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CoSIDA Continuing Education Session:

**HELPING OUR COLLEAGUES:
GAINING PERSONAL BALANCE**

- **Natalia Ciccone, Pac-12 Conference (Div. I)**
Assistant Commissioner, Communications
Co-Chair, FAME
- **Dave Reed, Colorado College (Div. I & Div. III athletics)**
Associate Director, Athletics Media Relations
- **Amie Canfield, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Div. I & Div. III athletics)**
Sports Information Assistant
- **Chris Holtz, California Pacific Conference (NAIA)** Sports Information Director

Moderator: Eric McDowell, Union College (NY)
Assistant AD/Sports Information/CoSIDA 3rd VP

ERIC McDOWELL: Everyone can use some advice from colleagues about balancing their personal life with the demands of the sports communication profession, especially, as I said, as we head into March, which is no doubt one of the busiest months for all of our members. So we are very pleased that you're joining us today, and we hope, as I said, to cover all the gamut for everybody about the different personal balance tips that can be provided, young and not so young. Everybody in our membership will come away from this with very effective answers to their questions from an outstanding group of panelists.

Our participants today are Natalia Ciccone from the Pac-12 conference. She is the assistant commissioner of communications and co-chair of FAME, and we'll talk about the Female Athletic Media Executives organization, as well. Dave Reed of Colorado College is the associate director for athletic media relations. Amy Canfield is from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute right down the street from us, a sports information assistant. And we have Chris Holtz from the California Pacific Conference joining us shortly. He is the sports

information director there. So we have representatives from Division I, II and III institutions as well as crossover schools and an NAIA school, as well.

Natalia, thank you for joining us today.

NATALIA CICCONE: Thanks for having me. I've been in the profession about 12 years, maybe 11 years, and at the beginning I definitely did not have a sense of work life balance, and now that I'm a new mom, I'm learning that. The biggest thing that I've learned is to ask for help and talk to your supervisors, and it's amazing how supportive people in your work environment can be, and that would be the biggest thing that I would say to everyone.

ERIC McDOWELL: Congratulations, mom. Tell us about the baby.

NATALIA CICCONE: He's going to be 11 months old, and it has been a really big challenge to balance work life because I was the typical SID that just really focused a lot on my work, and now it's amazing, when I have to get home, I want to be home for the two hours he's awake after work, and it's amazing how things get done. That's been the biggest lesson this year for me, and it's been a challenge, but we're getting there.

ERIC McDOWELL: If you teach him Stat Crew, that will be the first thing.

NATALIA CICCONE: Right, exactly.

ERIC McDOWELL: That's some extra income, as well, too. Thank you so much, and we're looking forward to your thoughts today.

Dave Reed, an old friend from Colorado College. Great to have you with us.

DAVE REED: Thanks for including me, Eric. I think the thing I'd like to stress to everybody is we love what we do, and that's why we're in the business and we do it so well. Now what we need to do is make sure that the people around us know that we love them even more than we love our jobs, and sometimes that's kind of difficult because the evolution of our positions has changed. There are new things coming all the time. We need to adapt to them. And when some of the people outside of our profession see what we're doing and how much time we spend, they can almost be jealous because we like what we do so much.

We need to make sure that we have an open line of communication, especially with our

wives, partners, boyfriends, girlfriends, whoever it is, so they really understand how hard we're working. And then we also have to make sure we have an open line of communication with our bosses and the people that oversee our entire department so that they understand what personal life demands that we have, and that will help everybody, let us create a balanced situation that we can all live with and keep everybody in our lives happy.

ERIC McDOWELL: Thank you, Dave. Next up is Amy Canfield from RPI. Amy, appreciate you joining us.

AMY CANFIELD: Thank you very much for having me. Well, I have been in the profession for about 10 years but seven of it full-time here at Rensselaer, and really I think living the single life here in Troy, New York, the biggest thing that I came into trouble with was actually my health. So my gaining personal balance was actually gaining better health and managing better stress levels. I would constantly work, I would work on my days off. The stress levels went high, and my weight went even higher.

Really over the last seven months, I've actually lost 67 pounds to try and get my life and my health back down to where it should be, which is enjoying it a little bit more, learning when to say no, and learning when to step out and enjoy my friends, my family and myself and being able to do the things that I want to do now that I'm no longer carrying around so much excess baggage.

ERIC McDOWELL: And you look fantastic. We're all so happy for you, too, because it's so difficult in this profession, and you are with a Division III school with Division I sports, so there's travel, and to try to avoid eating those type of unhealthy foods, it is very difficult. We'll look forward to hearing about that, too.

We also have joining us just jumping on is Chris Holtz from California Pacific Conference, the sports information director. We'd love to hear your opening thoughts.

CHRIS HOLTZ: Well, good afternoon to everybody. My apologies for coming in late. My personal story, I'm an SID for Division II NAIA conference, and about -- in November of 2008, my father was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, and that left myself and my mother, as I'm an only child, as his sole caretakers.

So in that way we have now had to balance not only eight to nine different schools and

X number of sports, but also having to deal with the stresses and strains of caring for my father while balancing work, as well. It wasn't easy, but I am thankful that I was able to do that.

ERIC McDOWELL: We're looking forward to hearing your comments and we appreciate that. It's a very difficult personal topic, and it's something that is incredibly heartwarming, and again, we appreciate you joining us for us.

Now, if he have questions we want to make sure that you get them to barbkowal@CoSIDA.com.

Now it's time to hear more about FAME, an excellent organization that really helps a lot of people. It really started just a few years ago. Natalia, as the co-chair, please tell us about FAME and its advantages and what you've been able to do.

NATALIA CICCONE: We're actually really excited about the new FAME. We've got a new steering committee that is really working together to move the organization forward. There's such an important message for FAME, and we really want to get that out there, and the fresh new faces that are involved are really helping to carry on what's been started 10, 11 years ago. We've got representation from all three divisions in our steering committee as well as NAIA, big and small schools, so we've got a lot of diversity in terms of experience and background on the steering committee.

The biggest thing is we're looking to have a conversation with women in the profession and to promote diversity within CoSIDA and exchange -- have an exchange of ideas and give support. One of our biggest focuses is with the CoSIDA awards to make sure qualified women are nominated, as well as diversity with the panelists at the workshop, and we're also focusing on the annual meeting at CoSIDA, where we want to kind of change things a little bit, maybe bring in someone who can talk to a specific issue that affects all women in the profession, and men, as well, and also look at opportunities for women in the profession to network and have a supportive -- just have some support there and answer questions, which I think has always been done, and we're going to continue to do that.

Yeah, we're really excited where FAME is headed.

ERIC McDOWELL: Well, it does



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tremendous work, and it is meant for everybody to really learn a lot from, and so those of you that will be attending, hopefully many of you will be attending our convention this summer. Make sure to check out our schedule and make sure to meet Natalia and see the folks with FAME.

To tie in with FAME, I want to ask you this one, and Amy, you can talk about this, your thoughts. There have been multiple questions that came in on a similar topic. Women in their early, mid, late 20s, they want to start developing a family or at least start spending time with a significant other, but the fear is that, especially developing a family could be difficult because of the time constraints and trying to make time for those people. Especially in your case with a baby that was born in March or April last year, right in the middle of a spring season which championships going on with the Pac-12, talk about how women in their late 20s, early 30s that love this profession, they want to stay in it but they're afraid that they may have to get out and find that 9-to-5 grind because of family.

NATALIA CICCONE: I was really nervous. I was one of those people who didn't know how I could do it with a family. And when I was pregnant, I missed our basketball tournament last year, and I'm the media coordinator for the women's basketball tournament, and I was really scared to tell my supervisor and didn't know how they would react. I was extremely surprised at the support, at how willing people were to help me and just take on my personalities as we got closer to the tournament.

You know, as far as actually having the family, I think when it comes down to it, you just have to make a decision as far as where you want to be. I don't know with all of the games in a row and having to be at all these events, I don't know that I would be able to do it on a campus. That's not to say that it can't be done because there are plenty of women in our profession that are moms and are SIDs on campus and have been able to find a balance, but I know that for me it wasn't until I got here to the conference office that I felt that it was -- that I could envision it a little bit more.

And so we just -- it was important for us to have a family, and we just went with it. Now we're just at the point that we just have to make decisions as to -- my son has actually been sick the last couple weeks, which is -- it's February, it's our busiest time, and my husband and I just talk to each other and we figure out, okay, who can afford to miss work today, who can stay home. I stayed

home last week because he had meetings that he couldn't move for his work, and then when he came home, he took care of my son and I went to work, and then you also work after he goes to bed.

So it's definitely a balancing act at home and working with your husband at home or your partner at home and figuring out -- both of you are going to have to make sacrifices, and we just have to figure out how it gets done. And again, if there are things at work that sort of -- that won't allow -- that make it difficult to take care of your son or take care of your body, whoever it is, I want to reiterate what Dave said, the open line of communication with your boss and your fellow workers is really important because you'd be surprised at how many people will step up and help you out, especially with people in your office who have families. They've been through it all.

ERIC McDOWELL: Amy, some thoughts on this, too, being that you're 22 years old?

AMY CANFIELD: You know, I wish I could say that I was 22 years old, but at the ripe old age of 31 actually, I can't really speak to having a family because I don't. I'm very much single, living here in Troy, but I think in terms of kind of managing your family, my family is currently three hours away. They live in Vermont across the state. So for me the job that I do and the commitment that I put into the job has caused me to sacrifice being a part of important things in their lives.

So really I had to start taking a look at what I was willing to miss and what I needed to miss. And really just realizing that the job is going to be here. The next morning, the job will be here. The work will be here. You know, in October my niece's wedding, that wasn't going to be coming around again. A best friend's wedding happened to be in England one year; that wasn't going to come around again. My father's 60th birthday is on the horizon; that's not going to come around again. So really it's knowing as an individual what you're able to give up and what you're willing to give up.

I find, as Natalia and Dave had said, if you have the open lines of communication with your boss, anything can be worked out. There's always ways to make things work. And you really can't give up those things in life, those moments that you're never going to get back. So it's very important that you keep the lines of communication open. Not only that, but you realize what you

want, want to be able to do, rather than the need of your job over being able to be a part of different things.

ERIC McDOWELL: That's a good point. When I think of my closest friends, it still hurts that I missed four of their weddings. It's very painful because you wish you could be there for those. I think one thing that's very important is funerals. There isn't any coach, there isn't any trainer, AD, anybody who would miss a funeral of any loved one, and that could be an uncle, it could be a very close friend, and there isn't an SID out there who no matter what that event is understand that there are priorities in life and also priorities in death, as well.

Great comments. Dave, I'm going to hit you with this in a second, but I do want to ask Chris a good question. How do you make time for yourself? Simple question, maybe a tough answer.

CHRIS HOLTZ: Very tough answer. I will say that because of the way ALS performs and goes about breaking down a person's life, their immune system is broken down, as well. So if you catch anything on a door handle or something, there's a risk of your parent getting a cold and not coming back from it. So in that way, it really took away quite a bit from a social life.

ERIC McDOWELL: And Dave now, young children. Talk about a piggy-back to what Amy was saying. You've got a christening, you have all of these firsts. How have you been able to balance in your role, in a multi-class school we might add, Colorado College being Division II in NCAA and also Division I in the sport of ice hockey.

DAVE REED: Amy was spot on when she said you have to prioritize what you're willing to miss and what you can't miss. With a five-year-old son, there are so many things that you want to be there, and part of it goes back to your work environment. I am very fortunate that I work with Dave Moross, who totally gets it because he raised two daughters by himself, put one of them through Colorado College, and he gets what it means to be around for your son or daughter.

I've also got our director of communications, who's raising two sons, so she understands that, too, there are certain things you're just not willing to compromise on.

That being said, what you have to do is we're fortunate now that we can shift what we do to

different times of the day. We're not locked into our office from 9:00 to 5:00. We can take things home. We can update the web at home. There are a lot of things that we can do outside the office that we used to have to sit in the office all the time.

So what I've done to make myself available is I've shifted my hours, and I'll do a lot of work at night so I can go to school in the morning with my son and I can pick him up. I can take him to swimming lessons during the day.

I've also got it really well worked out with my wife, and she understands there's a couple times of the year where we are just incredibly busy, one of those times being when the sports crossover from fall to winter, usually in October, and then it happens again at this time of the year when we're going from winter to spring. So she kind of takes on more of a load then, but then in the summer especially or when it slows down at other times of year, I make sure that I make my son and my wife my priority, and no matter what it is that's going on, I'm there for them.

And then I also, with a five-year-old son, he's just now old enough that he can start going to events with me, especially when they're outdoors like soccer or lacrosse, I try to take him with me and he is so excited just to spend a little bit of time with dad at work, and I find that makes an incredible difference in his demeanor during the day.

ERIC McDOWELL: This question is from Oklahoma and this is geared for Natalia. When you decided to start a family, how did your boss take it?

NATALIA CICCONE: She took it really well. I feel extremely fortunate to be here at the Pac-12, and I feel that the people in my office have been extremely supportive. And even before I went out on leave, I had to unload some work because of my stress levels, and my pregnancy later, later in the pregnancy, they said I either had to get out of work a month before I was due, or I had to unload some work. So I unloaded some work even while I was here. I didn't feel at any point that my supervisors, my coworkers were any kind of annoyed at me or mad at me or that I wasn't performing to the level that I should be.

Everyone understood that the first priority was this baby I was carrying and my health and the baby's health. I don't know what I would have done if I was in an environment where it wasn't



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supportive like that. I definitely think that at some point you need to make the decision, if you feel like you're not in a supportive environment if you want to continue to be there, and that's just one of the sacrifices you make when you decide you want to have a family. Is this a place where I want to be? Is this a place where I can be and raise a child and have a family?

And I think your partner, like Dave said, is really important in that equation, also, especially in our jobs where they're not 9:00 to 5:00. You work nights and weekends. You have to have a partner who's willing to help you and certain times of the year take on more. But that said, you know that other times of the year you're going to take on more because they're busy.

In our case at home, my husband and I are actually busy at the exact same time, and we're actually having my mom come out here for a month to help us because we're both going to be busy from the beginning of March until the beginning of April. But that's something that we know that we have to do. My mom is willing to do that, and that's going to work out for us.

And it might be a different situation for you, for any person. Hopefully maybe your busier times with your partner are opposite times of the year, and you just do more one time of the year and they'll do more one time of the year. But it's definitely a give and take, and then just trying to find -- finding a way to make it work. It's amazing how things will just work out, mostly because they have to. Somebody has got to take care of the child, somebody has got to take care of the things at home. You can't just leave your kid alone and expect them to be okay.

It just has to work out, and it's amazing how that happens. And I don't think you realize it until you get into a situation where things have to work out.

ERIC McDOWELL: This one is going to be for all of you and I'm going to go down the line for each. How do you meet somebody? Let me give an example. We want to hear from the folks that are married as well as those that are single as far as how they did meet somebody or how they would suggest you meet somebody. A sports information director who works in an athletic department, coaches, many coaches, probably 60 to 70 percent assistants, some heads, will move on, and if they do there's a crossroads there. Media members, there are some people in our profession that would love to date or spend time

with media members, but they feel that there is a conflict of interest in that case. So many people feel that they're limited to be able to meet people where you don't work in a major office setting where you have a lot of other people that you can meet through friends or what have you. I just want to know about how those of you who did meet somebody and for those of you that are not in a relationship right now, how you suggest in our profession you meet somebody. We'll start with Chris on this one.

CHRIS HOLTZ: Well, how to meet somebody, I am currently single, so I'm not going to say that I have the perfect end-all for finding somebody. But I think connections are important, connections with friends, like for me, people at church, et cetera. And I do think that there is a conflict of interest between SIDs and media members because it is a little, how do I say it, awkward, taking a relationship that was a working relationship and taking it on beyond working into a regular relationship.

ERIC McDOWELL: Amy, I want to hear from you but I'll piggy-back on that one. I had a friend who once dated a weather meteorologist, a forecaster, and that worked out pretty well because the forecaster knew nothing about sports, so they had common interests in theater and other areas, and she said technically he was with the media, but it was, of course, made clear that he would not talk to the sports person about anything with the job. That's a case it really worked out.

Another unfortunate that didn't is a person that dated a morning deejay. You can imagine the hours that were conflicted. They didn't get to have a lot of quality time together in those jobs.

Amy, your thoughts?

AMY CANFIELD: To be perfectly honest, and I'm not ashamed to say this, but I'm probably the worst person to ask this question. You know, I don't actively seek out relationships, so maybe that's bad on my part, maybe it's good. I don't really know. I just know where I'm at in my life right now, it just kind of works for me. But I always keep myself open.

I don't necessarily find that relationships with -- I can't really say that relationships with media members would be horrible. I mean, obviously you just -- in your business and the line of business that we're all in you obviously have to watch what you say. But for me I just enjoy the



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people that I'm around, and however things fall is how they fall. I guess I am really the stereotypical single person on here because with all the transformation I've been doing in my own life I've kind of been focusing on getting happy with myself before I've worried about making other people happy. So that's kind of where I'm at.

ERIC McDOWELL: That's excellent. That's a very good point. Dave, your thoughts?

DAVE REED: You know, I met my wife on campus, and so it did take a degree of professionalism just because there are so many things that can go wrong with on-campus relationships, kind of like dealing between a media relations person and the media. You have to be professional about it.

One of the things that we've found that we had very similar big rocks in our lives, the most important things, that's what we call them. You know, we found out we had mutual interests, and I think that's what you're looking for. So get involved with groups, with a church, a charity. You can play sports during the summer. I used to play sand volleyball and met a lot of nice people during the summer when I wasn't as busy. So get involved in things as time permits, and you'll probably meet people with similar interests.

ERIC McDOWELL: Natalia?

NATALIA CICCONE: I met my husband at CoSIDA. He was a former SID, and then we got to a point way before we decided to have a family and get married, we made a decision, are we both going to stay SIDs because we didn't think it was possible because you just move around so much in the profession. He made the decision to leave the profession. The way I was able to -- he was my stat crew when I worked at the University of Maryland so he was very involved in my life as an SID, and he really enjoyed it. I had a coach who was okay with him being a part of our trips when we went away for either overnight trips to games at Duke or whatever or when we went to the ACC tournament, he would come and be there the four or five days.

I think it's true for anybody who's in a relationship because the SID life takes up so much of your time, to try and find a way how to get your family to be involved. Dave is at the point where he's taking his kids to the game, and that's definitely making them involved with your work life. I mean, they're there at the games. And they become a part of it every game.

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My husband really enjoyed doing that. Now his busy time is over when I go to the women's basketball Final Four and he'll come with me and we'll bring my son. There are definitely times of the year where -- and I think there should be, where you just disconnect yourself from work and you get involved with people who are not a part of your work life and you do things that have nothing to do with sports, but I also think for your own sanity, because it is not a 9-to-5 job, having them a part of that is really important, as well.

And luckily sports is an environment where you can have kids and families involved to a certain extent.

ERIC McDOWELL: A couple things that come to mind in this area, too. We once had a panel on this, and I really appreciate a couple of you, Dave and Chris, talking about church. Church is Sunday mornings, and there's not many SIDs that have to be in their office on a Sunday morning. It is something that can be done maybe a Thursday night at 5:00, but it's amazing how many people can be met there. And this isn't all about relationships and spouse. It's also about friends, and Amy made a very good point on that. There are people who love what they do and they love being around people and meeting friends. She has a tremendous amount of friends that she relies on to get her away from sports. It's all about making time for that.

One other thing I think would be very good for the single people out there who are looking for somebody are dating services. I can think of five people in our profession right now who met through a dating service. There is a tabu, or was, at least, about meeting through a dating service. It is the old, well, I don't want to meet anybody at a bar but I hate to resort to that. That's not the case at all. This is a profession that can benefit from dating services. There is a person that met a lawyer. Never would have met her unless he had met her in an uncomfortable situation obviously, on the other side of the aisle, but the point is that dating services do really allow you to talk about what you do and learn about the other person.

There's another person out on the West Coast who met a woman who runs her own art shop and does an excellent job with that. You can really diversify and meet people who will also think what you do is cool, folks. When you say you are a publicity person that works in sports and the web,

that is not something that many people are familiar with. So I think those are two things to think about, and church, as we said, but also looking at dating services. That can be very helpful and very beneficial for people who work in this type of profession.

We have a very good question coming in right now. I am married, but I seriously think a change in my springs sports this year have made all the difference in home life. I went from traveling like crazy with softball to only occasionally with track. I'm at home cooking more meals instead of processed foods. Let's start with Amy because she said this in her opening topic about eating habits and healthy eating habits. Talk about that, Amy, about how cooking at home, whether it's for yourself or for a family or loved one can really make a difference and not eating that quickie stuff drive-through on the way home from the office.

AMY CANFIELD: Absolutely. Well, basically I was heavy pretty much all my life and pretty much overweight all my life, and I finally got to the point where I knew that it was just too much. I was very much overweight, and I knew I needed to eat better because that's what I was doing. I would get the fast food fix or get the quick kind of thing.

So what I did was I started a program. It's actually called the Six-Week Body Makeover. It's a program where you're only eating food that you buy at the grocery store. It's smaller portions, eating six times a day, and it really teaches you about what works for your body and what's going to make your metabolism work better.

So basically what I did was I just started on it. For the first six weeks of my program, I had no added sugar and no added salt. It was literally just the fruits and vegetables that came from the store and chicken and beef and potatoes and rice and just eating smaller portions and cutting out the majority of the sweets. Anybody who knows me, all my friends, will be able to tell you that I am a complete chocoholic. Chocolate is my favorite thing on the entire planet. And to give that up was very, very difficult.

Now, do I stay strict to the diet that lost me the weight? I don't now, but I eat smarter and I eat better. But a lot of it is taking the time to prepare. That's the biggest thing. That's the biggest thing that I found was giving yourself that time, even if it's at night before the next day or on a Sunday that you can kind of sit through and you can plan out your week, okay, well, what do I have going on,

what games do I have to prepare for, do I have a late hockey game.

For us here at RPI, on a typical Saturday in the winter, we have double-header basketball at home and then men's hockey that night at 7:00. So it doesn't leave a lot of options open to run out and grab food. So what you do is you make your own. You plan it out. I bought a little cooler with some ice packs, and I literally bring my food in with me to the office every single day. I prepare it each night.

ERIC McDOWELL: That's great. You don't hit the lunch cafeteria on the campus.

AMY CANFIELD: Absolutely.

ERIC McDOWELL: You don't get buried in the job to never get to that lunch counter, you already have something with you?

AMY CANFIELD: Correct.

ERIC McDOWELL: Very good comments. Chris, let me hit you with this one in a similar way about maybe you have some thoughts about trying to avoid eating out, and in your case, maybe making adjustments with certain sports, as well, to determine which ones could be done from home, why you can rely on an opposing SID, and sometimes at NAIA there is no opposing SID, so that can make it very difficult.

CHRIS HOLTZ: Precisely. I'm proud to say that the grand majority of our SIDs in our conference, are either coaches or athletic directors. So in that way, balancing time is not that hard because the communication is probably first thing in the morning when they're not busy.

Planning balance with meals, it was -- it's interesting trying to find ways to grab a quick meal at home without having to go out to Taco Bell or McDonald's or something along that line. What I try to do is, as was previously commented, look at my schedule for the week and see what games I have going this week. Like right now it's our conference basketball tournament, so there's not a lot of time in the evenings, but during the day, absolutely there's time to take care of yourself.

McDOWELL: Next question: Dave and Natalia, how do you handle a situation where your spouse's job is not as flexible as yours? If they can't get off those little emergencies, how do you deal with that on top of your work?

DAVE REED: Fortunately for me, we've been through this situation. She was working in

the financial sector, and her boss, when she walked in the in the morning, she basically didn't leave until he left, and that could have been at any point in the evening. I basically had to take on the role of getting our son to the doctor's office, to the dentist's office or any of the other places that a toddler or young son has to go to.

And again, it goes back to what we talked about before. My boss and our boss, they get what it is, and they know when you have to make sacrifices during the day, but they also know me, know I'm going to catch up at night. As long as they have that comfort level that the job is getting done, the coaches are happy, the athletic director is happy, then everything is okay.

If you have a situation where you don't have the trust of your superiors, or in our case, we're in communications in the athletic department, so the AD also has to be aware that we're willing to put in whatever hours it takes to get what we have to get done completed at a level that everyone expects, and we just make it happen. And as long as everybody knows that, I think you're in a good situation.

NATALIA CICCONE: I think what you need to -- a couple things: I think you need to find your support network. It's been difficult for us since we're not from California, and so my husband and I depend on each other a lot. But these next few weeks, we don't have much wiggle room in our schedules, and I'm going away. So that's why we're bringing my mom in. Luckily for us she's able to stay with us for the next month to help take care of our son.

But the other thing is you just have to -- if you have to do all the concessions and your work environment is allowing you to do that, that's great. But I think there comes a point where you need to figure out is it worth keeping the job that you're at if they're not being supportive. And that's the bottom line. If it's worth it and you're able to manage it, then great. But if it's one stress after another, you just have to assess your situation and figure out is it worth me being here or do I need to find something else.

ERIC McDOWELL: Yes in two instances. One was unfortunate, that there was a person who told her husband that you will get out of this profession, I don't care what you do, but you will not do this anymore, and it was extremely difficult on him, and he relied on many friends and family

and others, and people said that person is not right for you, they're not compromising.

And then there was another case where somebody feared that that happened, and the husband said to the woman that you stay -- this is what you do, you're the best at this and we'll make it happen, and she is now one of the tops in our profession and has that support from him. So it is definitely a two-way street. And let's face it, you have to have that person as your best friend. This is not the typical profession, and there are a lot of demands, and it takes a special person to be by your side.

Let's switch gears a little bit, and this will be for all four of you. Is your workplace environment toxic? Do people complain all the time? Are there feelings of us versus them? These seem to be common feelings amongst SIDs and athletic departments, and this does take some personal welfare involved to try and get through that. This one I'll start with Amy.

AMY CANFIELD: Well, I think personally, I think every workplace has their issues. Sports information directors and those in their office, they tend to fall into a very unique category where they're a part of an athletics department. Sometimes they're not part of an athletics department, sometimes they're part of a communications department and they work with athletics.

I think you're going to find issues across the board for everybody in this profession. But I think I'm lucky. For the last seven years in working at RPI, for all the changes that we've gone through as a department, our staff in sports information has been relatively the same for the last five years. And for me, I have one of the best bosses, I think, in all of sports information. So I really can't complain.

But really, it all goes back to, I think, being comfortable with the people that you work with, and being able to talk about those issues and not feeling like you're going to be penalized or looked down upon if you do have frustrations. And that's the biggest thing is being able to go in and talk to somebody about an issue that you're having and knowing that you're not going to get the door slammed in your face.

That's key, but as I said, I think I do fall into a very unique situation in that we haven't had major issues like that here in my office

environment. As much as I'm one of the lucky ones, I think communication still remains to be -- needs to be key throughout everybody's work environment.

CHRIS HOLTZ: Well, I've been fortunate enough for the last few years as an SID in this conference to be working from home, so the only hostile environment is the dog chasing the occasional squirrel, but that's another story.

But I do think especially at a smaller program, we're always trying to measure up to teams that have their success. Our conference is stacked right between two of the most storied conferences in the history of the NAIA, the Cascade Collegiate Conference and the Golden State Athletic Conference. So in that way there really is an us versus them mentality because every time we get a win over a certain team from either of those conferences, it's a big deal with our conferences. But you know, when we have a big defeat or something, it's almost expected. So there is an us versus them mentality.

NATALIA CICCONE: I would say you also have to have a healthy mind, and I think that's what exercising and doing things outside of sports and athletics helps with, and as long as you have -- I think when you have a good balance of that, you don't get sucked in as much into the negative and the toxic environment. And I think it's mostly because you get a break from work. Even though you might be out of the office but you're still doing work-related things, it's hard to really turn it off.

You know, I'm really fortunate that now I have to turn it off and get pulled away from any work things. I do play groups with my son's friends, and I've met other moms, and that's been really helpful. That's not to say -- I've had a really extremely supportive work environment here, which has been really great, but you always need to just step away from work and just -- and those breaks from work really, I feel like, refresh you. You don't feel as bogged down as when you're completely engulfed in it, in my opinion.

And I think exercise is part of that, too, and now with a family it's hard for me to find time to work out, but now I've just started in the last couple weeks getting up at 5:00 in the morning so I can meet a coworker before work at 5:30 so I can get my exercise in. All of that really helps. Eating really healthy and just surrounding yourself outside of work and even finding those people in your

office if you do have a toxic environment that will help you stay -- that will help you not get sucked into all those things. I think all of that stuff is important.

DAVE REED: My suggestion would be make sure that you're not being part of the toxic environment. Don't be too high, don't be too low. If you can keep an even keel in the office, you'll be the one that people look to as kind of the bellwether of what's going on. We answer to so many different people. We don't just answer to the media. We're answering to coaches, alumni, everybody on campus. And a lot of times we have our weeks planned out where we know what we have to do, and a frustration arises when we're getting ready to go to an event and yet somebody comes up with something crazy that they think is an emergency. And that tends to send a lot of SIDs over the edge, and you might get a response out of us that we don't really want to make.

So just try to keep everything on an even playing field for yourself, and I think people will admire you for that and it will take the level of toxic down in your office.

ERIC McDOWELL: Natalia, you'll see this with coworkers and you'll see this with many of the SIDs that you work with. Conference offices may not have the weight room per se, maybe an off-campus situation. But from what you've seen with colleagues and maybe your building does have it, when you have a weight room in the building where your SID works and you go work out, it could be at 5:00 p.m., coaches, people still think you're in the workplace, and you're not, you're trying to work out, and that has frustrated a lot of people, and somebody had asked about that. How do you deal with that? Where can you go or do you try to get out of your building to work out because when they see you, you see a coach work out, you don't bother them, but when a coach or somebody sees you, they start asking you about a roster?

NATALIA CICCONE: I would say put on a set of -- a Walkman (laughs), an mp3 player or an iPod or something. I know it gets maybe a little bit difficult to talk to someone when they seem to be tuned out of the world. And if that's the case, and if that's still not working, I'd say get out of the building. Going for a walk or going for a run -- where I worked at Maryland there was a trail right



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alongside the campus, so I would go back there and run in the mornings or after work.

I think in everything, whether it's balancing life, balancing family, balancing working out, you need to figure out what works for you, and if it's really important and it's really a priority, you're going to figure out a way to make it work. So I would say that's the biggest thing. It's just assessing what works for you.

And if you really like going to the gym, I know on bigger campuses they have more than one gym. Go to a gym that's not in your arena or in your office or go running instead or find a different activity that will allow you to have that time so you can work out.

ERIC McDOWELL: Or in my case I can put on an RPI tee shirt and nobody will talk to me here.

This one is really good, and I'm going to package them together for our final question and we'll ask everybody to provide their thoughts. Up until the last couple of years I didn't have email on my phone. Now I do, and I've noticed that this has been adding to my stress level because I check my emails on days off, at night, even if I don't need to because my phone is with me all the time. How do you handle that? How do you put it to rest knowing that we could be considered a 24-hour job? And to tie in with that, how do you then avoid having the stress at home, venting to the spouse or venting to family or friends when you go out? How do you put it all aside basically? Let's start with the phone part and then the part about trying not to continually talk about work to family and friends. Let's start with Dave.

DAVE REED: You know what: I think having the phone and having email on it is probably one of the greatest things that's happened. I don't look at it as a negative, I look at it as a positive because now I'm not sitting around waiting and hoping that an SID is very good and gets me a game file after the game or somebody else sends me what I'm waiting for. I know what it's there, and then I can use that time for more productive things like playing with my son, doing something with my wife that's important to her.

You know, I've turned that around and I've made it a real advantage for me. I've also communicated with our coaches, and they seem to be the ones that are usually asking you to do things when you shouldn't have to do. And if you have a good relationship with your coaches, they'll understand that when you leave the office, you're

not going home to work. You can choose to do what you want to do at home. You might want to get a project done that you know you don't have time for the next day, but the fact that they've had a roster change at 8:00 after practice because somebody quit, that can wait until the next day.

As long as you can figure out what it is you're willing to do and communicate that with the people that are most likely to ask you to do things when you shouldn't have to, I think the technology is only beneficial to us.

And what was the second part?

ERIC McDOWELL: We talked about the phone, but then how do you make sure when you get home you listen to the special person in your life and put it aside, not vent about a certain situation that occurred but trying to put it aside and listen better and also just avoid the stress at home?

DAVE REED: Boy, you know, at certain times of year I think it's almost impossible to put it completely aside, just because you need to let your significant other know what's going on. If you're going to have to work late or when a game file comes in, you need to know that, and sometimes, yeah, I kind of vent because maybe somebody didn't send me what I was waiting for or didn't do it very well and I have to clean it up. But as long as you communicate, I think they're okay with it.

You know, and the other thing, too, is make sure that you're doing things that they want to do when you have the time. As long as they know they're still every bit the priority that your job is, they'll be okay with it.

ERIC McDOWELL: Amy, the question to you first about the phone, trying not to check a score, and again, we're not talking about when you're updating a women's hockey game or men's basketball game at 10:00 at night. But when there's no event, how do you make sure if you're out having some refreshments with some friends after a movie that you're not checking that phone? And secondly, how do you avoid talking to your family and trying to avoid going off about the stressful things and focusing on other things?

AMY CANFIELD: Well, in terms of the phone for me, it's always on me. I mean, like Dave said, sometimes you can't put it aside. But it's fantastic to be able to have that. My Blackberry goes with me everywhere, and that way if there is a moment on my night off that somebody needs to

reach me, they're able to reach me. I'm able to figure out what is the thing that I need to focus on and what can wait until the next day.

I feel I do have a good working relationship with all of my coaches to the point where most of them know that if it's something that needs to be done that night, I will absolutely get it done that night, but nine times out of ten, it's definitely something that can wait until I'm back in the office the next day.

In terms of frustration, believe it or not, my father actually is my outlet for frustration. My father is probably one of the most level-headed people I've ever met in my life, and I'm able to speak with him about the frustrations that I have and get realistic and kind of grounded answers to kind of help talk me down off the ledge I guess you could say.

So for me, times I need that. When I'm at my most frustrated point, the phone has to be by me so that way I'm able to reach out to him and just get overall advice. But for the most part, it's taking it all in stride and knowing what can be done or what needs to be done that night as opposed to what can wait until I'm back in the office the next day.

ERIC McDOWELL: Now we'll look for final thoughts and comments from our members. Chris, your final thoughts for us?

CHRIS HOLTZ: Well, first of all, thanks for having me on this call. Second of all, personal balance in life is key, whether it's like what we talked about with exercise or eating right, and just even putting the phone away. I carry my Droid with me all the time, too, so finding that personal balance and personal time to just get away from our daily lives.

ERIC McDOWELL: Basically making time. That's a very good point. Let's go to Amy. Your final thoughts?

AMY CANFIELD: I just think the biggest thing, especially in our profession, and unfortunately I realized it so late, but I'm glad I've caught up, you have to take care of yourself. I know that for those that are married, there are other people that rely on you. For those who are single, you rely on yourself. But in the end it's all on you, and really, you have to take care of yourself because if you let it go to waste, there's not going to be anything left. And realize that when you have a problem to go to the people that can help you out or when you have an issue that

there's so many outlets in this business that can help you with whatever you need, whether it's personal, whether it's your weight or eating better, and to just take care of yourself.

DAVE REED: I was going to say what Amy said, to take care of yourself. But one of the things that you can do to help do that is make sure you're working on your lines of communication with everybody that can be affected by what you do in your profession. And that being said, don't be afraid to reach out to somebody else in our profession because a lot of us have 20 or so years' experience that can help, and it also might be good for somebody to talk to somebody who just got into the profession to see what their thoughts are.

Everybody is here to help each other. We're usually everybody's best friends, confidants. You can say things to us that your significant other is not going to understand.

And maybe we can help talk you through a tough situation, either at work or at home. Anybody can call me anytime they need to.

NATALIA CICCONE: I would say basically the same things as everybody else is saying. I think communication with your partner, people at home and your work people is super important. I think prioritizing what's going on in your life and assessing your own personal situation, and then figuring out if -- what needs to change and how you can fit your life into all that is really important. And something that Dave just said, which I think is huge, is reaching out for advice and for help. You know, you can delegate some work to people. I'm sure there are things that interns can help more with or somebody else in your office can help more with. I think sometimes SIDs feel like they have to do it all, and that's just not possible in order to stay healthy.

But also, if there's somebody who's in your situation that's in the business that you feel like they seem to have it figured out, ask them how they do it and ask them how they're able to juggle life, personal life, family. I don't think any of us are experts, but I think a lot of us -- some people have it more figured out than others. And they might have tips or advice that may work in your life, or it might just give you a good idea of like what you can do in your own life. So I think those are the really important keys to all of this.

ERIC McDOWELL: Well, you did a marvelous job. We're so happy because the idea



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of gaining personal balance was meant for all and everyone, and we can definitely say that everybody gained a lot from different perspectives from everybody on this panel. So we thank, once again, our participants.

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