

Your Work-Life Balance



There's no doubt about it; today's schedules are hectic! Juggling long work hours and long commutes with volunteer commitments, family obligations, grocery shopping, cooking and cleaning, it seems that there are not enough hours in the day to even think about leisure activity. Balancing all of your responsibilities is not easy, but it can be done.

Chances are you spend more hours at work each week than you are able to devote to your personal life. Long gone are the traditional 9-to-5 workdays. Especially in this difficult economy, employees are often working extended hours or at two jobs to make ends meet. The key to finding a balance between your professional life and your personal life should not be about dedicating the same number of hours to each. Instead, focus on trying to find harmony between the two. The goal is to achieve a satisfying professional life balanced by a fulfilling personal life.

Prioritize Your Time

The first step to finding this balance is identifying what's important to you. Take a look at both your professional and your personal life. Is a job promotion something you strongly desire? Is your volunteer work high on your list of things that are important to you? Once you've determined the things that matter the most to you, look at the amount of time you spend on each prioritized item. Maybe spending time with your family is your number one priority, yet little of your time goes

to this. You may be able to find areas in your life that you can spend less time on.

Schedule Work And Personal Activities

Most of us write down work-related appointments, but few of us keep a calendar for personal activities and obligations. Include your exercise schedule, food shopping time, carpools and everything else that takes up time in your day in your calendar. Tracking all activities will help you better plan your week. For example, if you see that you pick up the kids from basketball every Thursday, the same day your favorite yoga instructor teaches class, you may want to find a better time for the weekly trip to the supermarket.

There is such a thing as scheduling too much in your calendar. The key is to avoid overbooking and inflexible scheduling. Learn your personal limits and time frames and be sure to set practical expectations. It's not only okay, but it's necessary to schedule regular quiet time for yourself. Inform others who might be trying to reach you during this time and try to be consistent about what time of day you do this. This will allow for others to schedule appropriately. During this time, don't answer phone calls, text messages or e-mails. This is your time to reenergize.

Wrap Up Your Workday

Winding down at home after a long workday is something most of us look forward to. Planning a relaxing evening at home should start as you wrap up your workday. Try to dedicate the last 10 minutes of your day to clearing your desk and reviewing your plans for the next day. Blocking this time off in your calendar will help ensure that you get this done. Knowing that you've wrapped up your day will help you let go of work and focus your energies on family and friends.

Establish Your Workspace At Home

Laptops, smart phones and easy Internet access mean that work can happen outside of the office. This can offer many benefits to helping to balance your time, but it also presents challenges. The benefits include being able to knock a few things off your to-do list during downtime; however, the urge to check e-mail during time with family is often hard to resist. If bringing work home is unavoidable, keep it from invading shared spaces in the house. Designate an area of your home as your workspace and the rest as a work-free "sanctuary."

If you work from home, establish a separate workspace somewhere others will not disturb you or your work materials. Just as they respect your workspace, you should keep your work out of shared areas in your home. This means no computers on the kitchen table and no work-related phone calls from the family room.

Find Some "Me Time"

Finding space to quiet your mind can really help with feeling overwhelmed by a full calendar or expanding to-do list. A little "me time" is key to balancing work and home life, yet it's not always easy to find a little

quiet time in a busy household. It's okay to close the door occasionally and let your family know when you need to be alone. If indoor quiet space is limited, take a short walk or visit a nearby library.

De-Clutter At Work And At Home

Clutter piled on your desk or covering the kitchen table is certain to add to the stressors in your life. Too much clutter makes it hard to find life's essential tools, everything from car keys to phone chargers to the permission slip for Junior's school field trip. It's hard to unwind if you come home and see an untouched three-day-old stack of mail. Try to find pleasing ways to store your clutter both at home and work. Streamlining your possessions, especially tossing or fixing broken items, can help foster peace of mind.

Create Quality Time

We've all heard the saying "quality not quantity." When it comes to the life side of the work-life equation, truer words could not be spoken. Instead of coming up with time-consuming activities, try creating little rituals. They don't have to be elaborate or ambitious, like insisting on a five-course meal every Sunday. It could be as simple as

writing the quote of the day on a kitchen chalkboard when someone says something silly or clever. Fun ways to make each day special create joy and laughter.

Live well

Taking care of your health has to be a part of your work-life balance. Eating right, exercising and getting enough sleep will help keep you energized and feeling your best. This will make you more efficient at work so you can better enjoy your leisure time.

- Follow a healthy diet
- Make time for exercise
- Get enough sleep

Find Balance

The world has changed and today the boundary between work and home life is disappearing. With international business operating 24 hours a day and the increase of advanced communication technology, people have the ability – *and often feel obliged* – to work around the clock. It's standard today for married couples to both have jobs, which limits time with family and friends. Finding the balance between work life and personal life can be an ongoing challenge but with a little planning and effort, it can be done!

Buddha's Feast

Makes: 4-6 servings



The brightly colored vegetables in this Chinese stir-fry tell you it's rich in health-protective phytochemicals.

COOKING TIP: Try serving over brown rice for added zest.

INGREDIENTS:

1/4 cup chicken stock or vegetable broth
2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon cornstarch
3 cups sliced bok choy or Chinese cabbage
1 cup broccoli florets
2 carrots, *thinly sliced on the diagonal*
1 cup small button mushrooms, *stemmed and rinsed*
1/4 cup canned water chestnuts, *sliced*
1 14-ounce can baby corn, *drained*
1-2 garlic cloves, *minced*

PREPARATION:

1. In a small bowl, whisk together stock, soy sauce and cornstarch. Set aside.
2. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Cook the bok choy and broccoli for one minute. Drain and set aside.
3. Coat a skillet with cooking spray and heat pan over medium heat. Add carrots and mushrooms. Sauté for 3 minutes, stirring often.
4. Add the cooked bok choy, broccoli, water chestnuts, baby corn and garlic to skillet. Cook for 2 minutes to heat through.
5. Add reserved sauce and continue stirring until it thickens, about 2 minutes. Serve and enjoy!

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION (per serving):

111 Calories; 0.8g Fat; 0g Saturated Fat; 25g Carbohydrates; 5g Protein; 5.9g Fiber; 408mg Sodium