Women in Science

Work–Life Balance: Pay It Forward!

I find it difficult to follow my fellow Women in Science community members on the topic of work–life balance. There have been so many great tips and perspectives already shared this past year, but when the community asked for an industry perspective, I felt compelled to raise my hand and volunteer to write this month’s column. I’ve grown so much in my career in industry, and there’s one thing that I am reminded of by one of my dear mentors early in my career. He said, “Pay it forward.” From time to time, when we are in the flow, running fast and getting a lot accomplished, one may pause to think, “Did I take the time to breathe today?” It’s a wonderful gift to stop, reflect, and think deeply about that single question to ask yourself, “How am I making all this possible? What should I keep doing? And what should I stop doing?”

Much of my personal career growth in managing my time is through learning from others and learning a lot about myself, trying the things that work for me. Here is my opportunity to try to pay it forward. I am an early career industry scientist. I am also a single mom, who went back to school when my son was five years old to pursue my Ph.D. Work–life balance is a skill that I am constantly cultivating to fit the needs of myself and my son. Many thanks to the mentors, friends, and colleagues who supported me through this journey. Here is what I have found important in maintaining balance and paying it forward:

1. Love what you do.
2. Take time off—balance is a funny thing!
3. Ask for help—it takes a team.
4. Enjoy your colleagues.
5. Work smarter—strive for fewer meetings.

Thank you for the forum to share some ideas about work–life balance. In a world of constant change, maintaining our resilience and energy levels should be a top priority if we are to show up and be available to those that need our full presence: family, friends, and colleagues.

This article is a shortened version that is part of a series written by members of the Women in Science committee, for all Society members. To view the full-length articles, visit www.soils.org/membership/women-in-science, www.agronomy.org/membership/women-in-science, and www.crops.org/membership/women-in-science.

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