

How do you Achieve a Better Life-Work Balance?

Do you ever feel like we are being asked to do more with less, to be more involved with our families, to be more engaged at work, to be better parents, colleagues, partners, carers, friends and participants in our communities?

It's true each of these things add value to our lives, our sense of purpose and a sense of reward. But we also know how hard it is for most of us to achieve balance across all areas of our personal and work lives. We also know that the elusive work-life balance that we struggle to find, is of vital importance to our health and for the productivity of the organisations we work for.

Work stress arises when the demands of work exceed the resources we have in managing those demands. Work is usually going to have a level of stress associated with it and it is normal for this level of stress to fluctuate, but when the level of stress becomes persistent or difficult to manage, it can cause significant challenges for physical and mental health (Australian Psychological Society, 2015).

As work stress increases, it often impacts on time available for leisure and other obligations, which can develop into other sources of increased strain and stress.

After the 2020 pandemic, for many people, work and home life become more intertwined. This has made it more difficult to switch off from work life when we're in the home - and vice versa.

Despite these changes for some of us, the way to achieve balance may be to plan, effectively time manage, and set boundaries around what is achievable in a day - understanding also that some days do not always go to plan.

It is important to go easy on yourself when your plans, strategies and methods go wrong. If we see all of our efforts as not trying hard enough then it is likely that there will be no positive change around this issue.

“Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls - family, health, friends, and integrity - are made of glass. If you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered.”

Gary Keller

*Founder of Keller Williams Realty International,
the world's largest real estate company by agent count.*

WAYS TO ACHIEVE A BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Focus when you are at work: When you are working (whether you are in the office or at home), make sure those moments count. Reduce the distractions around you as much as possible so that the hours at work are not leading to talking/texting loved ones, daydreaming, TV watching, internet browsing (Facebook, eBay, Instagram etc.) because chances are you will end up drastically reducing your productivity and increasing your overtime.

Think about when you are at your most productive. Is it first thing in the morning, after lunch, or just before you leave for the day? Notice patterns and be honest about what could be done better in the actual work hours of the day. If you work better in the morning, check with your employer if you can start work an hour earlier and therefore finish an hour earlier. This will enable you to enjoy more of your evening with friends or family while also increasing your productivity.



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SWITCH OFF WHEN YOU GET HOME

Take off your work clothes as soon as you get home - it helps to create an emotional and physical action to the end of the day. If you can separate yourself from work equipment, like phones and laptops, then this will also aid your 'down-time'.

Obviously, this becomes a little bit more complicated if you work from home. Here, you need to create separation from home and work in more creative ways:

- Try to still put on work clothes in the morning and take them off in the evening
- Create a work space in the home and use it exclusively for work and not for play
- On the flip-side avoid working in your relaxation areas (beds, sofas etc)
- Simulate a lunch break by taking a walk, going for a run, or taking the dog out
- Try to work to your contracted hours - you still need time to switch off at the end of the day even if you're always at home.

MAKE HOME MOMENTS COUNT AS LEISURE

Listen to music when cooking, chat to family about their day. If a stressful thought of work creeps in, be kind to yourself and allow yourself to make a plan so you can then focus on home again. If you are someone who can keep a list — write whatever it is that is worrying you down. Mentally say to yourself, "I am going to think about this tomorrow when I have enjoyed some relaxation".

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

It's important to plan our day - think about what it is we are trying to achieve and how to get there. However, can you think about a day that went to plan exactly as you thought it would? Sometimes the most unplanned days are the funniest, most productive and rewarding. Remember, this is more about accepting that life is unpredictable sometimes, but that is

what makes it interesting and it's not always a bad thing! So, check yourself if you are worried about the unexpected - it's okay for things not to go to plan.

ACCEPT UNPREDICTABILITY AND LACK OF CONTROL

Adapting to unexpected challenges is a skill we can learn and may help keep our anxiety at a healthy level.

NEGOTIATE

If you can't do something, say so, and work with them to reprioritise or find another way. If it is something that you can either pass onto someone, apologise about your availability/demands or if it is out of your speciality — perhaps learn a way to say "I can't do that today".

GET SUPPORT ON MANAGING YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Are you finding it difficult to balance life and work? Is stress getting in the way of your success at work? Your workplace provides you with access to support from Converge Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Our counsellors are here to give you support and advice across:

- Sleep and fatigue
- Money management advice
- Nutrition advice
- Health coaching
- Managing heavy workloads
- Mental health issues
- Motivation and self esteem, and more

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