. (1986). No contest: The case against competition. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

LaBier, D. (1986). Modern madness: The emotional fallout of success. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Rohrlich, J. (1980). Work and love: The crucial balance. New York: Summit.

Smelser, N., & Erikson, E. (1980). Themes of work and love in adulthood. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Ulrich, D., & Dunne, H. (1986). To love and work: A systematic interlocking of family, workplace, and career. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Table 1

Robert Sternberg's Contrasts between Work and Love

WORK	LOVE
1. Forward movement clearly defined. Career ladder.	1. Hard to know next move.
2. Clear feedback, often seen in numbers. Profits, perks, and promotions.	2. Muddy feedback.
3. Zero-sum game.	3. Joint gain.
4. Tasks take precedence.	4. Human element takes precedence.
5. Trying hard works. Productivity counts.	5. Trying too hard does not work. For example, sex.
6. Level: More the better. Productivity, salary.	6. Balance: Too much of one thing means less of something else.
7. Objective record. Count things like clients or publications.	7. Subjective record. What you think or perceive is what counts.
8. Emotions get in the way.	8. Emotions make relationships.
9. Suspend the golden rule to win.	9. Suspend the golden rule to lose.
10. Move on is good. Promotion.	10. Move on is bad. Divorce.