How to be successful and still have a life and why

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Based on an the ICSE 05 NSEFS talk given by R. Kemmerer.
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About me

- Professor of Distributed Computing
- Head of Software Systems Engineering Group
- Deputy Head of Department
- Director of Research
- PC Co-Chair ICSE 2007
- Associate Editor IEEE TSE
- Co-founder and Partner of Zuhlike Technology Group
  - Software and Systems Engineering Professional Services firm
  - Approx. 250 staff
- 40 Years old
- Married to Cecilia Mascolo
- Our daughter Bianca is 3 years old
- I love
  - Playing with Bianca
  - Listening to Jazz and Classic
  - Gardening
  - Cycling, swimming, running
  - Good food and wine
  - A pint with friends
- I hate
  - Military (would not take grants from DoD, MoD, NATO, …)
  - Unreliable people
Caveat emptor

- There is no silver bullet
- Getting
  - tenure (US)
  - first permanent academic position (Europe)
  makes tough demands
- This talk is about how to balance your life in the presence of these demands

Some basic advice: Don’ts

- Neglect friends and family … … only to make yet another deadline…
- Freak out … … about success or failure
- Burn out … … your career is a marathon, not a sprint
- Overcommit … … colleagues/friends/family will be annoyed when you don’t keep promises
Some basic advice: Do’s

- Have a life outside work
- Have holidays
- Exercise
- Prioritize and learn to say no (and do that quickly)
- Manage your time

Get a Hobby or two

- Need to switch off
- Recreate
- Relax
- Meet interesting people
Family

- Have dinner with your family every night when in town
- Use (and support) your school’s creche or nursery
- Work at home (double edged sword)
- Don’t miss your kid’s games, plays, school events
- Take your family with you when trips allow it

Holidays and Vacations

- Taking holidays while staying at home is hard
- Make an effort to go on vacation
- Don’t take any work
- Don’t take your laptop!!!
- Should be at least two weeks in a row
- Combine vacations with conference / project trips
Exercise

- *Mens sana in corpore sano*  
  (Juvenal, 100 AD)
- Helps you to switch off
- Need to be fit for the physical strains of your job, e.g.
  - long distance flights
  - lecturing
- Necessary to maintain health in long term (remember the marathon)
  - We mainly work while sitting
  - Balance energy consumption

Exercise & Work

- Work out with colleagues and grad students
- Get them away from their work, too
- More fun when done together
- Sometimes interesting ideas emerge during exercise
- Always pack swimming gear when going to conferences
Don’t just attend the conference (ICSE 04)

Another conference: ICSE 06
Learn to say No!

- Academic life is full of opportunities
  - Teaching
  - Departmental committees
  - Journal reviewing
  - PC Membership
  - Consulting assignments
- Do these match your agenda?
- If not, say No!
  - Say No immediately
  - Non-response might be interpreted as a Yes!
- You need to start saying No soon
  - More opportunities than you can handle will arrive faster than you think
  - You need free time to be creative

Manage your time

- Maintain an (online) agenda
  - Schedule time for seeing your grad students regularly
  - Schedule free time for you
  - Schedule important matters during productive hours
- Maintain a to-do-list
  - Makes explicit how much you have to do
  - Makes explicit what you’ve got done
  - Makes you reflect on whether you should take on some new responsibility
Why?

• Life is way too short!
• What do you want to be remembered for:
  – Good parent
  – Good neighbour
  – Interesting person
  – Great researcher

Summary

You know you are in trouble when
• you complain that you can’t see the screen on beach as the sun is too bright
• your grad students complain because you did not reply to their email in 20 mins
• your partner asks you to mark days in your diary when you are at home
• your partner asks you to come to ICSEs with you so they can see you more often
• your kids only know you from your picture on skype
• cheques for the travel claim are larger than your monthly pay
• you pay more attention to your air miles account than your bank statement