

Make Life Work for You

We all want to strike a balance in our everyday lives. Whether it's a general balance between our work and personal lives, or a more specific balancing act such as caring for loved ones versus taking time for ourselves, the underlying goal is to enjoy life and find an equilibrium that leaves us feeling fulfilled and satisfied. As you work toward balance in your daily life, here are a few things to keep in mind and your **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** can help.

What it means to be balanced

When it comes to work/life balance, often there's a misconception that in order to find balance, our work and personal lives must be equal. Genuine balance, however, is more about fulfillment, an equilibrium that is more fluid and isn't accomplished merely by devoting an equal number of hours to each area of life. What we deem important – and to what degree – varies by person, so it's essential to determine what balance looks like for *you*. According to WorkLifeBalance.com, at the core of striking an effective work/life balance are the concepts of ***achievement*** and ***enjoyment***, and we should strive daily to have a meaningful degree of each when it comes to work, family, friends, and self. When our successes are intertwined with happiness, satisfaction, or a sense of pride, the result is balance in the form of fulfillment.

Redefine the line

Regardless of how your ideal balance is achieved – either with a more even distribution of life elements, or with a more varied configuration – it's helpful if each portion is distinct in its purpose and separate from the other. Setting boundaries is key; the blurrier the lines get between work, family, friends, and yourself, the harder it is to focus on one or the other, and it's more difficult to keep in balance. Here are some ideas for creating healthy boundaries to help keep your daily life inside the lines:

- ***Assert your availability***

Just because you're technically accessible doesn't mean you should give in to off-hour demands from your boss or family. Determine when work and home life begin and end – as soon as you get in your car, the moment you walk into your office or house, only during specific hours, etc. Avoid answering work emails or calls once your workday is over, and don't allow major interruptions from significant others when you work from home.

- ***Say no***

This is often the hardest boundary to set and can be even harder to uphold. But you can't do it all, you can't please everyone, and when you try, you're the one who comes up short on time, energy, and productivity. When you're asked to help out at work or attend an event, truly evaluate what you can handle and have time for – if you know that an activity will be at the expense of an important project or time with loved ones, just say no. Saying no takes practice, but you may find that people are more understanding when you set a limit!

- ***Go away***

We all need a break from work to reset and recharge, manage stress and prevent burnout, and recover from being ill. Paid leave exists for a reason and not taking advantage of it may come at a cost ...especially to you. So, take advantage of your time off and schedule a vacation, stay home when you're sick, and don't work when you're not scheduled to do so.

- ***Take care of you***

Imagine what would happen if you gave yourself the same care and attention that you give to your job and to others in your life. To effectively manage your responsibilities and support those you love, you must make your needs and well-being a priority. Go to the gym, meditate, watch your favorite TV show, read a book, or simply sit on your porch and get some fresh air.

For help finding more balance in your life, contact the EAP to request resources and information or to speak with a licensed counselor.

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

24 HOURS A DAY

800-222-0364

TTY: 888-262-7848

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