

Finding a Balance Between Work and Family

With the number of dual-income families continuing to increase, parents take on multiple roles and responsibilities and must find ways to balance work, family and leisure time.

If you feel as if you are being pulled in too many directions at once, or if there never seems to be enough time to accomplish everything on your “to-do” list, you may need to assess your work-life balance. Although juggling all of your responsibilities can seem like a daunting task, a balance can be achieved with a few simple changes.

What is work-life balance?

Individuals who have achieved work-life balance have learned to combine work and personal commitments in a healthy and manageable way. Even if you love your career and usually experience great enjoyment in your work, this enjoyment should not come at the expense of family or leisure time.

We often find that the demands of work and family are pulling us in opposite directions. Caregiving duties and other family issues may require us to spend more time at home, while an important presentation may require long hours at the office. Finding a way to manage these multiple roles can lead to a happier and more productive life.

Balancing Tips

The following suggestions can help you to better balance work and family life:

- **Build a support network:** If providing care for an elderly or sick friend or relative, enlist the help of friends, neighbors and relatives whenever possible. This extra help can give you a much-needed break.
- **Delegate tasks:** Do not be afraid to ask for help or to delegate responsibilities, both at work and at home. Children can be given age-appropriate jobs around the house, such as cleaning their rooms or taking care of pets.
- **Set priorities and limits:** Consider what is important to you and what you value most in life. Once you identify your priorities, it will be easier for you to make decisions about how to best allocate your time. Focus on the big picture instead of on the small details, and keep in mind that you may still need to make sacrifices along the way.
- **Stay flexible:** When juggling different roles and commitments, plans can change very quickly. Staying flexible and keeping a sense of humor can ease the stress associated with changing demands.

- **Discuss alternate work options:** Many companies are realizing the value of work-life balance and have created flexible work arrangements. Discuss your situation with your supervisor, and talk about the options that are available to you.
- **Develop family traditions:** The quality of the time that you spend with your family can be more important than the quantity. Create rituals for mealtime, bedtime and weekends to help create lasting memories and connections.
- **Use technology to your advantage:** Just because you are sitting in a waiting room does not mean you cannot be productive. There are numerous devices available that can help you stay connected, even if you need to step away from the office.
- **Learn how to say no:** There will be times when one more activity or assignment will be too much for you to handle. Learning how to say "no" without feeling guilty is important for these situations.
- **Appreciate your efforts:** Balancing roles is work in and of itself – work that should be rewarded. Take some time to acknowledge everything that you do. It is important to reward yourself occasionally and to give yourself some "downtime."
- **Find an outlet for your enjoyment:** Everyone needs time to relax and de-stress. Taking time for yourself can benefit everyone since you will emerge happier and more rested.
- **Get organized:** Keep a family calendar in a prominent place in your home. Assign a different color to each family member so you can easily track activities. At work, find the time of day when you are most productive, and turn off phones, email and other distractions. Plan to tackle projects and daily tasks during this time.
- **Explore alternate options:** Many communities offer child and elder care assistance programs. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can also be a valuable source of information about available resources.

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