



solutions



Four ways to promote conditions for a more balanced life

Sometimes, life gets out of balance. You may be working too much and neglecting your healthy lifestyle plan — eating well and getting physical activity are often the first things to go when life gets hectic. Or, you may be spending too much time taking care of family and neglecting your own needs. Being at your best in all spheres of your life (work, family, friends, and personal time) can be a significant challenge.

Living a steady and balanced life is like nurturing a tree. When you have the right conditions, the tree will thrive. Too much water, not enough sunlight, or not enough nutrients in the soil can stifle the tree's growth and it will have difficulty flowering and producing fruit.

1. SETTING YOUR PRIORITIES

The first step is to set your priorities. Usually, your priorities will be situational. When you are at work, you focus on projects and your team members. When you are playing sports, you focus on the game and the players. When you are in a social situation, you focus on the people around you.

However, sometimes there are some priorities that take higher precedence than others. For instance, if you need to take a friend or family member to the doctor, this may require you to make your personal needs — like your daily run or lunch with friends — a lower priority just for that particular circumstance. Realize that even when priorities are changed by a particular situation, adjustments can be made to make up time missed, especially for things that are most important to you.

Some things may need to be considered when setting priorities. You can ask yourself questions like:

How does this affect...

- My physical and mental health?
- Other people's feelings (my family, friends, or team members)?
- My productivity?
- My home life?



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2. MANAGING YOUR TIME

Making the best of your time can also set the stage for more balance in your life. One tactic is to make a to-do list that highlights your top priorities. You then can easily see what needs to be done immediately, before the end of the day, or what can wait until tomorrow. This can free up your mind and energy to work on other things.

Another tactic is to keep a well-considered schedule. While it may seem odd to schedule time for yourself, your daily workout, or coffee with friends, having things written down with a designated timeslot can help you more easily fit the things that are most important to you into your day. A dependable schedule can also help you better organize those top-priority responsibilities and events. It takes the guesswork out of your day. And, like a good to-do list, it can relieve you of the anxious feeling that you need to remember everything.

Your schedule, however, should not totally dictate your day. You might choose to go off schedule to help a coworker, friend, or family member who might need immediate assistance. It may even be that you find that you need time to deal with some personal issues or to call your Employee Assistance Program for support.

3. ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

Having clear boundaries to avoid overextending yourself in any one aspect of your life is essential for finding balance. Sometimes, a good way to set boundaries is by having a clear-cut place and time for work, family, and yourself. By creating clear divisions of where and when work ends, for instance, can help you avoid having work obligations bleed into your time for yourself or with friends and family.

For example, if you telecommute, you may want to designate a room in the house where you work for eight hours. After the eight hours are complete — if there is no pressing business, you can routinely shut down your computer and close the door to that room to have “me time” or time with your loved ones.

4. BEING IN THE MOMENT

If you are fully aware and engaged in each situation throughout your day, this can help you be more effective and feel more fulfilled. Again — like your priorities — the situation dictates where your focus lands. If a coworker comes in and needs to talk, for instance, you will give him or her your full attention — avoiding being distracted by emails or texts. This way, you make the current situation (and everything connected to it) your top priority.



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