Kanter Lecture
How Supervisor Training Transforms Employee Exhaustion and Engagement

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Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in Work-Family Research
2025 Finalist, Citation and Authors

Kossek, E., Porter, C.*, Rosokha, L. *, Wilson, K., Rupp, D., Law-Penrose, J.* 2024. Advancing work–life supportive contexts for the “haves” and “have nots”: Integrating supervisor training with work–life flexibility to impact exhaustion or engagement. *Human Resource Management*, 63: 397-411. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22207

Dilemma 1:
Employers face many dilemnas in implementing work –life flexibility policies.

Many employees hold jobs with limited opportunities for work life flexibility, making them susceptible to burnout. Yet most employers believe they can do little to mitigate this dynamic.

Dilemma 2:

Even when employees hold jobs with greater access to work-life flexibility, some do not take advantage of their flexibility to more fully engage in home roles (or alternatively work roles).

Dilemma 3:

Issues exacerbated when supervisors are unsure of their role in supporting work-life flexibility.

Dilemma: Work-Life Flexibility-Vague Concept

Work-Life/ Work-family/ Work-Nonwork

Type of Flexibility

Employees and Employers vary in views

Definition —the ability to manage where (boundaries) and when (schedules) one works—is considered “a valued resource that provides employees with the control and autonomy needed to adapt to simultaneous work and family demands” Kossek, Perrigino & Lautsch, 2023)

Work-Life Flexibility (and support) means different things to employees, supervisors & employers in different job contexts at different points in time & this has created challenges for research & practice.

Solution!

We argue that each dilemma:

one experienced by the work-life flexibility "have nots" (those with low flexibility),

& one experienced by the work-life flexibility "haves" (those with high flexibility),

may be addressed through a single remedy: organizational interventions that promote a *work-life supportive context*.

Psychosocial workplace stressors are part of the social determinants of health and wellbeing

The workplace is a **critical point of intervention** for reducing well-being , productivity.

Solution! Work-life Supportive Contexts

Assumption: When organizations proactively provide work-life supportive training to supervisors, it promotes a work-life supportive context (i.e., signaling that the organization is supportive of employees' managing their work-life interface) and resocializes supervisors to be more supportive of work-life resources which changes employees' perceptions regarding access and consequences of work-life resources (Kossek et al., 2021)

Work Life Supportive Context

- The availability of work-life flexibility in and of itself is not sufficient for promoting employees' perceptions of work-life support; a key factor contributing to employees' access & use is the social context, particularly their supervisors use and support of work-life flexibility
- For work-life flexibility to be effective in promoting employee well-being and engagement, employees (and supervisors) need to perceive that the organization is supportive of the employee managing the work-life interface (Allen, 2001; Lapierre et al., 2008).

Study Goals

Drawing on job demands resources (JDR) theory (Baaker et al, 20023), to investigate whether when organizations provide work-life supportive training to supervisors, where it promotes a **work-life supportive context** that may differentially benefit workers based on their job characteristics

i.e. does having a trained supervisor *mitigate burnout for those with limited work-life flexibility*

& *promote engagement in work and home roles for those with greater work-life flexibility*.

Work-Life Interventions

- Organizational change efforts are aimed at reducing work–life conflict in order to enhance the well-being and effectiveness of:
  - employees and their families
  - the organizations in which they work
  - society
- Interventions address:
  - **structural factors:** job design, human resource policies, technology (formal support)
  - **cultural factors:** supportive supervisors, climate (informal support)

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(Kossek, Hammer, Kelly, & Moen, 2014; Kossek, 2016; Kossek, Lewis, Hammer, 2010)

People managers are the linchpins.

Organizations depend on people managers to interpret and apply HR policies and practices.

50 percent gap between managers' views of how well they support of work-life alignment efforts and the employees' perception of that support.

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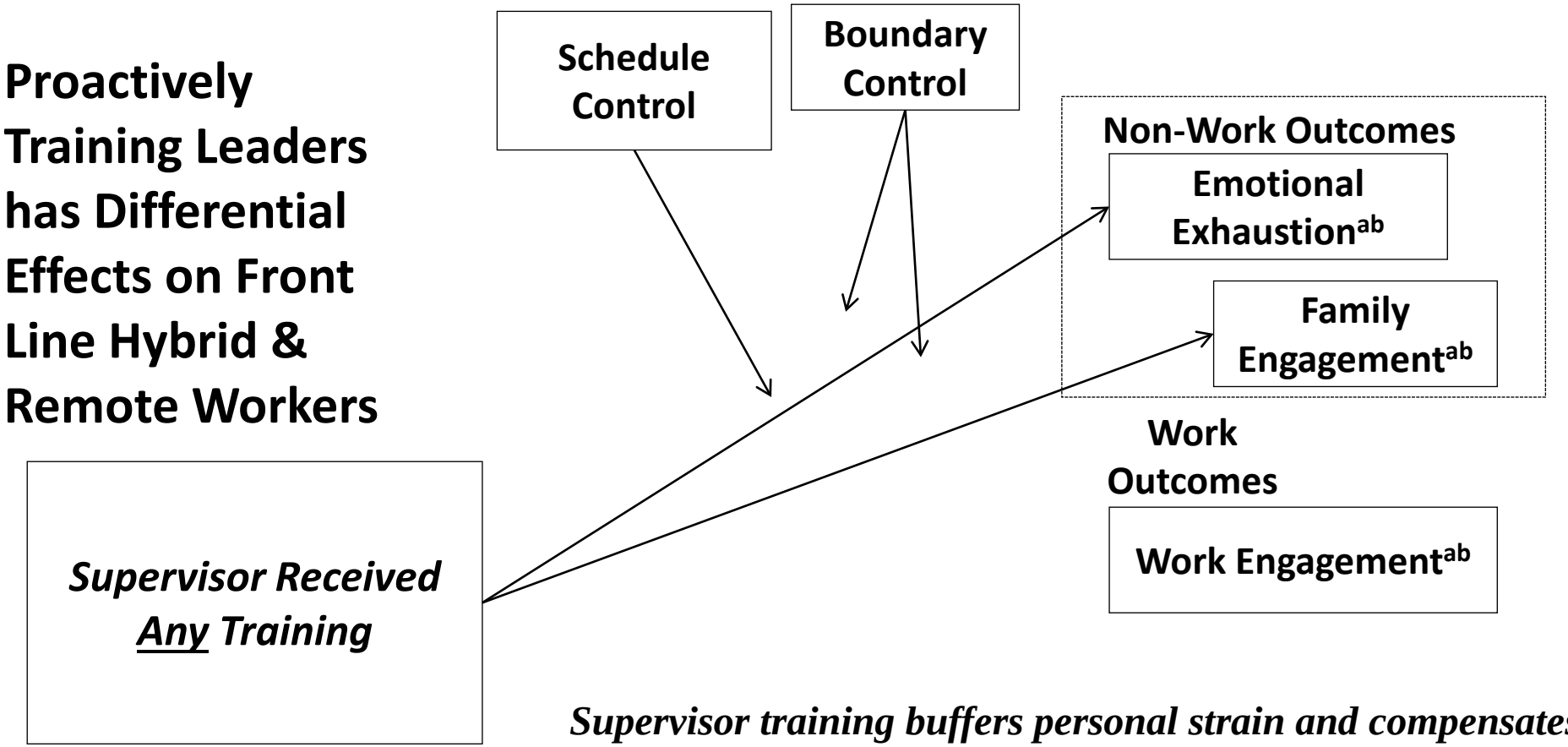
Dr. Ellen E. Kossek

Dr. Leslie B. Hammer

MODEL & HYPOTHESES

Proactively Training Leaders has Differential Effects on Front Line Hybrid & Remote Workers



[a]Controls for Salary
[b]Controls for T1 measure of DVs

Supervisor training buffers personal strain and compensates for lack of resources in job contexts with less work-nonwork inter-role control

Supervisor training facilitates employees' deployment of resources to increase engagement in contexts with more work role control

Method

- Large Public University
- 17 depts.- 12 randomly assigned to intervention
- Baseline Survey (March) data following by Training (Oct) and Post Training survey following March

- 57 employees in training group
- 184 in control group

Supervisor Work-Life Training Intervention

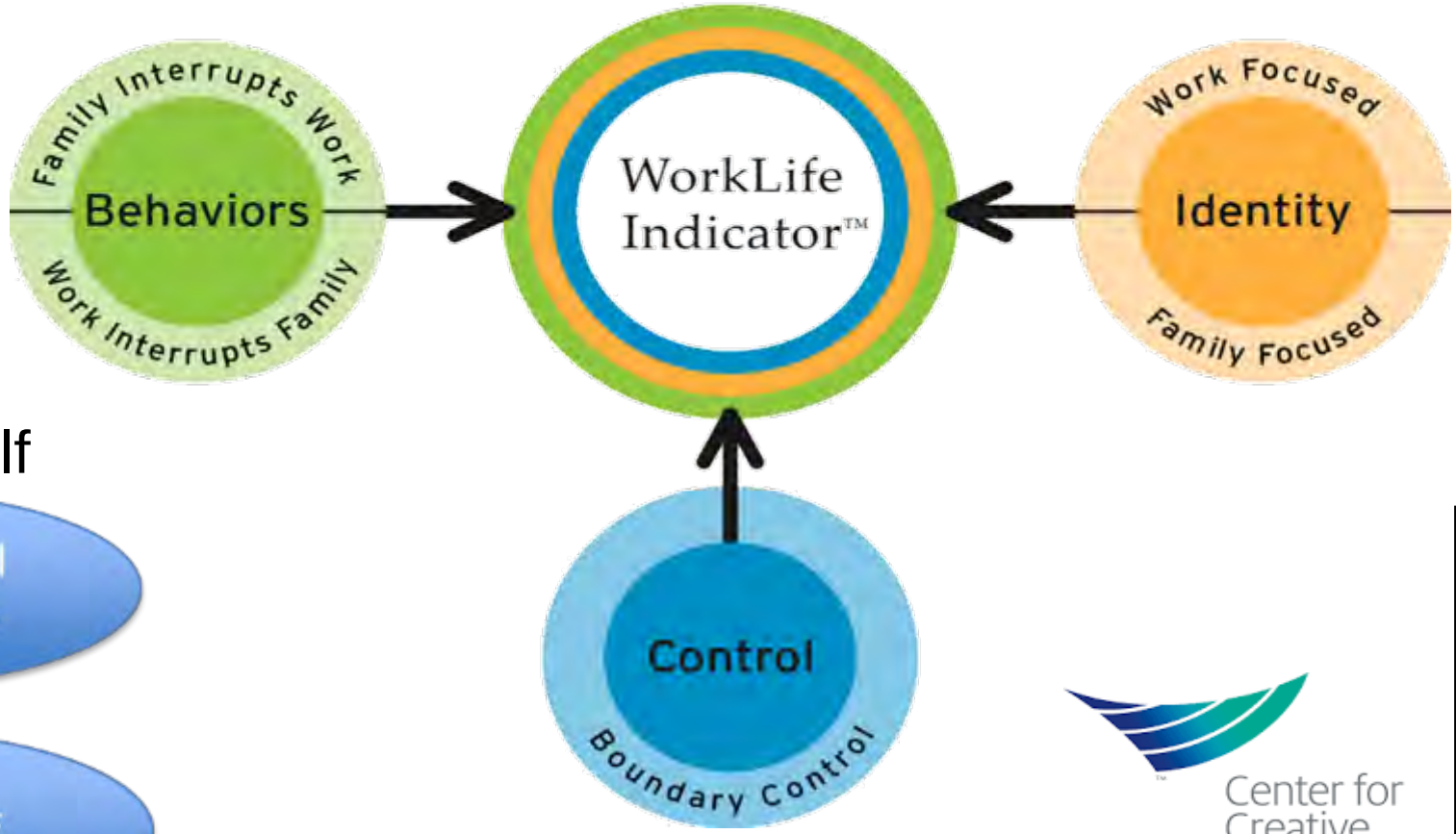
Thank you for your participation.

You will earn a passport badge if you completed all aspects of this training:

- ✓ **Module One:** **Leadership Training Overview**
- ✓ **Activity:** **FlexStyles Assessment (Kossek et al. 2012)**
- ✓ **Module Two:** **Managing Work and Personal Life Boundaries**
- ✓ **Module Three:** **Family and Personal Support & Performance Support (Hammer et al. 2009)**
- ✓ **Activity:** **Tracking Supervisory Supportive Behavior**
- ✓ **Activity:** **Preparation of a story or summary of an experience managing boundaries and/or providing family/personal support or performance support for your employees**
- ✓ **Module Four:** **Leadership & Work-Life Workshop – Practical Applications of Boundary Management & Supportive Behaviors**

Technology and Boundary Management

Work-Life Boundaries: Flexstyles

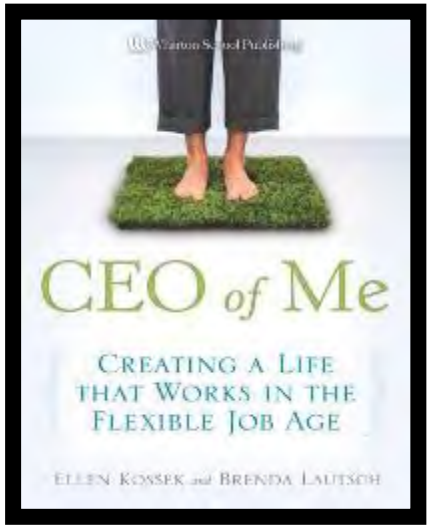


Time for self

Technological Dependence

Time for self

Center for Creative Leadership



Kossek, Ruderman, Brady, Hanum, 2012; Kossek & Lautsch, 2008 ; 2012; Kossek, 2016

Boundary Control

The degree that you feel in control over how manage boundaries between work life & personal life.

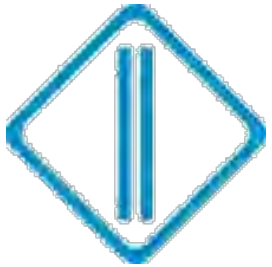
Role & Identity

Alignment

Overload Matters

High Boundary Control

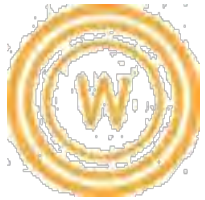
Moderate Boundary Control



Low Boundary Control

Identity

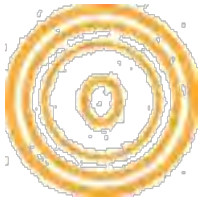
The degree that you **identify with & invest** yourself in **work/non-work roles**.



Work Focused

Family Focused

Dual Focused

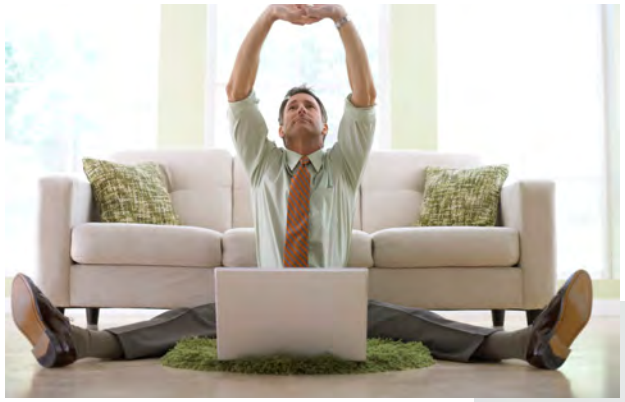


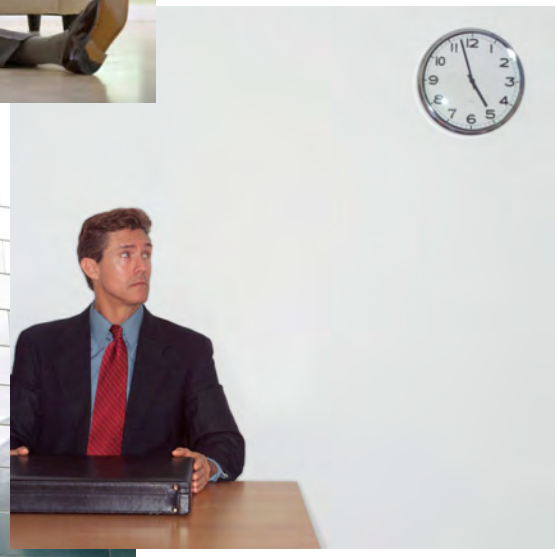
Other Focused

Interruption Behaviors

- **The degree to which you**
- **combine or**
- **separate**
- **tasks associated with work and those associated with your personal life.**

Types of Interruption Behavior Styles





Integrators

Separators

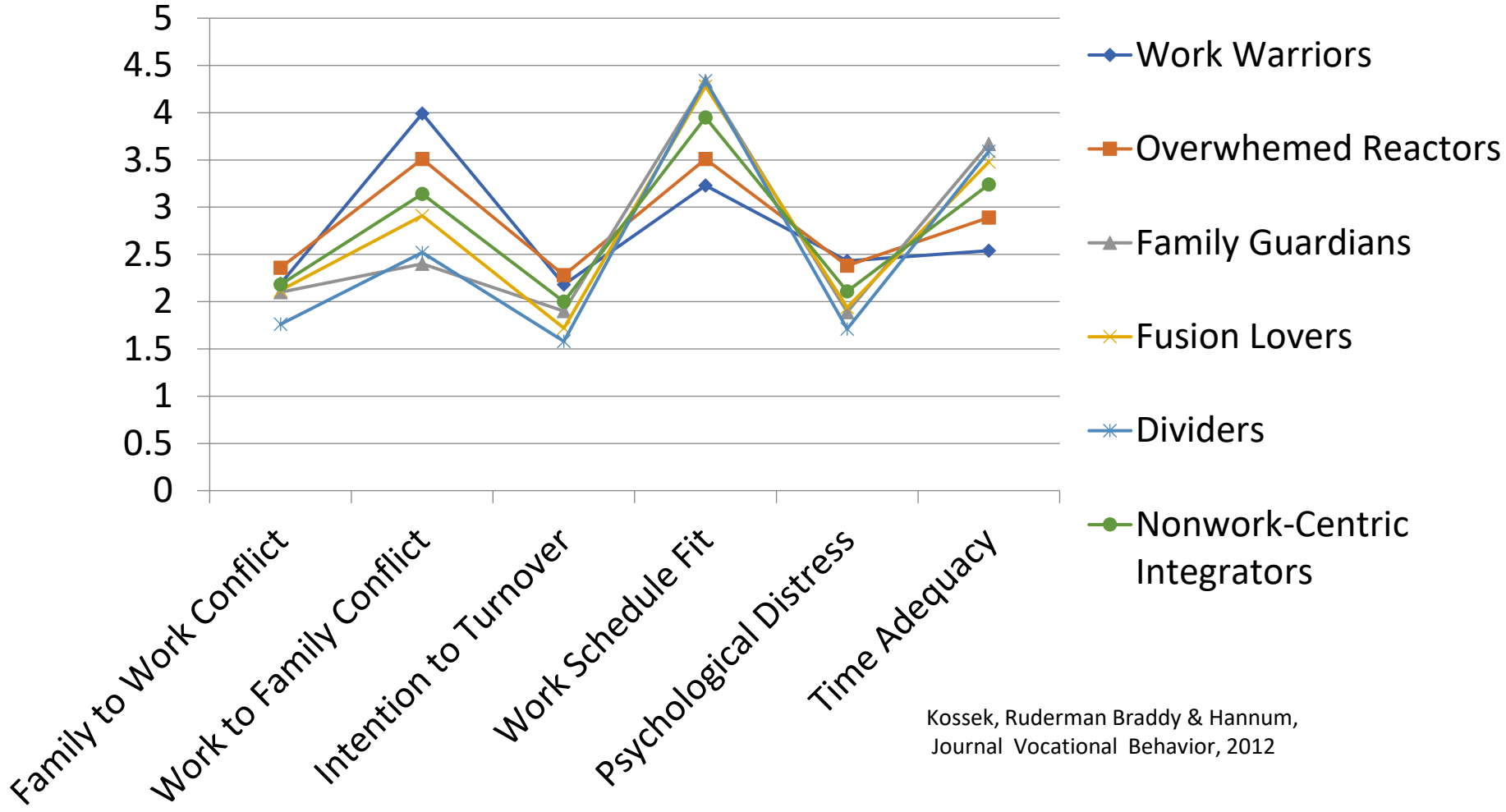
Work Firsters

Family Firsters

Cyclers

Source: Kossek, Ruderman, Brady, Hannum, JVB, 2012

Validation Study of Implications of Styles for Outcomes: Boundary Control & Role Overload Matter



Kossek, Ruderman Braddy & Hannum, Journal Vocational Behavior, 2012

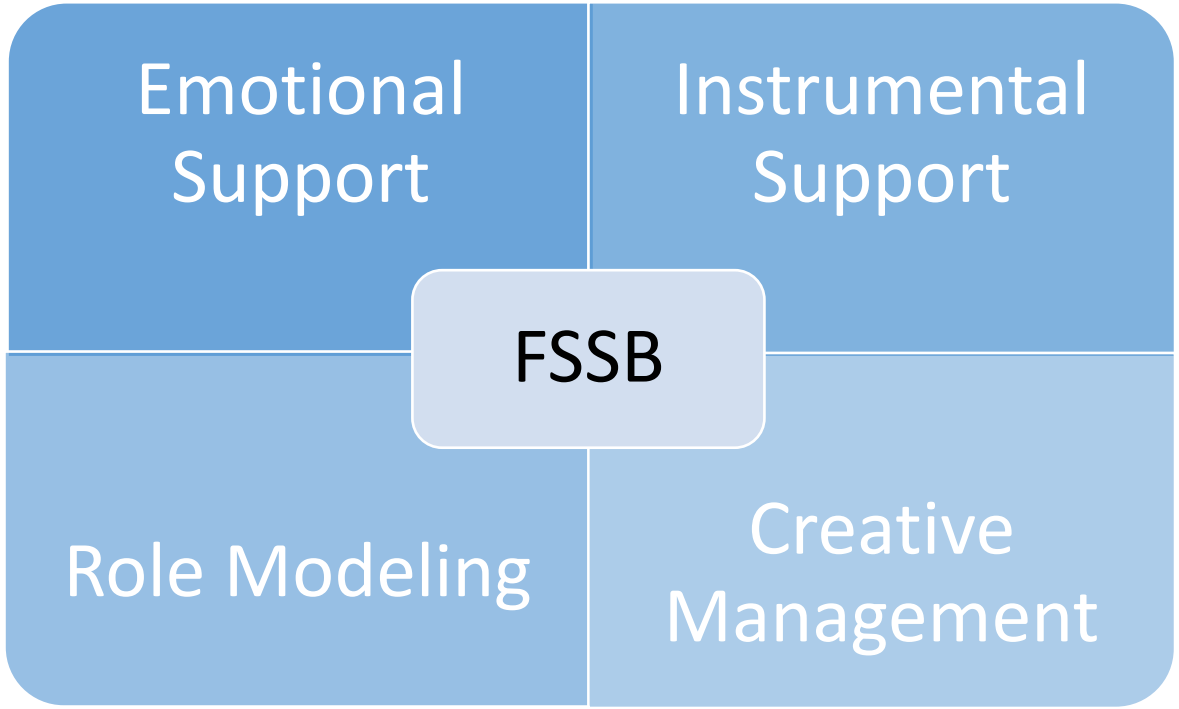
Boundary Control Tips

- Time Management: expectations & time buffers
- Transitions: Time triggers
- Boundary Control: avoid switching costs
- Physical boundaries: Designate a work area at home, separate twitter IDs or emails or cells.

Turn off smart phones on weekend with away message with emergency contact or let people know when you are back on line

Source: Kossek, 2016 Managing Work-Life Boundaries in the Digital age

Family & Work-Life Supportive Supervisor Behaviors- FSSB



Hammer, L. B., **Kossek**, E. E., Bodner, T., & Crain, T. 2013. Measurement development and validation of the family supportive supervision behavior short-form (FSSB-SF). *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology,* 18 (3), 285-296. Doi: 10.1037/a0032612

Family and Personal Life Supportive Supervisor Behaviors

Emotional Support for family

- Increase face to face contact; ask how employees are doing.
- Communicate genuine concern about work/life challenges.

Instrumental Support with scheduling conflicts

- Encourage employees to share schedule needs and constraints with supervisors and to learn new skills/jobs to increase their ability to fill different positions.

Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors

Work-Family Role Modeling

- Show how you are taking care of your own work/life challenges.
- Leave work at reasonable hours, demonstrating that you, too, have a non-work life.

Creative Work-Family Management/Think Strategically

- Communicate and be knowledgeable about work/life programs (e.g., EAP); flexible work policies.
- Think about department as a whole and relationships with other departments.

Findings
FSSB family (and personal life) supportive supervisor behaviors

- ***Higher job satisfaction (for those high in f->w conflict) (Hammer et al., 2011)***
- Lower intentions to **turnover** (for those high in f->w conflict) (Hammer et al., 2011)
- Higher self-reports of **physical health** (main effect) (Hammer et al., 2011)
- Improved **sleep** (Crain et al., in press; Olson et al., 2015)
- Increased **parental time with children** (Davis et al., 2015)
- Increased **children's sleep** time (McHale et al., 2015)
- Reduced **cigarette smoking** (Hurtado et al., 2016)

5 Days

10 MINUTES PER DAY

Behavior Tracking

Family and Personal Support

Performance Support

Face to Face Workshop Managerial Development: Creating a Culture of Support and Well-being

Module 4: Leadership & Work-Life Workshop

Practical Applications of Boundary Management & Supportive Behaviors

Welcome

- **Managing Yourself**
  - Boundary control
  - Tradeoffs of your style

- **Managing Others**
  - Identify your leadership style to increase boundary control and support your team
  - Debrief results of supportive behavior tracking & identify strengths and weaknesses

- **Managing Organizations & Adaptive Change**
  - Discuss practical applications for your team and Purdue

Results

- All hypotheses supported except for work engagement
- Training managers enhanced family engagement for employees with high schedule and boundary control (flexibility)
- Training managers reduced emotional exhaustions for employees in jobs with low boundary control

Discussion and Conclusions

- Training Managers can enhance work-life supportive contexts
- Front line workers with less access to flexibility can benefit from emotional exhaustion reduction
- Employees with more flexibility access engage in their families more
- Other interventions needed for work engagement

Moving toward Ideal work for all Agenda HOW TO…..

- Improve public policy to ensure worker access to as a basic right
- Design workplace to prevent not merely react to W-F Conflict
- Democratize and mainstream work-life flexibility (marginalized groups ,front line workers)
- Offer technical assistance to employers & employees to monitor fairness & legal issues
- Address new forms of family and work life demands
- How to not put everything on the manager
- How to make **sustainable**: Link to bus practice and societal gaps in family supports

Future Research
Gaps Between Research to Practice-
Why Supervisor Training Needed

- Implementation gap (Kossek, Baltes, Matthews, 2011)
- Flexible work arrangements use or availability to dif. job segments limited
  - Viewed as “accommodations”
  - Strong cultural norms to be full-time, full-tilt, all in, all the time
  - Fears of career penalties job loss→ lower use
- Ideal Workers Put Work First Socialized
- Can we Legitimize people having personal and family lives, while also being devoted, committed, and engaged workers?
  - Calls for interventions culture and structural change

Thank you!

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