

What career do you have now, and when did you develop an interest in that field?

I am an Executive Coach, Facilitator and Consultant and some of the areas in which I work are: Leadership and Management Development, Cultural Competence, Diversity and Inclusion, Innovation and Change/Conflict Management.

A main theme of my work is helping people to learn how their behaviors impact the people around them, whether it's a manager giving an employee feedback, and how effectively (or not) they do that; or whether it's someone moving from the US to Japan and needing to increase competence in the skills it takes to cross cultures and be effective in the new place.

I've been interested in these areas for much of my life, because my family traveled and lived internationally when I was a kid. It developed more and more as I got older, went through university, traveled more myself, went to grad school and so on.

How do you balance work with other aspects of your life?

I work for myself so it ebbs and flows, sometimes being much busier than others. When you work for yourself, you can take time off, but then you also want to be available to clients, so they don't take their business elsewhere. I try to plan less work around times of transition for my kids, like starting or ending the school year. Also, my husband and I share responsibilities so when I'm busier he does more and vice versa.

How do you manage your stress? Are there any techniques that work well for you?

For extreme stress, I stop and do paced breathing (4 seconds in, 6 seconds out), or just take deep breaths. Exercise helps too, and talking things out with friends and family is always great. I also see a therapist to manage stress and life's challenges.

How does the stress of adult life compare to the stress of adolescence?

The stresses are perhaps more life altering with more to lose as an adult, though they don't necessarily feel that way. I believe the feelings of getting a lower grade or being excluded or having your parents fight as a teen can be very severe and aren't to be minimized. However, the ramifications of having stress because you're about to be fired, maybe will lose your house, other larger responsibilities, might actually have more severe possible outcomes. Again, I don't think this is how this feels though.

And now that I say that, the psychological damage that can be done from bullying, exclusion etc. may be bigger than losing your house as an adult, so hard to compare. It's all horrible.

How was your middle school and high school experience? At this position in life, what advice would you give to students?

These periods in my life were pretty horrific: parents were splitting up, I was bussed into a different neighborhood because of desegregation (in South Carolina) with lots of racial and religious problems and discrimination; not to mention the usual social and romantic array of problems. I was threatened with physical danger by "friends" who turned on me and others. I moved a few times and had to start over, including one move where had to be separated from my Dad and sister; lived with other family; weather shock. It was awful a lot of the time!

My advice: it really depends on your situation and what you're dealing with. I'd say try to find activities, clubs, hobbies that you like doing and people that like you for who you are, not trying to be someone else. Don't ever do anything physically with someone because you worry they or others won't like you.