

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is a state of well-being that a person can reach or can set as a goal in order to allow them to effectively manage multiple responsibilities at work, at home and in their community. Work-life balance is different for everyone and it supports physical, emotional, family and community health and does so without grief, stress or negative impact.

The pursuit of work-life balance reduces the stress you experience. When you spend the majority of your days on work-related activities and feel as if you are neglecting the other important components of your life, stress and unhappiness result. Work-life balance enables you to feel as if you are paying attention to all the important aspects of your life.

What's at Stake?

Consider the consequences of poor work-life balance:

Fatigue: When you're tired, your ability to work productively and think clearly might suffer - which could take a toll on your professional reputation or lead to dangerous or costly mistakes.

Lost time with friends and loved ones: If you're working too much, you might miss important family events or milestones. This can leave you feeling left out and might harm relationships with your loved ones. It's also difficult to nurture friendships if you're always working.

Strike a better work-life balance

As long as you're working, juggling the demands of career and personal life will probably be an ongoing challenge. Consider these ideas to find the work-life balance that's best for you:

Explicitly acknowledge priorities: Start by listing your priorities in life. If factors like "health", "happiness" or "family" rank below professional goals, your long-term priorities are not stable.

Leave work at work: Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time. When you're with your family, for instance, turn that time into quality time by turning off your phone and being present.

Avoid perfectionism: It is good to use perfection as a guide, but recognize that it is unattainable. If you set your standards higher than you can obtain, you will never feel like anything is complete.

Set and enforce boundaries: Maintaining work-life balance require setting boundaries. If you must, schedule recurring "life" time into your calendar, and set reminders/alarms.

Avoid over-commitment: It takes a few minutes to entangle yourself in commitments that can take years to unwind. Learn when and how to say "no." If you find yourself over-committed, start delegating, canceling, and refusing.

Communicate: In a family or a relationship, every member needs to know the stress level and work load of every other member. A shared calendar system helps with implicit communication of stress level. It is also important to maintain *explicit*, dispassionate communication of stress level: if you're stressed or becoming stressed, warn your family.

Keep hobbies: Even if you love your work, it is important to have hobbies outside of work. Hobbies are a way of letting stress go before it explodes.

Exploit opportunity cost: Decide on a list of essential personal tasks. For every task, ask whether it is worth *your* time to do it, given how else you could spend that time. For the remaining unwanted tasks, consider hiring someone to do them.

Continuously adapt: Recognize that achieving work-life balance is a never-ending process.

Know when to seek professional help

Everyone needs help from time to time. If your life feels too chaotic to manage and you're spinning your wheels worrying about it, talk with a professional - such as a counselor or other mental health provider. Utilize the employee family assistance program.

Creating work-life balance is a continuous process as your family, interests and work life change. Periodically examine your priorities - and make changes, if necessary - to make sure you're keeping on track.

source: Sunrise Health Region, Work-Life Balance Safety Talk, April 15, 2013

Safety Talk Discussion

Be Accountable: Choose safety - work safe - and go home injury free!