



Work-life balance: Tips to reclaim control

Married to your work? Consider the cost - It can be tempting to rack up hours at work, especially if you're trying to earn a promotion or manage an ever-increasing workload — or simply keeping your head above water. If you're spending most of your time working, though, your home life will take a hit. 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.
- **Poor health.** Stress is associated with adverse effects on the immune system and can worsen the symptoms you experience from any medical condition. Stress also puts you at risk of substance abuse.
- **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.
- **Increased expectations.** If you regularly work extra hours, you might be given more responsibility — which could lead to additional concerns and challenges.

Setting limits - You can't manufacture time. If you don't set limits, then work or other obligations can leave you with no time for the activities and relationships you enjoy. Consider these ideas:

- **Track your time.** Pay attention to your daily tasks, including work-related and personal activities. Decide what's necessary and what satisfies you the most.
- **Manage your time.** Cut or delegate activities you don't enjoy or can't handle — or share your concerns and possible solutions with your employer or others. Organize household tasks efficiently, such as running errands in batches or doing a load of laundry every day; don't save all the laundry for your day off. Do what needs to be done and let the rest go.
- **Make a list.** Put family events on a weekly calendar, and keep a daily to-do list at home and at work. Having a plan helps you maintain focus. When you don't have a plan, it's easy to be sucked into the plans and priorities of others.
- **Learn to say no.** Whether it's a co-worker asking you to spearhead an extra project or your child's teacher asking you to organize a class party, remember that it's OK to respectfully say no. When you quit accepting tasks out of guilt or a false sense of obligation, you'll have more time for activities that are meaningful to you.
- **Leave work at work.** With the technology to connect to anyone at any time from virtually anywhere, there might be no boundary between work and home — unless you create it. Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time.
- **Reduce email access.** Check emails no more than three times a day — late morning, early afternoon and late in the day. If you access email first thing in the morning, you tend to focus on and respond to other people's issues rather than being proactive about your own needs.

- **Take advantage of your options.** Ask your employer about flex hours, a compressed workweek, job sharing, telecommuting or other scheduling flexibility. The more control you have over your hours, the less stressed you're likely to be.
- **Try to shorten commitments and minimize interruptions.** Most people can sustain a maximum level of concentration for no more than 90 minutes. After that, the ability to retain information decreases dramatically. When interrupted during a task, you need double or triple the time of the interruption to regain full concentration on your task.

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. If your employer offers an employee assistance program, take advantage of available services.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/work-life-balance/art-20048134?pg=1>

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