

Flourishing in Life, Work and Careers

Individual Wellbeing and Career Experiences

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NEW HORIZONS IN MANAGEMENT



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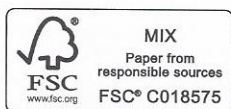
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5. Helping fathers flourish in all parts of their lives

**Alyssa F. Westring, Stewart D. Friedman and
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Research on the relationship between work and the rest of life has been linked historically with the concerns of working mothers. Not surprisingly, as women have entered the workforce in ever-increasing numbers, there has been both popular and academic enthusiasm for discussions of the challenges and opportunities for working mothers. Yet, as women's roles have changed, so have the roles and values of men (Friedman, 2013). Men are spending more time with their children than ever before and increasingly contribute to domestic responsibilities. Despite the increased engagement with family, working fathers still face expectations of total commitment to work (Rudman and Mescher, 2013). Paid paternity leave is a rarity in the United States and most men take less than two weeks off work following the birth of a child (Harrington et al., 2010).

However, there is a growing recognition of the importance of including fathers in the conversation about work and the rest of life. In fact, the 2008 US *National Study of the Changing Workforce* found that fathers in dual-career couples reported significantly more work–life conflict than mothers (Galinsky et al., 2008). In her 2013 book, *Superdads: How Fathers Balance Work and Family in the 21st Century*, Gayle Kaufman, investigates how fathers perceive their roles and responsibilities with family and work. She identifies the most common category of fathers as 'new dads', who hold a balanced perspective on their role as fathers – they see their responsibilities as both breadwinner and caretaker and spend more time with their children than more traditional, career-focused fathers. The Boston College Center for Work and Family has also conducted research on these new dads to understand the way in which modern fathers view their work and family lives – and how they attempt to integrate them. Its 2011 study, *The New Dad: Caring, Committed, and Conflicted*, shows that fathers want to engage more fully with their children. Yet, these fathers are also committed to their careers and strive for job security, a sense of

accomplishment and an interesting job (Harrington et al., 2011). This dual focus (both careers and family) represents a shifting away from more traditional expectations of fathers primarily as breadwinners (Friedman, 2013).

There is little in the way of support for fathers pursuing this dual focus. As noted above, the lack of paid paternity leave in the United States is a critical barrier for new dads (Mundy, 2013). At the organizational level, many organizations value and reward total commitment to the work role, particularly for men (Correll et al., 2014). Men who deviate from these deeply embedded norms face stigmatization and career derailment (Coltrane et al., 2013). Given these institutionalized constraints, it is imperative to understand the strategies that fathers themselves can pursue in order to maintain their dual focus on career and family. It is important that we empower working fathers (just like working mothers) to find strategies for being meaningfully engaged and effective in both work and family roles.

Slowly, there is growing academic scholarship on the topic of modern fatherhood (see, for instance, Raley et al., 2012; Ranson, 2012; McLaughlin and Muldoon, 2014). We aim to contribute to the body of research on the new dad by exploring strategies that working fathers can pursue to increase their performance in work and in family, as well as in other aspects of life, including community engagement and personal health. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the experiences of fathers in the Total Leadership program, a leadership development initiative focused on integrating work and the rest of life. Total Leadership helps individuals enhance their performance in all areas of their life by showing them how to pursue ‘four-way wins’ – actions designed to improve performance at work, at home, in the community, and for the private self.

This scenario is an ideal developmental opportunity for new dads because it embraces a focus on performance and engagement in multiple areas of life. In other words, like new dads, the philosophy of the Total Leadership program rejects the notion that one must choose between a successful career and a meaningful family life.

For this chapter, we focus on a series of ‘experiments’ designed and implemented by fathers of young children enrolled in the Total Leadership program as part of their Wharton Executive MBA. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to describe the entire Total Leadership experience in detail (see Friedman’s 2008 book, *Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life*). We explore how these fathers set out to enhance their performance in all aspects of their lives and the extent to which they reported being able to do so. We also describe the assets and liabilities faced by this group as they anticipated undertaking their experiments.

Before we delve more deeply into our analyses, there are several assumptions worth mentioning that underlie our perspective on this topic. First, we strongly advocate for institutional, organizational, and individual efforts to support working fathers. Changing policies and procedures at the national and institutional level will help to create organizational cultures that facilitate a dual focus for fathers. Yet, we also firmly believe that there are steps that ‘new dads’ can take to generate meaningful changes in their own lives, regardless of the culture and policies of the organizations in which they are embedded (Friedman, 2013). Another assumption underlying this chapter is that these steps are relevant to both men and women. While we focus on fathers in this chapter, our perspective is that work–life integration is a human problem – not a male or female problem. This chapter, however, provided us with a unique opportunity to look at a smaller subset of Total Leadership participants – young fathers. Yet, we believe that the lessons from this chapter are applicable across gender or parental status.

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

As part of the Total Leadership program, participants provide in-depth accounts of their attitudes, goals, and experiences through a privacy-protected social learning platform. Participants provided consent for their responses to be used for research purposes. We created a subset of data that included male Executive MBA students from 2011 to 2013 with at least one child under the age of three who provided data regarding at least one Total Leadership experiment. The resulting sample size was 36 participants. This small dataset allowed us to look more closely at a unique sub-population of Total Leadership participants. Across these participants, the average age of the youngest child was 1.3 years old and participants had an average of two children.

Our main goal was to extract key insights for working fathers by understanding a critical component of the Total Leadership experience: the design and implementation of experiments. Total Leadership experiments are short-term initiatives designed by the participants (and refined with peer and leader coaching) to enhance performance in all areas of life. Participants designed between one and three experiments, which were then implemented for four to eight weeks during the program (again with the support and feedback of peers and program leaders).

In prior research we describe the qualitative data analysis that we used to generate nine distinct categories of experiments (Friedman and Westring, in press). In this chapter, we use these nine categories to understand the experiments designed by this group of fathers. We pay particular

attention to how the role of fatherhood plays into the design, intended impact, and implementation of the experiments. We provide quotes from these new dads in order to provide useful and practical insight to fathers managing the challenging task of meaningfully engaging in both work and family. In addition to examining their experiments along the nine pre-existing categories of experiments, we also explored the extent to which the fathers directly and indirectly involved their children in their experiments. We extract key recommendations for new dads from these findings.

In addition to writing about the experiments that they designed, participants also reported the assets and liabilities that they believed might facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of their experiments. Understanding these barriers and opportunities may help other fathers who set out to make changes in the way that they integrate their life roles. We highlight key themes in terms of both assets and liabilities described by our sample of fathers.

Finally, while we have reported on the efficacy of the Total Leadership program in other outlets (Friedman and Westring, in press), we also think that it is important to highlight the impact of the Total Leadership program on this unique sub-sample. Participants reported their satisfaction in four key areas of life: work, family, community, and self (i.e., mind, body, spirit). They also reported their wellbeing (including physical health, mental health, and stress levels). These evaluations were completed at the beginning of the Total Leadership program and again at the conclusion of the program (12–15 weeks later). Satisfaction was rated on a ten-point scale from 1 (Not at all satisfied) to 10 (Fully satisfied). Mental and physical health was rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Very poor) to 5 (Very good). Stress was rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Not at all stressed) to 5 (Very stressed).

EXPERIMENTS THAT FACILITATE FATHERS' FLOURISHING

Across 36 participants, there were a total of 105 experiments (an average of nearly three experiments per participant). The first question that we explored was the nature of the experiments that these fathers conducted. We provide recommendations for 'new dads' that emerge from each of type of experiment (Table 5.1). Of these 105 experiments, we found that nearly a quarter of the experiments directly involved children. For instance, one participant designed an experiment in which he 'block[ed] off time every Sunday afternoon for a walk in our neighborhood with my wife, son, and dogs'. Another experiment involved 'creat[ing] sacrosanct time on Sunday morning before 12:00 and Sunday evening after 5:30 for

Table 5.1 Recommendations emerging from experiment theme

Theme	Recommendation for Fathers
Experiments directly and indirectly involving children	Children can become an active part of the experimentation process. By actively engaging them in creating meaningful change, they can develop a deeper understand of your values and goals and see you as a role model for creatively striving to align values and actions
<i>Nine types of experiments</i>	
Tracking and reflecting	Do not overlook the importance of personal reflection. It creates an important foundation for meaningful and lasting changes
Planning and organizing	Thoughtfully allocating time and energy to important activities can create a sense of purpose and focus. These efforts are multiplied when other stakeholders' goals and needs are brought into the conversation
Rejuvenating and restoring	It's not only mothers who frequently put their own needs at the bottom of the 'to do' list. By creating space for your mental and physical wellbeing, you will generate time and energy for the people and things that matter most to you
Appreciating and caring	When you spend time with the people who matter most to you, you can enrich your life and theirs. These effects are amplified even further if you can do so while also caring for your health and wellbeing
Focusing and concentrating	With the 24/7 availability of work, it is important to remember that quality time with family is just as important as the quantity of time. The act of creating boundaries around work hours may enhance the quality of the time you do have with your family
Revealing and engaging	Enhancing the quality of communication with key stakeholders is important, but for young children this might be best accomplished through play and activities together, rather than sit-down conversations
Time-shifting and re-placing	Question your daily habits of when and where you get things done. Even small changes to your routine may reap large dividends in terms of time and energy for the things that matter most to you
Delegating and developing	Review your work responsibilities to see whether there are tasks that you can delegate to others in a way that both challenges them and allows you to prioritize the most important activities each day
Exploring and venturing	In addition to exploring how small changes can make a meaningful impact on your life, also explore the possibilities for major life changes that will lead to greater fulfillment and engagement

family time'. As we will discuss further, even those experiments that did not directly involve their children were designed in a way that they would enhance the energy and/or time for meaningful parental engagement.

Building upon our prior research regarding the nine distinct categories of experiments, we explored the extent to which this group of fathers employed each of the experiment types that we reported in prior research. The first category of experiments is called 'Tracking and Reflecting' and focuses on personal reflections on behaviors, thoughts, or feelings in order to gain personal insight. Interestingly, only one experiment fell into this category for these new dads. The father wrote, 'I will keep a journal because this will help me reflect, slow down, and think through difficulties I'm having'. As with all Total Leadership experiments, this father expected the experiment to have spillover benefits for all areas of life. In our larger study of experiments, 'Tracking and Reflecting' was also the least common category, but with 18.5 percent of the experiments in that broader study falling into this category, 'Tracking and Reflecting' still represented a much larger proportion than the single experiment in the present study that focused on 'Tracking and Reflecting'. One possible explanation for the lack of this experiment type with fathers of young children is that they already are clear on their values and are aware of ways in which their behaviors don't align with those values. An alternative explanation is that past-focused experiments don't appear to yield an as immediate and obvious result as some of the more proactive, future-oriented experiment types. Perhaps fathers aren't able to envision the potential benefit of such self-reflection.

The second category of experiments is referred to as 'Planning and Organizing'. These experiments are forward-looking efforts to allocate time and energy in a more conscious, intentional manner. One father wrote:

I will spend at least 15 minutes one morning each week planning out the entire day. This will allow me to focus on what is most important at work, allow me to accomplish enough so I can go home to my family at a reasonable time, schedule a bit of time each morning to prepare to teach my class at church, and reduce my overall stress level.

In other words, it was clear that this father saw benefits in all life domains from this experiment.

For many of these fathers, 'Planning and Organizing' experiments were undertaken with a key stakeholder (most often their spouse/partner). For instance, one father wrote:

I will sit down with [wife] each Sunday to discuss and plan what we each have ongoing for the next one to two weeks because this will improve my ability to

spend more time with [child] on weekdays and better support [wife] on the home front. This will improve my ability to proactively accept or dodge 'nice to haves' at work, and focus on delivering high quality on the important things. It will improve both self and community domains by being better organized so I can plan ahead for relaxation time, or time to socialize with friends.

Similar to this experiment, there were many experiments that involved coordinating responsibilities and activities with one's spouse. For fathers, it is clear that proactive planning is often not to be undertaken in isolation. It is about finding a clear, shared allocation of responsibilities with one's partner in order to best meet both of their needs and those of their children. Note that in cases where the 'Planning and Organizing' was conducted with a key stakeholder in order to improve clarity of responsibilities and communication, these experiments were also coded as 'Revealing and Engaging', an experiment type that we will discuss in further detail below.

The third type of experiment is called 'Rejuvenating and Restoring'. These experiments involve caring for one's physical, mental or spiritual health. Engagement in 'Rejuvenating and Restoring' experiments is intended to have an impact on all areas of life by reducing stress and increasing health and energy. As in our previous study of Total Leadership experiments, this was an extremely common type of experiment for these new dads. It is clear that with both demanding fatherhood and work roles, these men are often sidelining attention to their physical and mental health. When asked to think carefully about ways in which they could enhance performance in all areas of their life, it was clear to these men that allocating their time to personal wellbeing was expected to reap dividends not just for themselves, but also for their work and family performance. One father experimented with doing yoga for three hours each week, with the expectation that it will 'improve my physical fitness, mental concentration at work and school, outward confidence, and show importance of exercise to my kids and other stakeholders'. Another father committed to:

exercise three times regularly a week because this will allow me to have more energy at home for the limited time I have for my wife and kids, providing me with the energy at work to handle stress better, be more patient, and be a much better leader, it will provide me with the physical stamina to participate in the community service projects at my daughter's school, and last and most important it will allow me to regain the health and peace of mind I so desperately need for myself.

'Rejuvenating and Restoring' experiments were also viewed as a way to enhance personal wellbeing while also spending quality time with one's spouse, kids, and/or friends.

‘Appreciating and Caring’ experiments involve spending time with key stakeholders. For these types of experiments the activities themselves may vary quite a bit, but the primary purpose of these experiments is to spend time together, have fun, and bond. For instance, one father experimented with ‘invit[ing] one of our family friends (family and kids) to our home each month where our family will make dinner for their family and socialize’. This experiment enables this father to engage with his own family, while also strengthening peer and community relationships. Another father experimented with having ‘at least two dates a month with my wife’. Further, many fathers chose to engage in ‘Appreciating and Caring’ experiments while also ‘Rejuvenating and Restoring’. For instance, one father chose to have:

family playtime at a park or some other outdoor facility that will encourage physical activity because it will hopefully build the family bonds between myself, my wife and my children. . . Also, it will help with my self-domain by allowing me to do physical activity and also help forge bonds between the kids.

Similarly, another father created an experiment in which he did ‘three mile runs three times a week with my wife. . .because this will improve my health as well as provide dedicated time with my wife on a regular basis’. Not surprisingly, it appears that many working fathers want to spend more time with the people who really matter to them on a regular basis. In order to do so, many are finding ways to engage with key stakeholders while also caring for their mental and physical wellbeing.

The next category of experiments, called ‘Focusing and Concentrating’, has to do with eliminating distractions in order to more fully engage with one activity or responsibility at a time. For these fathers with young children, a key aspect of ‘Focusing and Concentrating’ is removing work distractions while at home. One father experimented with ‘not pay[ing] attention to my phone/email/messages when I am at home after work and before my wife goes to bed’. Similarly, another father intended to ‘have a work, school and networking moratorium for at least one hour before bed’. For this group of working fathers, it is clear that work distractions tend to intrude on family time. Interestingly, there were no experiments designed with the purpose of reducing family distractions during work time. Although work distractions during family time was a notable concern in our broader study of Total Leadership experiments, this particular group of new dads seems to be particularly motivated to remediate this issue, as compared to other types of ‘Focusing and Concentrating’ experiments that emerged in our broader study.

‘Revealing and Engaging’ experiments focus on sharing needs, values,

and goals with key stakeholders. Although both ‘Revealing and Engaging’ experiments and ‘Appreciating and Caring’ experiments involve time with stakeholders, they are distinguished from one another by their purpose. ‘Revealing and Engaging’ experiments are conducted with a focus on communication. The experiment involves improving the quality of communication, rather than just spending time together. For instance, one father in this study experimented with developing ‘a personal blog/Facebook page’ because this will give stakeholders ‘a better sense of who I am and what my key drivers are’. Note the emphasis on sharing personal goals and values with others in this experiment. Another father focused on enhancing his communication with his own mother ‘by practicing patience, self-restraint and empathy’. Another experiment similarly focused on enhancing the quality of communication by ‘listening in lieu of talking. And when I do talk I will try to think more before I speak and try to remove any negative/sarcastic comments, as well as be more cautious in what I say’. These experiments emphasize the reciprocal nature of communication. Whereas some fathers feel the need to express themselves more effectively, others are striving to be more effective in the way that they listen and support key stakeholders. In this group of fathers, there seemed to be a preference for ‘Appreciating and Caring’ experiments over ‘Revealing and Engaging’ experiments. Perhaps with children, fathers recognize that simply spending time together (without necessarily focusing on communicating) can reap great rewards. Particularly with young children, values and goals may be best transmitted through behaviors, rather than more purposeful conversation.

Another category of experiments, ‘Time-shifting and Re-placing’, focuses on changing when and/or where particular activities are undertaken. One father experimented with ‘work[ing] from home on Fridays’. Another father experimented with ‘getting up at 5am’ to work before the rest of the household awakes. Other creative ideas for completing work included one father doing some of his work while at the gym (i.e., while ‘Rejuvenating and Restoring’) and another father using his long commute to make important phone calls. While some might assume that shifting the time/place for work requires the implementation of a formal policy (e.g., flextime), these fathers showed that there are some creative changes to work that don’t require organizational or supervisor approval. A few fathers also experimented with shifting the time of day that they exercised (e.g., ‘I will change my workout time from lunchtime to the morning’). In all of these cases, the fathers were willing to experiment with changes to their routine in order to see if there might be gains in terms of time or energy.

‘Delegating and Developing’ experiments involve assigning responsibilities to others in a way that frees up one’s time and energy for

value-added activities while also helping others to grow and learn. With this group of new dads there was particular enthusiasm for delegating responsibilities at work. For instance, one father's experiment was to 'increase both the amount of work I delegate to my team as well as the importance of the work I delegate to my team'. Similarly, another father 'proactively and deliberately [sought] to delegate, empower and coach the younger team members in my deal team'. On the other hand, there were no experiments designed to delegate responsibilities in family life. To the contrary, several experiments involved taking on additional responsibilities in the family domain. This finding echoes the 'Focusing and Concentrating' experiments, wherein work encroaches on family in a way that family does not tend to encroach upon work for these fathers. 'Delegating and Developing' work responsibilities may limit the spillover from work into family life and enable these fathers to focus their time and energy on both the work and family activities that matter most to them.

The last category of experiments refers to those that represent an entirely new endeavor or undertaking, termed 'Exploring and Venturing'. In this group of fathers, one experiment was to 'start my own business'. Along similar lines, another father wrote that he intended to, 'present my venture ideas to an Angel investor/alumni and seek funding for my idea'. Other new endeavors include training for a marathon, finding a new mentor, and starting a health-oriented blog. It is important to note that while 'Exploring and Venturing' experiments can vary widely, they each represent trying something completely new for the individual. These experiments aren't minor tweaks to a pre-existing routine, they are bold initiatives that are meant to find creative ways to find fulfillment across multiple life roles.

UNDERSTANDING LIABILITIES THAT INHIBIT CHANGE

Change can be difficult. By understanding the key obstacles to change, fathers can anticipate and overcome those very factors that would limit their ability to effectively implement changes to improve their effectiveness and wellbeing at work and in the other parts of their lives. We reviewed the key liabilities noted by this group of fathers in order to provide insight to others fathers who seek to enhance their performance in all areas of their lives (Table 5.2). These fathers reported a lack of time as their biggest obstacle to change. For instance, one father wrote that 'the most significant obstacles would be pressing needs from work and school that could

Table 5.2 Recommendations emerging from assets and liabilities

Liabilities		Assets	
Stakeholders	It is important for working fathers to get their stakeholders on board with their experiments and to show them how experiments will improve work performance, rather than detract from it	Stakeholders	There are people and tools that can support you in your change efforts. Spouse/partners as well as family and friends can be leveraged to increase accountability and to provide both instrumental and emotional support
Personal qualities	Self-doubt is understandable, yet an accurate self-reflection may ameliorate concerns regarding perseverance and dedication as obstacles	Personal qualities	'New dads' can capitalize on the strengths that have helped them to succeed at work to generate 'wins' across all areas of life
Time	While 'new dads' certainly are pressed for time, it is important to remember the fact that many experiments end up generating time and energy for what matters most	Tools and technology	Research the tools and technology that can facilitate your change process. In particular, smartphone apps that support tracking, list-making, communication, focusing, and fitness can make a big difference in experiments

distract me from my increased commitment to my family'. Another father noted that 'the hardest thing to change is...taking more time upfront when I already feel my time is stretched'. Given the fact that many of these experiments may end up saving time in the long run, a fear of insufficient time may unnecessarily generate resistance to change.

These participants reported that marshaling their own perseverance and a dedication to changing a deeply ingrained habit would be a notable challenge. Several participants reported that a 'lack of self-discipline' would impede the progress of their experiments. This sample of highly

accomplished Executive MBAs may believe they lack the perseverance to undertake these experiments, yet their experiences to date demonstrate ample personal strength and ambition. While self-doubt is understandable, it is important for fathers to realize that they cannot hold themselves to unrealistic standards.

Finally, these fathers were concerned that a lack of support from key stakeholders (particularly work stakeholders) might limit the effectiveness of the experiments. Supervisors, customers, and team members might all resist the change efforts if they do not see the potential for positive ways in which the experiment might enhance work performance. As an example, one father wrote that a liability of creating time away from work is that ‘our work contacts will expect us to still answer the phone at any time, and may not understand if we do not instantly respond’. Stakeholders may resist change if they do not understand the potential benefits change may yield.

CAPITALIZING ON ASSETS FOR CREATING CHANGE

When individuals and organizations attempt to undergo a purposeful change process, it is essential to explore those factors that will facilitate change. We asked these fathers to report what assets they believed would be most likely to enable their experiment to be successful. We believe these findings will help other fathers to understand the supportive structures and people in their lives who will help them in their pursuit of work–life integration.

These fathers viewed their supportive personal relationships as the biggest factor facilitating the effectiveness of their experiments. In particular, the encouragement and enthusiasm of their spouses or partners was noted as incredibly valuable. More broadly, children, extended family, friends and co-workers were also seen as key assets in the change process. Fathers noted their own personal drive and strength as a facilitator of change – stubbornness, dedication, perseverance, faith and determination were all traits that these fathers possessed that gave them confidence in their ability to implement their experiments. A third key asset was having the tools and technology necessary to implement the experiment. For instance, smartphones allowed for the use of organizing and list-making applications as well as hands-free communication. Across these fathers, social support, internal strength and technological tools represented the three main categories of assets for generating change.

Table 5.3 *Reported satisfaction and wellbeing before and after Total Leadership*

	Before	After
<i>Satisfaction with:</i>		
Work/career/school	7.37	8.36
Home/family	6.46	8.47
Community	4.11	5.23
Self	4.31	6.53
<i>Wellbeing:</i>		
Physical health	3.14	3.50
Mental health	3.47	4.00
Stress	3.92	3.08

Note: Satisfaction rated on a ten-point scale from 1 (Not at all satisfied) to 10 (Fully satisfied). Physical and mental health were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Very poor) to 5 (Very good). Stress was rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Not at all stressed) to 5 (Very stressed). For all measures except stress, higher 'after' scores represent an improvement.

IMPACT OF TOTAL LEADERSHIP EXPERIMENTS

Our final set of analyses concern the extent to which participants reported improved satisfaction and wellbeing as a result of their participation in the Total Leadership program. Experiments represent a key component of this program, yet the reported changes may be also due to other aspects of the Total Leadership program (e.g., a clarification of one's leadership vision, dialogues with key stakeholders). Table 5.3 displays average levels of satisfaction and wellbeing before and after the Total Leadership program for this group of fathers.

Paired sample *t*-tests were conducted to investigate whether these changes over time in these variables were significantly different from 0. In all cases, these changes were significant at $p < 0.05$. In other words, these fathers reported significant gains from the Total Leadership program.

Beyond these quantitative findings, the participants reported the insights that they gleaned from their experiments. There are three primary themes that permeate these insights. These themes are relevant across experiment types and are likely to have a continued impact on how these fathers manage all aspects of their lives from this point forward. One major theme that emerged was how clarity regarding one's priorities was a critical underpinning for the experimentation process. Gaining this sense of what is most important allowed participants to design experiments that increased time and energy for things that are important while removing or reducing those that are unnecessary or distracting. For example, one

participant wrote ‘the biggest thing I learned from this experiment is what my true priorities are’. Another participant emphasized how the experiments enabled him to align his attention and energy on those priorities. He wrote that the experimentation process ‘helped me to think more about my dedication of time and energy to various aspects of my life’ and served to ‘reaffirm the need to focus attention on specific areas in order to enable time for other activities’.

Another important lesson learned by these fathers is the power of small, incremental change. These experiments challenged their beliefs that change had to be large scale and life altering in order for it to make an impact. One participant wrote that he ‘learned how making small changes in life can make big differences in relationships’. Another participant learned to challenge ‘black and white’ thinking about change. He wrote that ‘one of the biggest things I learned was that I need to understand that it should not “all” or “nothing”’. For many participants, they didn’t achieve the objective goals they set forth when designing their experiments, yet they nonetheless achieved incremental gains and a new perspective. ‘I was not as successful with this experiment from a goal perspective, but from a mindset I do not think I could have been any more successful’. Indeed, some participants noted that being willing to scale back the scope of an experiment when it proved to be unrealistic was a critical factor in achieving small wins.

These fathers also learned about the powerful nature of habits. While there were obstacles to breaking old habits and forming new ones, they all noted the importance of accountability in this process. Given the inertia associated with removing or establishing habits, accountability to oneself and to others was essential. One participant reported that ‘the key to change is forming a habit of some of these practices. So continually focusing on them and holding myself more accountable is key’. Several participants noted the value of being held accountable to a stakeholder. For instance, one father wrote that ‘developing new habits is hard and sometimes you need support (work colleagues or family [wife]) to hold you accountable on difficult goals’. Experimentation with four-way wins is not an isolated effort. This fact was noted in the design and implementation of experiments and solidified in post-experiment reflections.

CONCLUSIONS

These three main takeaways represent shifting mindsets that have the power to extend the impact of the Total Leadership program well beyond the months in which it is completed. Despite societal and organizational

constraints that suppress the ability of new dads to meaningfully engage in both work and family, there are nonetheless key ways in which fathers can enhance performance in all areas of their lives. The process of experimentation yielded valuable recommendations and insights for fathers who desire both engaging careers and deep connection with their families. We hope that the future for fathers enables them and their families to flourish.

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