



Most of us juggle multiple roles and responsibilities every day, and the boundaries between work and life aren't often clear. Business happens around the clock. Smart technologies have enabled working professionals across the globe to stay in touch and be responsive in real time to meet the needs of their customers. In fact, a recent article in the Huffington Post indicated that the average person checks their smart phone 221 times a day. Business processes are more efficient and transparent than ever before.

If we are working smarter and faster, why is it that so many employees report feeling less in control of their time, completely overwhelmed, and out of balance? Nigel Marsh, in his 2010 TED Talk on how to make worklife balance work, explains that today's organizations are inherently designed to get as much out of their employees as they can. Marsh cautions against putting your quality of life in the hands of your employer. "Design your own life and set and enforce your own boundaries," says Marsh.

STRATEGIES FOR BALANCE

Robert Brooks, author of *The Power of Resilience: Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in your Life*, offers the following suggestions for feeling more balanced and bringing greater joy to your life.

- **Focus your time and energy on the things you can control.** Let go of the things you can't.
- **Build downtime into your schedule.** Start small. Add 15 minutes a day to do something that energizes you and you enjoy. Play with your children or pets, take a hot shower or bath, read, exercise, or visit with a beloved friend or family member. Make downtime an important part of your daily routine and schedule it like you would a business meeting.
- **Minimize activities that deplete you of your energy.** Rethink errands and household chores, which are identified by many as energy zappers. Outsource them if you can. Hire a cleaning service or order your groceries online. Barter with a friend or family member for help. Find ways to make energy zappers fun. Build in incentives to reward yourself. Use these strategies to make routine activities more manageable.
- **Get moving!** Physical activity has many positive advantages. A short, brisk walk every day has immediate and long term benefits, both physically and psychologically.
- **Set realistic goals.** Avoid taking on more than you can handle and don't be afraid to ask for help.
- **Take care of yourself physically, psychologically, and spiritually.** This is especially important if you are a caregiver at home or serving others through your work. Get plenty of sleep, eat nutritionally balanced foods, exercise regularly, and maintain healthy relationships. Put your self-care first!

REVALUATE WHERE YOU "PLUG IN" YOUR ENERGY

Technology has changed the way that we live and work in many positive ways. However, the excessive use of technology and being "plugged in" all the time can have negative consequences as well. According to recent research published in the *Harvard Business Review* (2014), being "plugged in" all the time can hamper initiative, erode performance, and inhibit creativity. The authors stress the importance of managing your own human capital in an effort to better balance the demands of work and family. Consider the following suggestions.

- Define success for yourself.
- Manage technology and unplug on a regular basis.
- Build support networks at home and at work. The research found that rewarding relationships have the most significant impact on personal success in the workplace for both men and women.
- Collaborate with your partner and engage your family and loved ones in work activities and decisions when appropriate.

There is no magic formula for achieving work-life balance! It's a puzzle with many complicated and moving pieces. You know yourself best. Pay attention to your body. Aches, pains, and illness may be indicators of stress. Monitor your self-talk for negative or self-defeating thought patterns. Find ways to manage and express your emotions. Regular journaling can help you to become more aware of how your thoughts, behaviors, and emotions influence your ability to balance multiple demands.

Know when you are at risk and what triggers an imbalance. Unexpected or unrealistic demands, losses, and financial or health crises often top the list. Reach out for help when you need it. Commit to healthy habits now so that when faced with an imbalance, you have strategies, tools, and resources to help you recalibrate. Schedule an appointment with a career coach to learn more about work-life balance and to build skills and competencies to help you better balance your career and personal life.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Families and Work Institute](#)

[The Center for Work and Family at Boston College](#)

The Mayo Clinic

National Institutes of Mental Health

The Daily Muse

The New Careerist

Nigel Marsh, TEDxSydney (2010), *How to Make Work-Life Balance Work*

Robert Brooks, Ph.D. and Sam Goldstein, Ph.D. (2004) *The Power of Resilience: Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in Your Life*

Boris Groysberg and Robin Abrahams (2014) *Managing Your Work, Managing Your Life. Harvard Business Review* The Huffington Post