

The Wellness News

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Work-Life Balance

Balancing work with everyday life is an important skill to learn. It can prevent overwhelming feelings of stress and isolation, as well as promote overall mental and physical wellbeing. However, the numerous ways technology keeps us connected to work, along with current pressures stemming from a struggling economy make maintaining a work-life balance more challenging than ever. Here are some ideas for keeping a healthy balance in your life:

Prioritize: Make a list of the activities, people, and goals that are most important to you. Your list might include things such as having a satisfying career, spending time with your children, or going on regular bike rides. Avoid listing things only because you think they *should* be important to you. Next, make a list of the current activities you devote your time to. Does your second list reflect your first list? Where can you make changes so that it does?

Log your time: Keep a log of the activities you participate in each day along with the duration of each activity. Include both work and non-work related activities. After a few days, take a look at your log. Are you spending enough time on the things that you find rewarding? Make adjustments by cutting out or reducing time spent on unnecessary activities.

Stay in the moment: It is easy to allow stress from your job to leak into time at home, or to let domestic issues distract you from your work. Make an effort to stay in the moment and focus on one activity at a time. If you cannot focus on your current activity, try taking five minutes to write down exactly what is on your mind and what you plan to do about it when it is time for that activity. Then do your best to leave those thoughts on paper and return to the task at hand.

Schedule and protect recreation time: Set aside a certain amount of time each week to focus on activities or relationships that you enjoy. Include the time in your schedule as if it is a doctor's appointment that you cannot break. If one whole day or evening of recreation time seems overwhelming, try starting with simply one hour a few days a week. Your recreation time will allow you to relax and revitalize so that you can better handle stressful situations in the future.

If time management is a concern, try setting reminders on your computer for mandatory deadlines or events. Include both work and non work related appointments. The reminders will help you to focus on and keep track of your goals!

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Learn to say no: As tempting as it is to try to fit in every work opportunity or social engagement that comes your way, it is important to evaluate how each commitment will affect your time and productivity. Pick and choose activities that help you to work toward your overall goals and priorities without costing you too much time or stress.

Nurture your relationships: Whether you create a regular movie night with friends, take a walk after dinner with your significant other, or invite coworkers out to lunch, establishing and maintaining relationships is a great way to make sure you are balancing your social life with work. Not only will you create a great support system and stress outlet, you will have resources for when you start to feel overwhelmed.

Ask for help: Trying to fit everything in on your own can sometimes be a struggle. If you are starting to feel overwhelmed, don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Brainstorm time management strategies at work with your boss, recruit a friend to trade off watching the kids while you take turns running errands, or ask a coworker for feedback on a tough project.

Make sleep a priority: No matter how much you have on your plate, sleep should be an essential part of your schedule. It makes you more productive throughout the hours that you are awake and prevents you from making mistakes that may cost you even more time when you end up needing to fix them. Aim for somewhere between 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Make sure to allow yourself at least an hour to wind down before bed. Quality of sleep is important too!

Already stressed? Here are some quick stress busters:

- Take a brisk 5-10 minute walk to clear your head.
- Place your hands on your abdomen. Concentrate on taking deep breaths. Focus on feeling your belly rise and fall. Repeat for 1-10 minutes.
- Starting with your calves, slowly squeeze each muscle in your body, just enough to make the muscle tense. Hold for 10-15 seconds. As you release, notice the sensation of the muscle relaxing.



Call Your Health Coach for More Information 1-800-433-2320

Sources: WebMD, Mayo Clinic, Forbes

