

Work Life Balance

Tips for Action



Overview

While everyone has their own idea about Work-Life Balance might look like, one thing is for certain - we all have a limited amount of time and energy to accomplish the important responsibilities and goals in our lives.

Balance involves giving appropriate amounts of focus, energy and time to the important aspects of our life and often this needs to be flexible in order to deal with life's natural challenges.

Sometimes we need to work a bit harder, and sometimes rest a bit harder. But balance is not all about how much time we spend at work or home, it's about the quality of activities we engage in and their overall return to us in terms of energy, satisfaction and wellbeing.



Definitions

- 'A *state* where you have a sense of **control and satisfaction** over how you work and live, in order to have **enough time and good energy to achieve the goals and activities that are important to you**, while at the same time sustaining your **health, relationships and beliefs** (whether it happens unintentionally, or you have to 'work at' balance with effort, negotiation, support and applied strategies)'.
- A good work-life balance means you have harmony between the different aspects of your life. The benefits gained from each area are able to support and strengthen the others. Many people are learning to blend their work and personal lives successfully (work-life integration). (Health Direct GOV).
- Living a meaningful life that acknowledge the whole person and meets crucial human needs.

Personal Benefits

- Health and wellbeing
- Reduces Stress and prevents Burnout
- Enables perspective, meaning, connection
- Social support
- Fun and enjoyment
- Learning and development
- Self-esteem - confidence

Professional Benefits

- Better perspective
- Increased sense of control
- Increased productivity, creativity, capacity
- Tolerance and interpersonal effectiveness
- Morale, satisfaction and motivation
- Retention of talent
- Reduces turnover and recruitment costs

Signs of Imbalance

- Loss of energy, motivation, flexibility
- Stress, frustration, worry
- Loss of empathy and patience
- Pessimistic outlook or negative attitude
- Not getting enough, sleep, exercise or rest
- Change in performance
- Difficulty managing work, people and life
- Withdrawal or getting overly involved

Barriers to Balance

- Unaware of imbalance or our needs
- Forgetting the high priority of YOU!
- Motivation and energy
- Time and unexpected events
- Competing priorities
- Negative or unhelpful thinking

Self-Limiting Beliefs

- Too busy or too many responsibilities
- Too tired or 'stressed'
- It won't work
- No one else is doing it, the boss isn't!
- I tried once but it didn't work
- My job will be at risk; they'll think I'm lazy

Getting Balanced

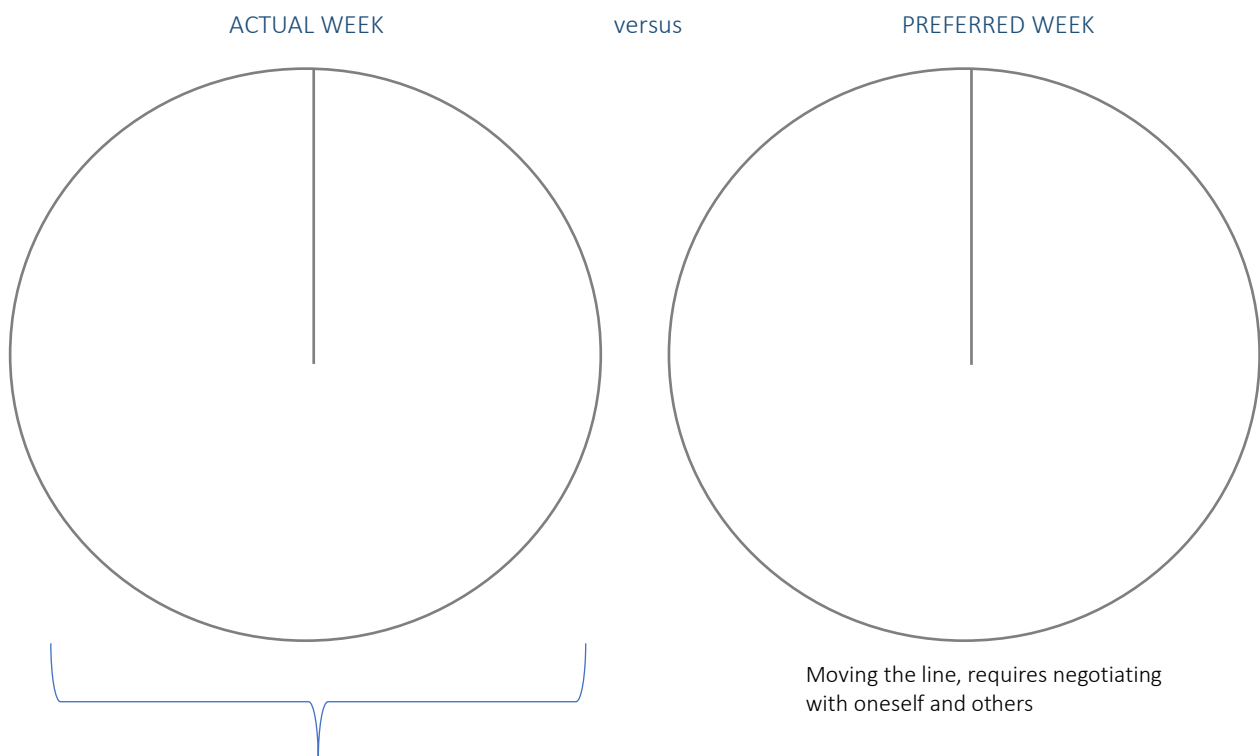
- Make balance a priority and commit to it - make it a change that you want!
- Make time to reflect on your life and balance needs
- Make note of where your energy is going (actual balance) and decide on how you would like your life to be (ideal balance)
- Make plans to achieve balance by setting reasonable goals and removing obstacles
- Start small by adding enjoyable activities back into your day or week and reward yourself for gains made
- Stay focused and motivated by getting others involved in your attempts to balance and by making dates, reminders and other changes to your routine that support your plans.

RESEARCH:

- Many people are 'time poor', constantly rushing to juggle different commitments.
- Australians work hard — with more than 1 in 10 employees working more than 50 hours per week, which is considered 'very long hours' by the OECD.
- 35% of Australian men and 42% of Australian women state that they were always or often rushed or pressed for time (ABS 2017).
- On average, Australians have 16 days of unused leave.

WHERE DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME AND ENERGY?

If you're too busy to go fishin, you're too busy! (Jed Clampett)



Critical Activities for Work Life Balance

1. **Work** time (work has many benefits)
2. **Home** responsibilities (managing households)
3. **Social** time (connecting, belonging)
4. **Exercise/Physical** activity time
5. **Recreation** time (hobbies, relaxation, fun)
6. **Personal** time (learning, spirituality, identity)
7. **Sleep**

Balance requires Self-Management

- Self-awareness (what's needed)
- Goal setting (what needs to be different)
- Time management (managing the load)
- Assertiveness, asking for help and saying 'no'
- Problem solving (removing the obstacles)
- Stress management (managing pressure)
- Checking on options for flexible work

KEY TIPS

- Identify priority activities you need in your life
- Re-evaluate your (realistic) expectations
- Create a buffer zone (we often do too much)
- Prioritise energy enhancing activities
- Small shifts in time boundaries or the type of activities you do can return bigger gains
- Practice new habits and boundaries
- Create a transition between work and home

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Disciplined start and stop times and boundaries
- Switching off (self, notifications and devices)
- Rituals to move between work to home mode
- Add one or two energy enhancing activities in
- Say 'no' or take some things out of your week
- Clarify role expectations with the workplace
- Develop a culture of balance and role-model it
- Revise your goals in line with your actual time

More Tips for Work Life Balance

Tips for Work (paid, voluntary, home duties, study)

- Know your role and responsibilities - expectations
- Accept your limits (time, energy, skills) as a natural part of working life
- Take proper breaks to relax or energise
- Manage your workload by prioritising, and when appropriate, by seeking assistance or delegating
- Slow down – your inbox will never be empty
- Talk to your colleagues - shared problem solving brings other options and support
- Seek good advice and ‘perspective’ by asking helpful questions such as - 'what is the best step to take here?'
- Learn to say no to things that are not 'essential'
- Cultivate a sense of humour, creativity and fun at work (and use appropriately – Politically correct)
- Think ahead and set achievable goals
- Maintain your interest and curiosity in your work and others; stay fresh by looking towards what could be learnt or done differently
- Focus on the positive aspects of your work & personal life. Record and remember these often.
- Learn to accept what you cannot change; take positive steps to change what you can.

Personal Development (identity, self-esteem, learning)

- Make time for yourself to reflect on your achievements, strengths, goals etc
- Take up a new hobby or interest
- Try a short course at Uni or TAFE
- Talk about people, the world and your thoughts on life
- Listen to what others have to say

Tips for your Spiritual Side

- Take time to clarify and discuss your values, beliefs and the meaning of life!
- Discover more of you: try new/different things; try meditation, church, interest groups, adventures, etc
- Make efforts to see and develop your personal 'bigger picture' of life. Connect to what “fills you up”.

Heart & Mind

- Accept that you will experience a full range of emotion and learn how to express this appropriately
- Get to know your personal signs of stress
- Prevent stress from creeping up - develop a personal daily/weekly plan/habit to manage stress.
- Learn how to use breathing and other techniques to relax (bath, massage, read, music, hobbies)
- Control negative thinking (worry) by rationally reviewing each situation. Ask yourself, ‘what would I be telling a friend in this situation to help them?’
- Take one situation at a time – sit down and problem solve the best approach and plan positive and assertive approaches to interpersonal stressors
- Be reasonable: Practice what you preach; Take good advice; Check if your attitude is helping or hindering you: Look at the glass half full versus half empty
- Nurture positivity; read positive literature, share something positive, watch positive movies

Tips for Physical Well-being

- Regular activity & exercise (walk; swim; ride; sports) improve general and heart health, increases energy and concentration
- A healthy, balanced diet provides excellent stress buffering.
- Reduce your intake of caffeine; nicotine; alcohol; drugs
- See your GP, dietician, exercise physiologist, etc

Tips for Relaxation - (leisure, rest)

- Make a list of pleasant activities and do more of them - eg movies, reading, music, massage, time with pets
- Make time for rest and ensure a healthy sleep pattern
- Try to reduce intensity - don't book yourself full

Tips for your Social Self

- Spend time with children, family, friends and people you like and get involved with social activities regularly
- Add more fun and play to your life - games and parties
- Build a support network in your friends and family for talking and sharing regularly- reduce isolation

MORE Resources at: <https://yespsychology.com.au/services/resources/>