

Work-Life Balance Rx.

“Prescription for keeping a Work-Life Balance”

Here is some information you will find very helpful.

Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance is a concept that refers to assessing and prioritizing your time, resources and effort given to *work* (i.e., career, vocational ambitions) and *life* (e.g., family, health, fun, leisure). This is the process of getting the *lifestyle balance* you want based on values and goals. The term *work-life balance* can be used to explore the unhealthy life choices that some people make as they neglect important areas of their lives (e.g., self, family, friends) in favour of work-related duties and aspirations.

In getting the work-life balance right for yourself, if must be remembered that:

1. Although it can be *tough*, it is not impossible,
2. Getting the balance right is really *worth* it for many reasons,
3. For things to change means *you* have to make some changes,
4. *Happiness* will be the ultimate outcome.

To help you start thinking about how to restore or regain your work-life balance formula, consider a time in your life when things were in-balance:

1. Who noticed first?
2. What were the signs?
3. How great did it feel?
4. What were you doing?
5. What did you do to get on that track?
6. Who helped you get in such good shape?
7. How long did it ultimately last?
8. What ongoing impact does it have on you?
9. What did you learn? (i.e., about yourself, about others, about how you change)
10. Is this something you would like to develop again?

Answering these ten questions will enable you to review the *information* and *process* you already know about getting in-balance, and potentially increases your *motivation* and *commitment* to do the work to again get to that stage. I learnt a long time ago that you can't tell the shape of a violin by the sound; whether it's a traditional style, asymmetrical, trapezoidal, or whatever; they all sound exactly the same. Even with an inconsistency of wood thickness, a *Stradivarius* sounds great. Like us, violins that are all different in various ways, we all have the amazing potential to do well. There is no one right or perfect way to get the life we want. It is about knowing we all have capacity to do well, irrespective of where we have come from or what we have. It's up to us to play to the tune that is meaningful.

Current realities of work-life issues:

We work more hours, have more demands, are more competitive, and have less security.

With minimal free time, we are torn between the pressures of employment and personal life.

Work is necessary to earn a living, but we also need *quantity* time for ourselves and others.

We make unhealthy choices and neglect important areas of our lives.

Burnout is experienced due to stress and overwork.

We get to breaking point and experience a range of physical and emotional problems.

Spheres of Life that need to be considered:

When planning for developing areas of your life, these spheres will be worth considering;

Work - paid, voluntary, home duties, study,

Personal development - self-esteem, emotions, thinking style,

Social - partner, family, friends, groups, community,

Spiritual - rituals, values, beliefs, purpose,

Physical - exercise, sport, diet, health,

Relaxation - leisure, rest, hobbies, fun.

Striving for Wellness:

What many people strive for in life is a state of *wellness*. This can best be thought of as being in positive health, comprising a sustainable balance (i.e., mind, body, spirit) as an actively sought goal, and making choices toward a more successful existence that results in an overall feeling of quality of life and wellbeing (e.g., healthy, happy, prosperous).

Benefits of Balance:

The reasons people actively work toward getting an improved work-life balance is to;

Reduce stress and prevent burnout

Increase health, energy and motivation

Stimulate the immune system and promote recovery from illness

Increase wellbeing via calm assertiveness

Encourage perspective-taking in life

Promote self-esteem, social support, connectedness, and happiness

Increase productivity; employers too are very keen on this aspect!

The following signs may result from, or lead to, an imbalance in life:

Decreased - energy, motivation, flexibility, connection with others, health, performance, and

Increased - stress, frustration, worry, negative attitude to self/others/work, alcohol and drug use.

Tips on How to Thrive, not just Survive:

Assume responsibility for your own survival (i.e., be proactive)

Use your strengths to cope

Consider your positive times and do more of what you've done before

Don't accept what others define as inevitable; accept what others define as inevitable

Be hopeful, not helpless (remember - what you focus on you amplify)

With low mood, appraisals are distorted, therefore you must focus on positives

Develop a caring approach to yourself (being stressed is *self-abuse!*)

Recognise when you are choosing to do too much (or being exploited) and be assertive

Use time management approaches to identify use of time and be more constructive with it

Set clear goals, then maintain and evaluate them

Set attainable standards for yourself and others

Identify the skills you need to work more effectively and acquire them

Have the courage to say and do what you believe is right

Cultivate positive relationships with colleagues and managers
Establish a supportive network both at work and beyond
Leave work behind when you are not there (distance yourself)
Balance work commitments with responsibilities beyond it
Take all the time off work that you are entitled to (employers don't like this one!)
Take care of, and spoil, yourself with nice things
Identify job stress factors, and activate change where you can
Postpone major life changes if you are not feeling great
Resolve personal conflicts as they arise
Continue to do the things you enjoy
Control your work
Exercise and meditate regularly
Seek help when needed (e.g., family, friends, GP, priest, coach, psychologist).

Tips for the Workplace:

Know your role and responsibilities and focus on these areas
Accept limits (time, energy, skills)
Take proper breaks to energise
Manage workload (i.e., prioritise and delegate)
Slow down at times; and speed up at times
Talk with colleagues (get support and opinions)
Cultivate a sense of humour, fun and creativity
Learn to say *no* as necessary; boundaries are critical
Think ahead and set achievable goals
Maintain interest and curiosity in work; stay fresh by learning and problem-solving
Focus on the positive aspects of work and your personal life (recall these often).

Fear of Change:

If we take risks there will be fear, and the only way to get rid of fear is to be active. Don't wait for fear to go away before you make changes. As *Nike's* advertising slogan encourages us; *Just do it!* You need to *behave as if* you can do something, and you'll be surprised how successful you will be. *Fake it until you make it* is what I encourage my patients to do. It's easy to put off change until we feel better about ourselves. But self-esteem won't magically improve; it improves after we've made desired changes. Everyone experiences fear in unfamiliar territory, even those who have achieved and are successful. Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from helplessness and inertia. People who refuse to take risks live with a more severe sense of dread than if they took the risks necessary for change.

Life's Sat-Nav!

My belief is that the process of making changes in life *should* be like my car's satellite navigation system. It needs only two pieces of information; *Where are you? Where do you want to be?* It does not need to know what your mother was like, what school you went to, what happened when you were seven, what are you afraid of, or how crazy your boss is!

Finally, I encourage you to consider *The Serenity Prayer* (Grant me the *Serenity* to accept the things I cannot change, *Courage* to change the things I can, and *Wisdom* to know the difference).

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