

Scenario One

Colleen, an account manager for a Big Four accounting firm, loved her job. However, the frequent travel was beginning to wear her down. She had a five-year-old daughter, Lillith, and a husband who often traveled for work as well. The task of balancing their schedules and child care for her daughter was overwhelming for her at times. However, this week, she thought she had everything under control. She had just returned from an important trip and was planning to take a few days off. She had promised Lillith that they would spend time together and that she would attend her preschool “graduation.” They were both looking forward to it.

As Colleen prepared to leave for her vacation, her boss, Ricardo, stopped by her office to tell her that she would have to cancel her vacation to cover for a sick colleague. She would need to leave the next afternoon for a trip out of state.

Colleen considered Ricardo a friend as well as her manager, so she was sure he would understand when she explained why she could not leave the next day.

Surely he would understand that she had an important event planned with Lillith—but he didn’t! Ricardo explained that he needed her. Her colleagues routinely covered for each other, including her, when it was needed. Besides, no one else was available this time. It was in times like these that people showed their commitment to the company. Colleen tried to persuade him to see her point of view. However, Ricardo simply reminded her that the partners were meeting in a few weeks to allocate bonuses and decide upon promotions.

Colleen assured him that she was a committed employee but was also a committed parent. Couldn’t she be both? Why did she have to choose between the two? Ricardo said he really did understand but sometimes people have to make hard choices. He said he was sure Colleen would make the right one. The only problem for Colleen was that she didn’t know what the right choice was.