



Marriage

Job fallout may affect life together

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Couples about to get married hear from plenty of people that they must work at their marriage if their marriage is to work.

But, according to marriage and family experts, couples should also take seriously what effect their other work — as in their jobs or careers — will have on their marriage.

"Work has got to be addressed as probably one of the most serious questions in the marriage," commented Dr. Dennis E. Boike.

A marriage and family therapist, Boike has presented seminars and workshops on marriage and family issues at diocesan parishes.

He notes that work makes up an important part of a person's identity, and cited studies that showed more than 80 percent of the nation's men said they derive their personal identity from their career.

"Almost everybody is more worried about their work than their marriage," he noted. "You're dealing with a situation where work is more important than the marriage, especially in younger couples."

Because work is such a priority for most people, the number one conflict in marriages is over how much time a spouse allots for his or her mate, he said. Hence, couples should regularly discuss how much time and attention each mate needs from the other each day or each week, he said.

Some couples, for example, can see each other little during the week as long as they see

each other on weekends, he said, while others need each other's daily presence.

Boike pointed out that he works up to 70 hours a week, but spends part of that time at home with his wife.

"My wife doesn't mind if I do work on Saturday at the house, but she doesn't want me going to the office," he said.

In addition to the fact that work forms such an important part of people's lives is the fact that its pressures — and how a couple deals with them — can make or break a marriage, according to Jerry Monaghan, who coordinates the diocese's Retrouvaille program with his wife, Trudy.

Retrouvaille ("Rediscovery") is a Catholic program designed to help couples in problem marriages, and to aid divorced or separated couples who wish to reconcile.

Jerry Monaghan pointed out that work pressures can undermine a marriage if couples don't discuss them.

"You have to talk to each other and share emotions concerning stressful relationships at work," he noted. "To the degree that you can't leave (emotions at work), it helps to get the emotions surrounding it out."

Spouses should become "active listeners" to each other, Monaghan said, concentrating

less on what specific work problems are and more on what the problems are doing to their mates' emotional lives.

"I would start with the question, 'What's it doing to you? What are your feelings inside?'" Monaghan said.

It's better to share your stress at your job with your spouse than engage in behavior as getting drunk after work, noted Kathy Healey, who, with her husband, Richard, runs the marriage preparation program at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester.

She added that couples should discuss the place of work in their lives, especially when they decide to have children, who demand a large part of a couple's schedule.

"You need to talk about that and see where you're both coming from," she said.

Monaghan added that if one or both spouses feel trapped in a dead-end job, the couple should form a "united front." Couples should then discuss what they can do together on a regular basis to wind down from work, he said.

Healey, Monaghan and Boike all pointed out that spouses owe it to each other to relieve work-related stresses in such healthy manners as exercising daily, or meditating.

"Do something," Boike said. "Don't just complain."

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