

CONFLICT

We struggle with all manner of conflict and ambivalence in life. Viktor Frankl in The Will to Meaning notes that "being human means being in the face of meaning to fulfill and values to realize. It means living in the polar field of tension established between reality and ideals. . . ." For women, the tension between reality and ideals is particularly acute, especially women who become professionals. The mastery of lawyering skills and participation in law school activities creates substantial demands on one's time. Women who have substantial family obligations find the conflict almost inevitable.

The conflicts experienced by women in law school are, in the final analysis, more fundamental and deep-rooted than simply having insufficient time to raise a family and become a lawyer. The socialization into womanhood does not traditionally prepare women for the mind-set and value system that lie at the core of our present thinking about legal education. The virtues and values associated with women's socialization are ignored or held in disdain in law school. Law school is a thoroughly masculine world that promotes masculine values and a masculine conception of justice. One reason that the experience of so many women in law school is traumatic lies in the need to maintain their own sense of values.

SUSAN SPENCER

I feel so immersed in conflict now that I find it difficult to find some objective level from which to write. I hope that by wading through my feelings I will gain some clarity of thought that will help me to go on with my life.

Cynthia Epstein in Women in Law writes of the personal conflicts professional women share in achieving balance between private and professional life. I too wonder how I will be able to maintain a balance. It has been hard to do that in law school. Will it be even worse when I get out? My biggest conflict is time. How to ration out such a scarce commodity? I don't see my parents, brothers, or my grandmother nearly as much as I'd like. When I do, I'm

loaded down with books and heavy thoughts. There seems to be so little chance just to be together, with nothing hanging over us. I don't have enough time to be with my husband either. This problem is compounded by his work (he is a lawyer); we rarely meet on middle ground, with open minds and hearts. I can't enjoy my professional life when I feel deprived of personal communion. Both worlds suffer.

My inability to ration out my time in a spontaneous, relaxed manner has always been a problem. I have high-strung, invisible energy. I have always felt that work comes before play--whether it be cleaning the bathroom or reading tomorrow's assignment. I have always had trouble saying, "oh well, so it won't get done." Because I associate my personal life and love relationships with play, they too wait in the background until I hear the voice "spend time with loved ones." I feel I've taken love for granted because I've always had it--from family, friends, and/or my husband. I feel my personal life is more precious to me than a professional life could ever be. I simply must learn to treat it that way.

Now that I am pregnant, I worry about rationing time even more. Will I be able to give the child enough time so that he or she feels secure in life? I know I will love it with all my heart. But will that love be enough? I want to work too--will it give the child an emotional problem to be left with a baby sitter every day? I see myself rushing every hour on the hour, taking time only to wipe vomit from my shirt, and drop the child with a middle-aged baby sitter who plunks him or her in front of the T.V. all day. Perhaps I'm being too cynical. I know my obsession with getting everything done. Something will have to give.

All facets of personal life are in competition. I have looked forward to motherhood for a long time--and my feelings have not changed. But I worry how my role of mother will affect my role as wife. Will I be able to be both? My fear is magnified by the fact that my husband, Ron, is not as enthusiastic about the child as I am. I want him to share in the joy, the fun (not to mention the responsibility). As a mother will I be able to continue to be friend and lover? I know that I need to relax about all of this. Perhaps a forced slow-down after the child is born will be good for me. Maybe then I can learn to be more relaxed about time. There is also a problem in finding time

for myself. My time is always the first to go. I know I'm happier when I have that time. I love to run, garden, or just sit outside. I feel at peace with the world and with myself when I'm doing those things. I've told myself there will be more time for everything when I get out of law school. When I come home from work, I'll be able to do what I want. And I'll be able to travel and visit family and friends on the weekends. But knowing my compulsion with getting everything done and doing it myself, I'm wondering now if that is simply a dream. I'll still be baking bread and making granola in the evenings. Is time something you need to make "time" for? Do you make a date with yourself for a long walk next Saturday afternoon? I think an obsessive person needs to become obsessed to change their obsession.

Another conflict is whether I want to be a lawyer. I'm worried about finding work that interests me. Much of law seems to be pure tedium. I also worry about whether I'll like myself after a full day's work as a lawyer. I don't want to lose respect for myself; I don't want to compromise my morals or ideals. The thought of juggling my personal life to accommodate work becomes more burdensome when I think of the work itself.

Recognizing these conflicts can lead to growth. My life is on the threshold of the unknown. I'll soon become a lawyer and a mother. I have never been either and I'm unsure whether I'll be a success at either. I have older, familiar roles that I want to preserve. I keep telling myself that it's much more important to be happy than to worry. Hopefully, I'll be able to live out that thought.

DENISE CHAMBERLAIN

Years ago, like many young people, I was struggling with finding a satisfying lifestyle. Today, my conflict is less traumatic. It is no longer a "battle or struggle," "controversy or quarrel," or "a collision." I believe that each person has some conflict in her life. Conflict leads to growth and further development as an individual.

Currently, the conflicts in my life center upon a need to balance my private and professional worlds.

I don't want my professional world to overwhelm my personal world. I've been trying to balance the time I

spend studying with the time I spend with my husband, family, and friends. This year has been the first time in six years that my husband and I have lived near our families and lifelong friends. Many of our family members are getting older, and we want to enjoy as much time as possible with them. Another part of me focuses on my professional world. I want to be a good lawyer and want to do well in law school. So the reading and hours of study are very important. And yet I don't want to be consumed in my legal studies.

CATHY MORGAN

My predicament stems from the power and control men have over the legal system. In order to be a success as a lawyer, I must play the game as well as men do. Yet to remain the person I am now, I have to hold on to my "feminine values" and change the system so that it is easier for the next woman. I don't see a solution to this problem; I just see managing to live with it.

Probably if my father and father-in-law were not so oblivious to retaining one's feminine values as being an end in itself--as a form of success--it would be easier for me to feel successful at being a lawyer who is not "successful" by a man's standard. Success is as defined in terms of salary. It's sad to think that they don't see the happiness that money brings as fleeting. It's sad that there are so few people who see success as the inherent value of particular work.

Even though I want to prove to the world that women are as competent as men, I will never find satisfaction in being successful as men define it. If I follow my own path, I am a failure. If I go the way of the upper middle-class lawyers before me, I am reinforcing a system that is destructive to my sisters.

MICHELLE WIDMER

Males love to undermine a woman's abilities to act and react. As a female law clerk in two different law firms in West Virginia, I have faced situations where male attorneys expressed concern in regard to my ability to take an active

part in a case. In one situation, a partner in the firm questioned my ability as a female to work with a client accused of rape who was awaiting trial in the county jail. The decision made was to not let me work on the case. Later, questions were raised about my dealing with the men in the coal, oil, and gas business. I was informed that such men prefer a "man's man" rather than a female lawyer. Worse yet was the situation where I was prevented from going on an overnight mineral title search because of one attorney's fear that his wife would not appreciate me accompanying him into the next county!

I enjoy the courtroom environment, more than any other aspect of lawyering. The problem is that the assertive behavior common of trial lawyers is questioned if the trial lawyer is a woman. The typical behavior of a male trial lawyer is held in disdain if you happen to be a woman.

Personal versus professional aspirations is the key to the conflicts I experience. These competing aspirations affect my work. I am plagued with indecision. When my family needs help and assistance, I feel obligated to put down my law school work and assist them. At other times I refuse a desperate call from my sister in order to complete an assignment that has been overdue for 5 weeks. I now have a nervous stomach which needs constant attention. I wear gloves to bed at night in order to save my short, torn nails from further biting.

For years, I've desired to be an attorney. I worked hard to accomplish this goal. To make it as a young attorney, to become successful, it is necessary to give over 100%. It's life-consuming.

Yet, there are other interests that I need to pursue to have a full and happy life. I am single and lonely. (I have a problem with Aphrodite.) Love plays an important role in my life. However, when you give 100% to the practice of law, who in hell has time for love and romance? Without love, who can create a lasting relationship which leads to sharing, caring, laughing, joy, and eventually marriage? Tell me where in the extensive practice of law one finds time to have children. This painful conflict is faced by almost every woman lawyer I know. It can only lead to unhappiness and guilt.

As a law clerk, during the past two summers, I battled my desires and cried over my predicament. I

wonder if I made a mistake by pursuing romance rather than giving 100% to my work at the office and then not being asked to return to clerk again for a second summer. I wonder whether some romances might have turned out differently if I had been available the weekend I chose to spend in the office putting finishing touches on a trial brief. More importantly, I wonder when these conflicts and questions will end and my life become simple again.

I know the answer to these questions. I will always have conflicts with my professional and personal roles. I am just going to have to learn to cope with it.

SUSAN DALPORTO

I deal with conflicts between my professional life and my private life every day. I believe that I have more conflicts than younger women law students who reached maturity in the midst of the women's movement. I was a traditional wife-mother-homemaker for 13 years before entering law school.

I was raised by a perfectionist mother who valued and resented the traditional role of women in our society. This influenced and confused me. She devoted herself to her home. She martyred herself. She complained of her role and spoke often of a career in interior design she wanted and never had. A mother who sends mixed messages plants intense conflicts to be resolved by a daughter.

Having spent 13 years in the traditional role of full-time wife, homemaker, and mother, I maintained high standards of child care and domesticity which are now impossible. But I still try. I feel like I'm on a treadmill which won't stop. I try to be more efficient and "save time." It never stops.

I feel alienated from my husband, home, children, family, pets, business affairs. Most of all, I feel alienated from myself, my body, my sensuality. These things which are so meaningful to me and valued throughout my life are being pushed aside to become a lawyer.

My role as a law student traps me just as my earlier domestic role. Maybe more so. Now I have to be superwoman. I must be a good student, always prepared, so I'll be a competent lawyer devoted to my clients' welfare; community conscious, informed of world and local

affairs; well-read; a loving, caring mother; supportive wife; gourmet cook; spotless housekeeper; gracious hostess; sensitive friend; veterinarian to my pets; payer of bills and taxes; physically fit, beautifully dressed, meticulously groomed, sensual, and sexual. I also should have a job on the side to earn money, get experience, and exhibit competence and ambition.

What I really need is time to communicate with myself to figure out what to do about this mess. I need time to answer basic questions: What are my goals? What is the good life? Am I happy? What life style do I want? What is important in life?

It's 7 months before graduation and everyone is frantically looking for a job. I feel like a pervert because I have not been interviewing and don't know what I want to do with my life.

In the midst of all this goal-seeking and superwoman mania I am getting pissed off. There is a conspiracy in our society. The technological society promoted to free us from drudgery enslaves us. We give up our marriages and our children to strangers, our homes to house cleaners and home decorators. What do we have left? A professional career. Is it worth it? Not to me.

I told a woman friend of mine that I really wanted a part-time job. She said she did also but she would not pursue that because it was characteristic of females. Men don't do that. I don't care if it is stigmatizing to work at a professional job part-time. I'm working two full-time jobs now and it's no fun. I'm trying to carve out a little niche of sanity in an insane world.

It really frightens me to see people devoting their lives to work. There is an insanity pervading the world. We have been propagandized into believing that we need two cars, a \$100,000 house, two color tv's, a microwave, washer and drier, video games, and expensive clothes and jewelry. Home and family have taken a back seat to material success. Who profits from our enslavement? As utility costs and rents soar, and food prices skyrocket, we sink further and further into slavery. We beget children who will have no sense of family, to join the work force...working as slaves of international conglomerate executives so stockholders can increase their profits.

Am I paranoid? Are we wasting our youth racing toward plastic goals that will leave us cold and yearning for

the warmth of family, friends, home, love?

FRAN HUGHES

I feel I have been carrying around a bundle of conflicts that have nearly rendered me incapable of making decisions. One day I feel a particular way, and the next day I feel the opposite. I am getting married to a fellow law student in a few months and am scared stiff about marriage. I wonder if marriage will allow me the time I need to develop a career and still maintain a relationship. Sometimes I resent it that I have to worry about this kind of concern. I worry about him not getting a job as prestigious as mine or that he won't be able to earn as much money as I do. I don't want to make him feel so bad.

Career location is another concern. What if I really like my job and his career demands that we move or vice versa. I even wonder if I want the responsibility of raising a family.

I have spent a lot of time trying to come to grips with my motivations. I know my ambitions may not be the most noble, but want to feel good about myself. Growing up poor and being the only person from my family to graduate from college has put pressure on me to succeed. I am concerned about a lot of social issues, but do not want to be a "cause" attorney. I want a job where I don't have to constantly struggle to make ends meet. I guess my attitude is let men take "cause" jobs or legal aid work. I want to be economically independent. The only way to be independent with and from men is to be able to support myself.

I am extremely busy going to school, working full time, exercising, reading, and being with friends, but I also think I am very well organized and my partner shares in doing the tasks around the house. I don't think I'll be a wife split between my commitment at home and at work. If I spend a great deal of time, I will work worry about Doug's feelings because I don't think he expects me to work when I can be with him.

The conflicts that I experience at school will, I am afraid, be magnified with the start of a professional career. I constantly feel I don't have enough time to read and be by myself. The only time I really get to spend alone is when I run.

The biggest conflict for me will probably involve the decision to have children or not. I think of myself as a career woman, but at the same time, I sometimes feel it would be a creative endeavor to raise children. It's such a responsibility and I am basically a selfish person.

ANN SPANER

Everyone I know feels that they have more things to do than they have time to do them. Yet, we all make choices as to how we want to spend our time. It would be interesting for me to try to keep track of how many waking hours I spend on work in a week. I know it's damn few. This is an especially agonizing conflict because it colors my self-image and distorts my goals and ambitions. . . . My "true abilities" in reading, writing, and thinking remain more or less constant. It is my subjective self-image that takes wide and vexing swings. . . .

I've spent a good deal of time and energy cultivating masculine characteristics and tendencies, so in some respects I am at ease taking on the role of the dominant gender. I am unabashedly assertive (some call this aggressive) and I eschew passivity. However, I desire to have children and to take on traditional female responsibilities; these tempt me to postpone professionalism. But I can never imagine a life where children, home, and husband would be my only interests or involvements. . . .

Much of my first year in law school felt like a titanic struggle to hold on to values I've nurtured and developed, which law school, in its lumbering nihilism, would destroy. I so feared the efforts to co-opt me (not just the institution and its games for sorting, but the faculty, administration, and a majority of students were also in on the conspiracy) that I flatly refused to play even the most simple and innocuous games everyone plays to get by. . . .

I have wanted to succeed at law school--and perhaps I have. I came with the same hope that most students start out with--to be in the top 10, make Law Review grades, be active in organizations of interest, and come out a well-rounded, competent lawyer. I learned early that doing what it takes to live out that scenario was not as compelling as my heartfelt suspicions about the nature and purposes of higher education.

Having real doubt about the usefulness or value of grades before coming to law school, I soon found that measurement of ability and knowledge was arbitrary, unpredictable, unreflective, and laughable if it weren't taken so dead seriously by students themselves and potential employers. I've cheated the side of me that wanted to do what it takes to succeed in law school and that part of me is angry. It shouts at the other side, "Coward! Just couldn't cut it, eh? Couldn't do the work. Couldn't stay with it." I guess I'll never know if I could have gotten good grades if I'd tried. I didn't really try.

A recurring and perplexing personal conflict for me has always been the tug-of-war between working hard and intensely, and being spontaneous and going with the flow. I've more frequently opted for the latter. Being "spontaneous" is a quality that I have valued for a long time. It requires a great deal of sacrifice. A counselor at the university counseling center tried repeatedly to get me to manage my time. He wanted me to make a schedule of the hours in every day and to plan in advance what I would be doing during that time. I couldn't. Well, let me say I couldn't stick to what I had planned. Things would come up. More likely than not, I just rebelled against the imposition of a formal structure.

I like being spontaneous. There is joy in it. It feels alive. Planning my life out from now until retirement, or some other distant time, seems dead to me. Who knows what the spirits have in store for us? I want to stay loose and open. Of course, this kind of thinking can be self-defeating in law school, where jobs and opportunities are snatched up early and little remains for those who lag behind.

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conscious choice but in any event this conflict is in remission these days. I don't worry about it much anymore.

There are two or the three personal conflicts I have identified. A recurring and perplexing personal conflict for me has always been the tug-o-war between working hard and intensely and being spontaneous and going with the flow. I've more frequently opted for the latter. Being "spontaneous" is a quality that I have valued for a long time. It requires a great deal of sacrifice. A counselor at the university counseling center tried repeatedly to get me to manage my time. He wanted me to make a schedule of the hour in every day and to plan in advance what I would be doing during time. I couldn't. Well, let me say I couldn't stick to what I had planned. Things would come up. More likely than not I just rebelled against the imposition of a formal structure.

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I don't really dislike working. In fact, I prefer working to going to school. It is just that I am selective in the kind of work I do. It must be politically correct and psychologically rewarding. I want to have some greater purpose than making money or simply keeping busy. I want to feel that I am striving for some greater good than my own immediate needs.

I am less spontaneous in work situations than I am in school. Something about being paid for my time (as opposed to paying the institution) makes me feel more accountable and responsible to an employer. If I can work at a job that means something to me and feel that I am doing an adequate and conscientious job of it, then I can allow myself to be spontaneous without guilt.

The second personal conflict I want to address is the conflict between solitude (independence) and togetherness (loveship or mutual dependence). This is a hard one to confront. Through adolescence and my early twenties I was adamant that I'd never get tied down. At that time

marriage seemed unnecessary and children were unthinkable. I liked men. I liked loving men. But I didn't want one of them claiming me as his own or confining me in the ways that relationships seemed inevitably to confine people. Self-reliance and self-dependence were my creed. I found great strength in being alone, in doing my work alone and in taking full credit or blame for my actions. When I am in love it is so difficult to discern where my ideas or actions stop and the other person's start.

One of the prevailing lies that young women are told is that if they don't marry (or pair off) that they will be lonely and unhappy in their old age. Many old people are lonely and unhappy but most of them have been with partners all their lives and can no longer relate to their spouses or have lost their loved ones. The point is that it doesn't make any sense that old people who've lived outside of marriage would be any more unhappy or lonely than those who've been wed.

I have changed my attitude and now desire companionship for all of the traditional reasons. I do want to have children. I feel it is a responsibility of concerned adults to have children. In addition I know that children are one of the most powerful sources for understanding that have available to us.

I still get overwhelmed at times with the impossibility of truly knowing another person or being known by another. There must be an effort to try to reach out, but we should not be discouraged when, despite the effort, understanding fails.