

Compass

Finding balance: a daily challenge

Getting all the moving parts of your life to work together smoothly is tough. Just when it feels like you've got your work, family and social life in synch, something can change and suddenly you're out of balance.

When there's a big change at work or in your family, you may struggle to make the needed adjustments. Stress can accumulate and start to take a physical toll on you. If you feel this happening, it's important to take a step back and seek new ways to balance your life.

Finding balance is a challenge that virtually everyone faces in modern life—every day. Balance isn't a magical achievement that, once attained, is permanent. Instead, balance requires that you take a flexible approach to life and constantly re-examine how you're spending your time. Then you can make small changes along the way that better support your goals.

In this edition of *Compass*, we examine ways in which you can:

- Develop a new plan for identifying your priorities and jettisoning non-essentials.
- Get the help you need to cope with big changes in life when they occur.
- Build a foundation of health and wellness that helps you stay strong.

Log on and learn! You can access *Work-Life Balance* on the FOH4You.com website. Although it's a daily effort, finding better balance is possible!



Employee Assistance Program

We care, just call.

1-800-222-0364

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Develop a plan for balance

Perhaps the one-two punch of work and home life stress is getting you down. Signs that you're getting out of balance can include difficulty concentrating, or feeling emotions such as anger, sadness, guilt, or frustration. Developing a strategy for better balance can help.

- Keep your goals realistic. Focus on doing things you know you can accomplish. If it's not yet in your skill set, learn how to respectfully say "no" so you're not over-scheduled.
- Drop activities that sap time and energy. Take a close look at how you spend your time. Identify and exclude things that don't help your career or personal life.
- Schedule some rejuvenating downtime—some "me" time—into your schedule. Be sure to make time for family, friends and activities that help you recharge.
- Take brief breaks throughout your day to stand, stretch, breathe deeply and shake off tension. This helps you handle stress and refresh your thinking.

Dealing with life transitions

Sometimes we look up and realize we need to deal with a major life transition. Examples include finding child care for a new baby, sending kids off to school for the first time, or locating caregiving services for an elderly parent. These big changes can be overwhelming. Having coping strategies can help make transitions smoother.

Tap your social network

It helps to talk to friends and loved ones about the changes coming your way. Sharing your feelings can help you get constructive feedback and support, and help you find the way forward when you're faced with major changes.

Have an optimistic attitude

Remind yourself that you have the ability to cope with the transitions you face. The challenges may be new and difficult, but it's key to remain hopeful about a good outcome.

Manage the stress of transitions

Big changes in life often result in stress; they can drain you mentally and physically. When you're in the middle of a transition, remember to keep yourself healthy by getting regular exercise, eating a balanced diet, and getting enough sleep. Plus, use techniques such as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation or deep breathing to help you relax.

Get the help you need

Maybe you need expert help in arranging caregiving services for an elder parent or a child. Or, you need legal or financial assistance. If so, access your program's work-life services. Work-life specialists can provide pre-qualified referrals to the specific services you need, from adoption to education to special needs and more. Also, if you need confidential counseling help to get through life transitions, your program is there 24/7.

Exercise helps with balance

Use exercise to help you stay balanced. Recent studies suggest that people who exercise regularly feel better equipped to balance work and home life.

Cutting stress is the ticket. Exercise is one of the best ways of keeping stress under control. It helps you detach from work, and it boosts your energy, alertness and stamina.

It doesn't have to be the Olympics. Even some simple exercises done between other tasks can help. This includes things like climbing stairs, taking a walk or doing some jumping jacks.

Schedule it if necessary. If you're tempted to skip workouts sometimes, put them on your weekly calendar and make them a firm priority!

