

# Balancing Your Band WITH Your Personal Life

Fran Kick

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Beginning in 2014, I started gathering “secret insider insight” at the TBA Spouses Luncheon. The idea was to ask real-world band director spouses what is the one question they’d love to ask their spouse, but never would? Their questions were profoundly impactful and very telling as to the communication gaps and behavioral differences between band directors and their spouses. I have subsequently followed up with TBA directors—along with other band directors from across the United States—capturing questions and video interviews. Utilizing an active research approach, a pattern emerged in both communication and behavior that either worked well or didn’t work.

## Did you *really* know what you were getting into?

On both sides of the relationship, there’s clearly a difference between spouses who *knew* what they were getting into vs. spouses who *did not know* what they were getting into. “I had no idea!” was what many spouses shared. Interestingly enough, there are many band directors who discovered early on in their career that they too had no idea what they were getting into. The time commitments, the pressure to always make things better, the one more spinning plate you add (without taking any plates away) starts to stress out young band directors early in their career.

One exceptionally talented band director (who’s still married to his first wife BTW) actually refused to be interviewed on video. His reason? “My suggestion for any young band director is to wait to get married until you figure this job out. Had I gotten married early on in my career, I’m sure my marriage would have ended in divorce. I was just too all-consumed with keeping up and was staying at school *all the time!* It probably would have ended badly.” I wonder if the early-career + early-marriage relationship challenge is another reason why we lose so many band directors?

## Burning out band directors or relationships?

Nationally, according to research by Dr. Richard Ingersoll, Professor of Education and Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education, “anywhere between 40 and 50 percent of teachers will leave the classroom within their first five years (that includes the nine and a half percent that leave before the end of their first year.)” What about future educators? Well, “40 percent of teachers who pursue undergraduate degrees in teaching never even enter the classroom at all.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ingersoll’s research included private school teachers and also excluded the three percent of teachers who left (perhaps on maternity leave) yet still returned to teach within the five-year period.

However, when sharing these numbers with music educators the response is usually “I bet it’s higher for band directors!”

Utilizing updated video interview footage from band directors and their spouses, hear some of the challenges and issues faced in balancing life, relationships, family, and career when you are married to a band director: <https://youtu.be/7UW1A-YoLGI> or simply scan the QR code below to watch this 7-minute video on your phone right now.



Want some ideas that have worked for these same band directors and their spouses in balancing their band director job with their personal life? Go to: <https://youtu.be/kytl164iryY> or scan the QR code below to watch this 15-minute video on your phone.



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During my clinic at the 2019 TBA convention, participating directors shared and prioritized tips and tactics to better balance being a band director WITH their personal life. Here are the top ten ideas they shared on how to balance both your personal relationships and your professional career as a band director:

1. We make time to participate in something that we are passionate about. (something other than band.)
2. If one of you is home later than the other after dinner and they have yet to eat, sit with them at the table as they have dinner—even though you may have eaten alone.
3. The work will always be there. Set your hours and prioritize the most immediate tasks and then GO HOME!
4. Take time to travel to a “bucket list” place as often as you can.
5. Go to church together.
6. Maximize your time at work so that you can be as present as possible once you are home.
7. Schedule date nights and then watch a Netflix TV series together. (You can't move on without the other person!)
8. We work together, so our rule is to leave school most days by 5:30 PM and not work until our son is in bed.
9. Having a date night each week with your spouse is really important!
10. Ask them every day what's been going on in their life today, then LISTEN!

### Taking Time vs. Making Time

In addition to these top ten tips, there were many specific “date night” ideas shared! BRAVO! Remember everyone gets the same amount of time every day, every week, every month, every year. Rather than thinking about “taking time” for your personal life, be sure you are “making time” to reinforce the relationships you have with the important people in your personal life. The only other most-often, repeatedly-reoccurring, idea shared was “shutting down” your electronic devices. (i.e. Turn off the technology and stop phubbing your partner!)

*The term phubbing is a portmanteau of the words ‘phone’ and ‘snubbing’ and describes the act of snubbing someone in a social setting by paying attention to one’s phone instead of talking to the person directly in one’s company.<sup>2</sup>*

Perhaps you know someone who might benefit from Tripp and Tyler’s patent-pending *Present Spray*: <https://youtu.be/eHmi0bre2nQ>.

Belinda Luscombe, author of *Marriageology*, believes this might actually be one of the earliest signs that a relationship is struggling. Are you looking at your phone when the other person starts talking?<sup>3</sup> When you do that, whether you intend to or not, the message you are sending is: “You are less important than my phone.” YIKES! Perhaps we all need to keep in mind an important lesson we strive to teach our band students: Pay attention, respond appropriately, and get more involved in what’s going on—balancing your band WITH your personal life.

#### REFERENCES:

1 Riggs, L., (2013, October 13). Why do teachers quit? And why do they stay? <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/why-do-teachers-quit/280699/>

2 Yeslam Al Saggaf and Sarah B. O'Donnell, Phubbing: Perceptions, reasons behind, predictors, and impacts. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 1, 2, (132-140), (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12506>

3 *Marriageology: The Art and Science of Staying Together* by Belinda Luscombe. ISBN 978-0-399-59236-2

*Fran Kick is an author, educational consultant, and professional speaker who just celebrated 30 years of marriage with his first wife Judy. He is the creator and presenter of KICK IT IN® a series of self-motivational personal leadership presentations and published materials. Since taking an educational leave of absence from teaching band at Centerville High School (Ohio), he has developed his part-time speaking adventure into a full-time year-round mission. Today Fran presents programs across the U.S. and Canada to thousands of college/university, high school, junior high/middle school students, plus the many people who work with them. He has his B.A. in Music Education and a M.A. in Educational Psychology. Fran's involvement with TBA has been graciously sponsored in part by both Drum Corps International and Music for All. You can find more information about Fran Kick at <http://www.kickitin.com>.*

*FYI: For an earlier article written by Fran Kick with strategies on “Balancing Your Band and Your Life” be sure to check out the September 2014 Issue of Bandmasters Review. [http://apps.texasbandmasters.org/publications/bmr/2013\\_september/](http://apps.texasbandmasters.org/publications/bmr/2013_september/)*