

You can have two Big Things, but not three

by Jason Cohen on January 7, 2014

No you can't "have it all." You can have two things, but not three.



"Unfortunately, not only have they stolen your identity, they're also living your best life."

Forget work/life integration for a minute. How much time do you have, regardless of partitioning?

From your 24-hour daily allotment, the 1950s-style break-down is 8 hours for work, 8 for home and commute, and 8 for sleep and ablutions. So, "work" and "home" are the two things in which you can spend 40+ hours per week.

This is the amount of time it takes to tackle something huge. A career. A parent. A startup.

There are weekends and vacations and sick days and such, but those don't add up to enough *concentrated* time to carry off something like a startup without causing work or home to suffer.

Of course "work" and "home" are just placeholders for "Big Things." If you're unattached, "home" doesn't occupy significant time.

The rule of life is: **You can have two "Big Things" in your life, but not three.**

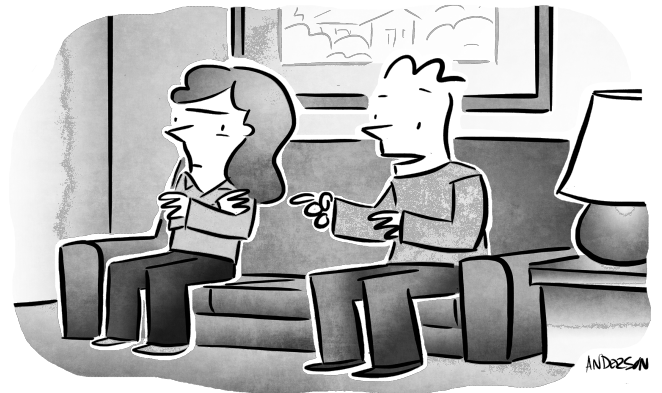
Big Things include:

- Job
- Kids
- Spouse
- Social Life
- Major Hobby (e.g. build a boat in the garage, become a chess master, video game addiction)
- Startup

You can do a startup on the side while you have a day job, but your family will never see you. You might even lose your family. It happens. This is partly why it's easier to start a company before you have a family or even a spouse.

You can have a job and a social life, but unless your spouse is fully integrated and agreeable to that social life, there will be strife. "Going out with the guys *again*?"

Yes, "kids" and "spouse" are on the list separately. Young kids strain marriages because there's not enough time to invest in the kids as well as be there for each other.



"Someday we're going to look back on false memories of this and laugh!"

Some people try to "have it all." Men and women both. But it's never true. At most two can function well; the rest do not. More often, there's just one that receives the

majority of the energy, and the rest suffers.

Note that “Sleep” isn’t on the list of options, even though it’s mathematically the same in terms of time commitment. That’s because cutting out sleep doesn’t work—then you can’t function at a high level at *anything*.

No, you are not an exception. That’s egotistical self-deception. Not on sleep, and not on the number of Big Things. Ask the people around you if *they* think you’re

not failing at one of your Big Things.

Time to decide which two.

Printed from: *A Smart Bear*

<https://longform.asmartbear.com/two-big-things/>

© 2007-2023 Jason Cohen  @asmartbear