

Refocus and Realign

When you're busy with work and caring for others, it's easy to forget about the biggest priority of all: YOU.

Taking good care of yourself means focusing on you and finding balance in your daily life. When it comes to balance, we often think in terms of only the major categories of work and life, which can seem overwhelming. To truly find balance, it's best to consider the parts of the whole and begin to equalize the *individual aspects* of those two categories in a more achievable way. Here are some tips to help you get started, and on your way to finding more balance in all areas of your life:

Resting and Running

It's just as bad for you to constantly move at 100 miles an hour as it is for you to never leave the couch. Pace yourself throughout the day, the week, and even the month. Give it your all when you need to, then reward yourself with a time-out. If you know you have several obligations one weekend, for example, block out the following one to do personal tasks or nothing at all. And, find middle ground by saying no when you just can't or shouldn't, and by saying yes when it's been a while since you helped a friend or relative.

On and Off

Periodically disconnecting from devices may seem daunting or even unsafe, but research supports that there are significant benefits. Unplugging not only allows you to improve your relationships with family and friends, it also gives you a clean break from the workday and can even positively affect your health. Set aside time each day to deliberately unplug, and require the same from everyone in your home. You can take it a step further by vacationing in places where cell service and internet connections are scarce or even non-existent (or at least that's what you can tell everyone).

Today and Tomorrow

Dwelling on the past and having specific expectations of the future can hinder you from experiencing the present and can keep you from being able to move forward. What happened yesterday shouldn't dictate what happens to you tomorrow. Likewise, focusing on the future shouldn't detract from your everyday life. For example, while you should be making long-term plans for retirement, don't forget to also make some fun plans for next weekend. Be mindful and in the moment and not be caught up in a past that you cannot change and a future that you cannot predict.



Work and Life

Having equilibrium in the matters above will naturally contribute to a general balance between work and life, but don't forget to be deliberate when it counts. Take time away from work – you have vacation days for a reason! It's essential that you escape the office and your daily home routine from time to time. Bond with family, reconnect with friends, or simply treat yourself to some alone time.

Like many aspects of life, finding balance takes practice, and it's an ongoing process that will evolve over time. The more you make a conscious effort to equalize your life, the easier it will be and the more fulfilled you will feel. Inevitably, life will get hectic and the concept of balance may go out the window for a time – just be sure to occasionally check in with yourself, and refocus on these tips when you begin to feel uneven. If, however, your scales seem to be lopsided no matter how hard you try, reach out to your EAP for support. Call any time, day or night to speak with a consultant who can help you figure out what's weighing you down.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees and their family members at no cost.