

Work Life Balance

Finding that balance between work, family, friends and fun can be difficult. In fact, there are days when it seems it is not even possible! In order to find balance, it is necessary to understand what balance is... and what it is not!

Balance

Balance can only be achieved when we understand what we are looking for. Work life balance is not where every part of your life has equal amounts of dedicated time – this would be absolutely impossible, as work and sleep take up 2/3 of the day (ideally)! We are looking for choices about how we spend our time that bring us to a state of calmness and well-being.

Finding balance is choosing activities and attitudes that bring us more energy than we expend. It is unique to each person. It starts with understanding who we are and what we value.

Understanding You and Your Values

- **What do you value in life?**
 - interacting with people
 - new challenges
 - quiet reflection
 - partner
 - friends

- **What do you like to do?**
 - exercise
 - entertain
 - try new activities
 - create

- **What will it take to do the things you enjoy?**
 - scheduling specific time
 - letting go of certain self expectations
 - e.g., the house dusted and vacuumed every day

Putting Yourself First

The way to start defining balance in your life is to put yourself first: making your health – physical, emotional and spiritual – the primary goal. How you do this is specific to each person, but it starts with self care.

Self Care

- **Adequate Sleep**
 - we all need at least 7½ hours of restorative sleep a night
 - short-changing your sleep will catch up with you
- **Nutrition**
 - healthy food choices and portion sizes
 - eating breakfast every day
 - snacks should be protein – carbohydrate combinations
- **Physical Activity**
 - strive for ½ hour a day
 - make it fun
 - get outside if you can
- **Honesty**
 - know your limits
 - be honest with yourself

Choose a Balanced Life

Make a decision to live in a way that brings you mental steadiness and emotional well-being. Look for strategies to manage stress, so the stress does not manage you. Model a balanced life for others, and encourage others to seek balance in their lives.

- **Do one good thing for yourself every day**
 - It may be small, but do something
- **Learn to say “no”**
 - You do not need to justify your decision
- **Start a gratitude journal**
 - Staying focussed on the positive reinforces balance
- **Seek help when you need it**
 - We all need help dealing with things at times; it may be time, it may be someone to talk to
- **Ease yourself out of toxic relationships**
 - Relationships are meant to build us up, not drain us

Reflective Exercise

Write down a list of activities you enjoy that renew your spirit and bring you peace.

How did you do?

- **10 or more activities**
 - Congratulations! You have a good foundation for a balanced life!

- **Less than 10 activities**
 - Perhaps you may want to examine those things that take time but do not make you happy.

Remember, balance takes practice, effort, and needs to be fluid, allowing for unforeseen circumstances and the occasional impulsive get together with friends!

Reference

Henrikson, M. (2009). Work-life balance: is there such a thing? In *Nursing for Women's Health*, 13(2): 151-154.