

Your Health: Work-Life Balance



Do you ever feel like there is not enough time to do all of the things you have to do, and no time at all for the things you enjoy? If so, you are not alone.

On average, people in the United States have worked more and more hours each year since 1970. But in recent years, fewer people say they want to take on more at work, even if they would get promoted or get paid more money. More and more workers say they want time to spend with their families and to do things that are important to them.

How is your work-life balance?

Do you ever feel:

- That you always have more and more work to do at your job?
- That too many people depend on you every day?
- That you never have enough time for your family or friends?
- That you never have time for hobbies or things you enjoy?
- That each second of your day is scheduled?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, take steps at work and at home to get your life into balance.

Manage your time

- **Focus on the important things.** Taking on too much can wear you out. Look at how you spend your time, and redirect your focus. Learn to say "no" and let go of things that do not matter.
- **Set one small goal at a time.** Use a day planner. Break large projects into smaller ones.
- **Ask for help.** Let your children, your partner, your coworkers, and other people in your life help you get things done.
- **Make time for you.** Leave your work at work. If you give up free time to get more work done, you may pay for it with stress. If your job offers a flexible work schedule, use it to fit your own work style. For instance, come in earlier to have a longer lunch break, or make time for a yoga class or workout during your workday.
- **Unplug.** Don't let the technologies that help you do your work get in the way of your leisure time. Consider turning off cell phones or beepers when you are with family or friends. And avoid checking work email when you're not at work.

Make changes at work

Lower your job stress

Job stress causes trouble at work and at home. At work, you may worry about things you have not had time to do at home. At home, you may worry about your job. This cycle upsets your work-life balance.

Lowering your job stress can get your life back in balance.

Job stress can be caused by:

- Pressure and deadlines.
- Heavy workloads or long hours.
- Not being allowed to make decisions.
- Health and safety hazards.
- Feeling you may lose your job.
- Unclear or changing job duties.
- Too much responsibility.
- Work that is very tiring or boring.

Do any of these things bother you?

Work with your boss to change things. There are some things that you may not be able to control. But even a few small changes might help lower your stress.

Take advantage of programs at work

Businesses make money and are better off in other ways if their employees are healthy and happy. For this reason, many companies have programs to help balance work life and home life.

These programs may include:

- Flexible schedules and hours.
- Time off for family reasons, education, or community service.
- Being able to work from home.
- Employee assistance programs to provide counseling.
- Child-care programs.

Check to see if your company has any of these or other programs that could help you. If not, talk to your boss about why work-life balance programs make good business sense. Even if your company does not start an official program, you may be able to get flexible hours, time off, or the ability to do some work from home.

Get help

Stress can be hard to manage on your own. A professional counselor can help you learn ways to balance your work and family life. See if your company offers counseling through an employee assistance program. You can also ask your doctor for a referral.

Know when to quit

If you are truly unhappy because of a stressful job and the suggestions here have not worked, it may be time to think about changing jobs or changing careers. But before you quit, take time to research your options.