



*The prospect of a long day at the beach makes me panic. There is no harder work I can think of than taking myself off to somewhere pleasant, where I am forced to stay for hours and 'have fun'.*

-Phillip Lopate

# EAP ACCENTS

## Work-Life Balance



In Great Britain, one of the toughest mental health concerns that they are finding is the balance between work and the rest of life. It wouldn't take much to realize that the United States is in the same boat. Nearly three out of ten employees deal with some mental health issue annually. Many of these problems are work-related in some manner. A large percentage of these issues result from imbalance that affects both employees and their families.

One in six people work 60 or more hours a week, and that number has doubled for women over the last two years. This leaves many families with one or both parents significantly absent from the home. As well, those parents are more susceptible to mental and physical illness which could result in long-term absence from the family unit. Most significantly, people interviewed that work 60 or more hours per week stated that they

spend a significant amount of time away from work thinking or worrying about their jobs. The same research survey found that one third of the respondents were unhappy about the amount of time they spend away from home. Also noted was that women feel the uneasiness of having to "juggle" family life and work more definitely than men. Two-thirds of the respondents felt that their personal relationships, including children, spouses and friends, are seriously affected by their work.

So, what's the answer to a balanced work-life? Who's responsible and how is happiness achieved in such situations? Read on to find out more about how to determine if your life and work are out of balance, how to balance them, and ways to make your life outside of work more valuable.



If your work-life balance is out of whack and you don't know how to fix it, contact your **Employee Assistance Program** at **1-800-899-3926!**

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# Sound Like You?

The following are standard symptoms of a person who's life is imbalanced between work and home:



- **Typically in a hurry.** Do you find that every day has too little time and too much "To Do" list? Occasionally, everyone feels that way, but if it's a way of life for you, examine your priorities!
- **Have to be in control.** Control issues are at the root of many mental illnesses. Typically, we'd all like to think that we have some semblance of control over life, but the reality is that our control is limited. Often we struggle so hard to maintain control that we lose it.
- **Difficulty relaxing.** Just resting once in a while, listening to music, reading a book or chatting with a friend can be enough to rejuvenate the overworked spirit. The problem is that most workaholics don't know how to relax because if they do, they might lose control!
- **Pride yourself on multi-tasking.** It is a great gift to be able to do several things well at one time.

Not everyone has that gift, but even if you do possess it, you need to shut down occasionally. Take time to have a meal without reading, writing a memo or having a phone conference.

- **Often expect perfection.** Not only do you work toward perfection, but you get very frustrated when others don't do the same. Most people are not perfectionists and expecting such behavior only leads to irritation.
- **Rarely delegate.** Why should you delegate when no one can do the job as well as you can? Remember, no one is indispensable and everyone has abilities. Delegating is the sign of a true leader...not a workaholic.
- **Doesn't have fun.** Not only do you not understand how to have fun, but you get irritated when others are having a good time. How can they be so foolish when there's so much work to be done? Probably because they understand that the work will still be there tomorrow!



*Does work follow you home?*

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## The Stress Factor

Did you know that 9 out of 10 doctor's visits involve some level of stress? Stress affects us both mentally and physically. For a workaholic, stress is a way of life. Add to that, caffeine and sometimes even cigarettes, and you have a person giving their life for their job. If you're a Marine, that's acceptable. If you're a factory worker or even a CEO, that's insane. Few jobs are worth your life.

Stress causes any variety of mental illness including obsessive/compulsive disorders, addictions, anxiety and depression. Physical diseases range from high blood pressure to heart disease. While some stress can be a motivator, it's not possible for your mind or body to live under that pressure for long periods of time without suffering.

Personal relationships also fall under attack when there is extreme stress. You communicate less effectively and become angry more easily. Others find themselves avoiding you, both at work and at home. Stress is often passed on from colleague to colleague and family member to family member. Your stress weighs on your spouse and children, or puts more pressure on your colleagues and employees.

Exercising, resting, and eating right all combat stress effectively. Of course, those things are hard to accomplish when all you think about is work!



# Taking Responsibility

Who's responsibility is it when your work-life balance is off? Who's job is it to fix the situation? YOURS! It's your job and your life...who else should be responsible? The good news is that help is available for getting the balance back. Consider making the following changes to improve your quality of life and keep work in check:

✓ **"Work smart, not long."**

Develop priorities and avoid less productive activities, such as meetings that can be handled by email.

✓ **Take breaks.** Give yourself scheduled breaks as needed. Particularly, take a lunch break and get out of the work environment if possible.

✓ **Leave work at work.** Whether you actually bring work home with you or just let it take up your thoughts at home,

you're still there. There's little value in coming home physically but being at work mentally.

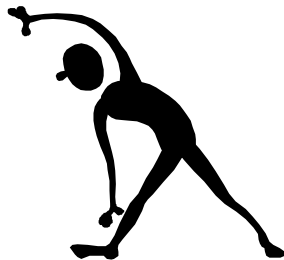
✓ **Reduce stress** outside of work by exercising, developing hobbies, and spending time with family and friends.

The desire to be productive, wealthy and fulfilled has led many to make work their lives.

Unfortunately, when the work takes over, we lose sight of what is truly valuable. Lives

are limited in scope of time and energy.

Decide what you value most, then evaluate where you spend the most time. Do you live to work or work to live? When all is said and done will your family remember you as someone who valued life or as the workaholic who never made it around to living?



## Just a few suggestions on the job...

1. **Learn to delegate:** Amazingly, there are other people capable of picking up the slack. Learn who can be responsible and helpful, then train them to help out.
2. **Miss a golden opportunity:** Not every chance to move up the ladder or get the raise needs to be jumped at. Other opportunities will come along if you're really that good at your job!
3. **Procrastinate:** Okay...don't make it a habit. But shock your family once in a while by coming home early to relax or taking a day off for no special reason. Be unpredictable!!

*In order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: They must be fit for it, They must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it.*

-John Ruskin

# The Balance Quiz

If you can answer “no” to the following questions, then you probably have a balanced work and home life. If not, contact your Employee Assistance Program today.



*How balanced are you between work and home?*

1. Do you bring work home with you or find yourself thinking of work while at home?
2. Do you work through lunches and breaks?
3. Do you miss out on family events, quality family time, or special times (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) because of work?
4. Do you have a problem talking to other people about subjects other than your job?
5. Do you find yourself not communicating with your spouse or children because they don't understand your job?
6. Do you lose your temper with family and friends because they don't understand why you feel compelled to work so hard?
7. Are you often tired or depressed?
8. Do you drink more than one caffeinated drink per day? Do you use caffeine to help you work longer and harder?
9. Do you feel like your identity is your job...without it, you wouldn't know what to do with yourself?
10. Do family members ever express that they feel like your job is more important than them?

*We're here to help! Contact your Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-899-3926.*

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