



Stanford eCorner

The Entrepreneur and the Family

Steve Blank, *Stanford Engineering*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2326/The-Entrepreneur-and-the-Family>

Female Stanford students of entrepreneurship ask serial entrepreneur Steve Blank: "How can one balance family life with the demands of the start-up?" Blank advises single people to stay single, and suggests that those with family ties set strict schedules to insure time together. Start-ups can easily take over one's life, he says, and one must be equally diligent in taking time off as working.



Transcript

I think this is based on the fact that you realize all the speakers for ETL this semester shared a characteristic. and so, we had some of our female entrepreneurs ask, essentially from the women's perspective, what advice do you have for balancing the demands of a family life with the boundaryless life of an entrepreneur? OK. So, that's a great question. And I think, again, parsing the question, it assumes that your life should be boundaryless, and I guess I disagree. I'll give you a couple of Steve's heuristics but they are personal ones from me and I am not suggesting them for you. I will just observe how I live my life. One is, if you're single and you want to do startups, stay single. Seriously, stay single for a while because startups can be all-consuming 24/7, just suck you dry. But if you do get married and have relationships, particularly if you have kids, we actually set some rules in our family that were quite helpful. And I think our kids appreciated it and I think made a better family.

We would always have dinner at 7:00 p.m. What I didn't realize is my wife was feeding my kids earlier. And what they didn't realize is after I put them to bed, which was another big deal, I went back to work. Electronically, I worked for another five hours. We spent weekends with our kids. Though half a day on Saturday they went to work with me, but the other parts of the weekends were theirs. And I have a whole list of what I did to preserve my family on steveblank.com site under "Epitaph for an Entrepreneur", which actually truly meant that. But just to summarize, Thomas, you got to make rules or the startups will take over your life. And you're going to be maybe successful but quite lonely. So, you can balance these things whether you're a male or a female.