

Recipe for the american dream

[Art & Culture](#), [American Dream](#)



Writing 100 October 28, 2009 Essay 2 Recipe for the American Dream Since the establishment of this country, Americans have set their eyes on success. The way we define success has changed along with technology. The American Dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement." [1] When repeating this phrase out loud one draws up images of fancy cars, big houses, quality clothes, etc.

What Adams fails to mention is that success requires work, furthermore success in terms of fancy cars, big houses and other luxuries require over 40 hours a week of work. The more time one spends at work, the less time one has to spend doing other things. Ellen Goodman's "The Company Man", is a prime example of why spending an excessive amount of time working is harmful to a human being. In providing a comfortable life for his family, the main character neglects to have a presence in his home. The pursuit of the American Dream calls for an unbalanced lifestyle, which alienates individuals from their families.

Very early on, Americans are taught to believe that the more one does, the more one receives in return. It is undeniable that this ideology stems from biblical teachings; "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6: 7) This ideology continues to get instilled in every aspect of the average American's life. The more studying a student does, the better grade the student receives. The more an athlete practices, the better athlete he'll become. It is not odd that adults keep this ingrained in their minds as they go into the workforce.

The more time and energy spent on the job, the more money and benefits an employee will receive. Money is an important ingredient in making the American Dream become a reality, and Americans experience constant reminders of the need to live the dream, through the media and peers. Living the Dream is not a crime in itself, but what gets sacrificed in the process may prove to be more valuable than most of the objects themselves.

Christopher Clausen helps readers to understand in “Against Work” that “the workaholic...neglects his family, withdraws from social life and loses interest in sex. (Clausen 673) Phil, the main character in Goodman’s, “The Company Man” works “himself to death, finally and precisely at 3: 00 am Sunday morning. ” (Goodman 629) Before his death, Phil “worked six days a week, five of them until eight or nine at night, during a time when his own company had begun the four-day week for everyone but the executives. He had no outside extracurricular interests” (Goodman 329), not even his life at home.

It is heartbreaking for someone to die leaving their offspring to go around “asking the neighbors what [their father] was like” the “day and a half before the funeral. (Goodman 630) Phil is so consumed by his job that his children never have the opportunity to connect with him and get to know him as a person, rather than simply their biological father. His wife admits to “missing him all these years” (Goodman 629), which shows his absence as her companion. Phil never grasps the concept of balance, which is understandable considering the Dream he makes a reality never puts

balance into the equation. “ Working to earn one’s bread is something few people can escape. Working out of moral vanity is sheer self-deception. [2]

It is true that the majority of people work because they are conscious of the fact that they will receive compensation for their time spent working. While it is imperative to earn enough to put food on the table and clothing on the backs of our loved ones, it is also imperative keep life outside of work in mind. Although working to obtain a “ comfortable” life, without having to live from paycheck to paycheck demands a lot of time from a weekly schedule, there are benefits to hard work besides earning more disposable income. Some would agree with Voltaire who states that “ Work spares us from three great evils: boredom, vice and need. [3]

Work will absolutely remedy boredom, and vice, but people will always have a need for something else. Work satisfies the need of money to provide food, clothing and shelter, but it disregards the need for love, care and affection. Many Americans struggle with finding a balance of work and family. It is far too often the case that individuals choose to pursue riches, while leaving every other aspect of their lives to suffer. It is ironic that Phil and many others like him work to provide the family with a “ better” life, according to American standards, while neglecting everything that makes a life meaningful.

A study of Workaholism states that “ spouses and children of workaholics report feeling lonely, unloved, isolated, and emotionally and physically abandoned. ”[4] This behavior is reflected in Phil’s wife and children. “ His second child...lives near her mother and they are close, but whenever she

was alone with her father, in a car driving somewhere, they had nothing to say to each other. ” (Goodman 630) Since Phil was absent so frequently, his own daughter feels no connection to him, even when he is present, it is as if she is riding along with a stranger.

Phil works his way near the top of his company, but has nothing to show for it. Yes, he earns a great deal of money, but look at what it costs him in the long run. “ He works like the important people” only to have the company president, on the afternoon of the funeral to begin, “ discreetly of course, with care and taste to make inquiries about his replacement. ” (Goodman 630) To the company, Phil, and others like him are disposable, like plastic spoons used to mix up the ingredients for turning the Dream into a reality.

His hard work at the job did not console his wife, nor did it establish a strong relationship with his children. Phil’s work ethic even steered the youngest of his children away from obtaining a “ serious” job. “ The youngest...has spent the last couple of years, like a lot his friends, doing enough odd jobs to stay in grass and food. He was the one who tried to grab at his father, and tried to mean enough to him to keep the man at home. ” (Goodman 630) The boy is traumatized by the way his father lived his life.

Work is what causes his father to withdraw from his family, and there is no doubt that the American Dream is what spearheads the separation. The need to ensure the family “ happiness” pushes Phil to working toward the top of his career, eventually causing the detachment. It is very easy to get wrapped up in wanting to procure certain material things for one’s family, especially living in America. It is understandable that an individual may want to acquire

the “ finer” things in life, but doing so should not take precedence over any other aspects of life, such as one’s family.

Once family alliances become solidified in the workaholic father's absence, spouses resent having their turfs violated when workaholics do try to become more actively involved in their families. Older children, too, often rebuff the workaholic's attempts to reconnect with the family because they feel the reentry is too little, too late, or both. “[5] Too much of one thing is never a good thing, there needs to be a balance in order achieve more in life. In attempting to take the ingredients for cooking up the American Dream, one needs to consider adding the spice of balance into the recipe, without it, the Dream is bittersweet.

Works Cited Sheet

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- Healthcare Training Institute. Study of Workaholism Part II: Spouses and Children of Workaholics <http://www.homestudycredit.com/courses/contentWK/secWK16.html> [5] Ibid