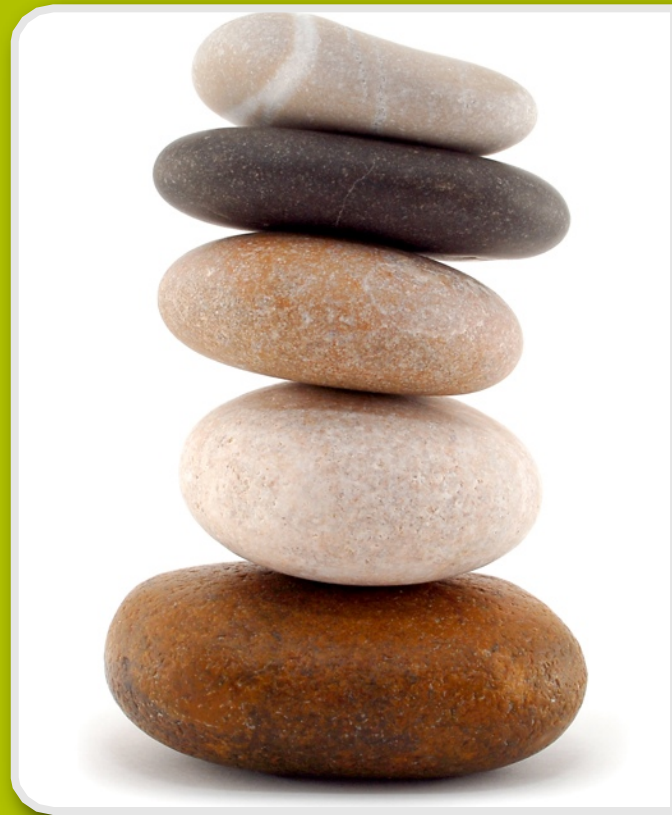


HOW TO
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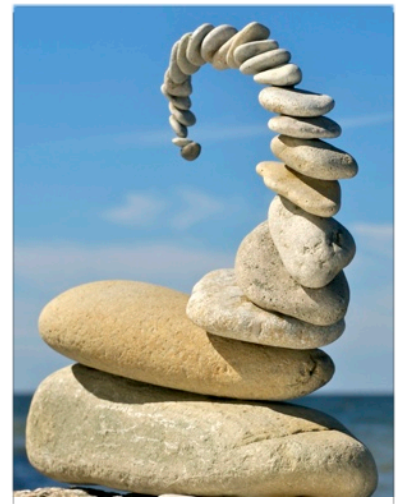
How to Achieve **Balance** In Your Life

Introduction

We live in an era where success is often defined by *over-achievement* in either our professional or personal lives. When we focus *too* much on our business or professional goals, our relationships can suffer. Likewise, when we ignore our professional development needs, our job security or business can be put at risk.

We're thrown into a constant state of *unbalance* between the relentless and competitive corporate work ethic, the "*need-it-now*" mentality encouraged by our dependency on technology, and the desire to see, do, and achieve *more* each day.

So often, we're driven by the desire for 'more' that we lose sight of what's really important: our relationships, health, and enjoyment of life.



Excessive work loads and office politics can lead many people to a state of burnout, leaving them feeling tired, depressed and lethargic. Personal relationships, our health, and careers can suffer as a result.

Even people working from home question how to balance it all. Although the commute may be easier, the temptation to be glued to the computer and phone is stronger than ever!

Before you know it, these telecommuters are working during every waking moment of the day, often ignoring household responsibilities or their children, just to earn that extra dollar.

Another type of imbalance can happen when our personal lives are strained. Parental responsibilities, spousal difficulties, and even the support needs of our aging parents can create a disruptive level of stress. Strains in our personal life can affect our productivity at work and threaten our health and emotional well being.

Regaining work-life balance is a step by step process that requires us to look at various aspects of our lives in honest and frank ways.

It may take time or require some work. You might need to make some schedule changes or even sacrifices, but in the end, your peace of mind and strengthened relationships will be well worth the effort.

These work-life balance exercises are not meant to judge or criticize your past life choices. Let them simply help you reflect on what's important in your life right now and how you can reclaim the happiness you deserve.

Relationships

Relationships are at the core of modern day living. Relationships help us in business, the marketplace, our families, and our friendships. If we want to achieve a sense of balance in our lives, we should pay close attention to our relationships.

Different relationships in our lives require our attention and care in different ways. Parental responsibilities require a different kind of commitment than that required for a spouse or an aging parent.

When there are issues in any of these personal relationships that constantly require special attention, this can sap the energy from our other commitments and relationships.

The goal, of course, is to find a balance.

To help achieve that balance, the following suggestions may be helpful:

1. Be mindful of your capabilities when adding responsibilities.

Acknowledge when certain relationships in your life require special attention to deal with an issue or concern. Trying to treat everything as normal, when it isn't, will catch up with you at one point or another.

- For example, if your teenager requires your special attention to deal with an urgent issue, it may be a bad time to take on added responsibilities at work and volunteer as a baseball coach. If you can postpone added duties or projects, try to do so.
- ***Attempting to be all things to all people can lead to imbalance and exhaustion.***



2. **Communication is critical.** Maintain clear lines of communication between you and the people in your important relationships.

- Let those in your personal relationships (your spouse, children, or close friends) know when you have added responsibilities or challenges at work so they'll better understand the reasons behind your inaccessibility at certain times.
- Miscommunication and misperceptions about behaviors can cause unnecessary (and avoidable!) stress and conflict.

3. **A point to remember.** Understand that certain relationships go dormant or evaporate over time due to life circumstances. Divorced friends often fall out of touch with married friends. Those with children often find less in common with their single friends.

- Trying to salvage these relationships can be exhausting, especially if both people involved don't have the same interest in saving it. It takes two to be in a solid relationship, not one.

4. **Learn how to compromise.** This can be difficult, especially if you feel like you're "*giving in*," but this skill will be useful in keeping the stress levels down in your life.

- If your boss wants you to work the weekend, ask instead if you can do the work from home in the evenings. In many work situations it doesn't matter how or where the work is done so long as it meets the deadline.
- Compromising with your spouse and children will show them that you hear what they're saying and you're willing to come to a fair solution.

Body and Health

One of the ways we might discover that our lifestyle needs balance is through our bodies.

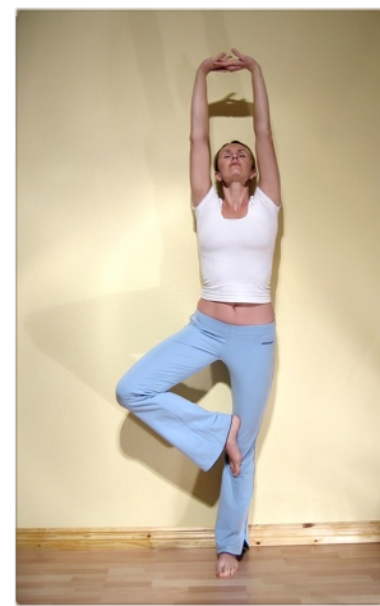
Many believe ***our bodies have ways of alerting us to the need for positive lifestyle changes.*** Headaches, fatigue, sleeplessness, and irritability could all be signs that changes need to be made in our personal or professional lives.

These physical signs often start off small, but if we don't make the necessary changes, the problems could continue to grow, thus causing physical harm or damage.

Experts agree that serious illnesses can result from the unfortunate combination of mental stress, poor diet, and a heavy workload. The good news is that all of these factors are within your control to change!

You are in charge of your reaction to stress. *You* are in charge of what you put into your body for food. *You* are in charge of how you allow people to treat you at work.

Extensive hours at work, too little exercise, or intense strain in your personal relationships can all serve to make you feel unwell.



Here are some tips for staying healthy and stress free:

1. **Get moving.** Even 10 minute intervals of exercise can relieve stress and help clear your mind. Choose two or three times a day when you can spare 10 minutes to walk, get some fresh air, or do some yoga stretches.
2. **Eliminate caffeine.** We all know caffeine is the jolt in our coffee that wakes us up in the morning, but it can also cause headaches, anxiety, and insomnia. Avoid having caffeine late in the day and try to limit your morning coffee intake to avoid the jitters.
3. **Get enough sleep.** Set a bedtime for yourself and stick to it. Turn off the TV, do some deep muscle stretches, and relish the quiet of your bedroom.
 - It may take some time to get used to going to bed earlier – especially if you’re a night owl – but your body will thank you for it in the morning.
4. **Eat dinner as a family.** This is a perfect time to shut off the TV, turn on the answering machine, and just focus on talking with your family members about their day.
 - You can reconnect with your kids, they can discover more about what you do for a living, and you’ll also get a heads up if your spouse needs more of your time later in the evening to talk.

The best step you can take to protect your health is to pay attention to your body’s signals. If you ignore them, it may be at your own peril. ***When you achieve a healthy balance between work and your personal life, your sense of well-being also improves.***

Career

Many people define themselves in terms of their career.

“*What do you do?*” is a common cocktail party opening line, and most often, the question is referring to someone’s career or profession, not their personal interests and hobbies.



The quest to present a successful life to the outside world has led many people to put most of their mental and emotional energy into their professional life.

Trying to live “*like the Joneses*” has put millions of people into credit card debt, which causes stress and turns the family life into turmoil as the family tries to dig themselves out. This is an example of a tremendous imbalance in life, as there will be very little left to dedicate to one’s personal relationships.

Complete physical and mental exhaustion is another negative outcome from putting too much of yourself into your job. In that never-ending quest for more money, workers give their heart and souls to their jobs, only to be passed over for promotion, or worse, laid off.

Yes, we all want and need to provide for our families, but at what cost? Be sure to focus plenty of energy on your personal relationships because those will last a lifetime longer than your current work relationship.

To perform your best in your career, you need to feel healthy in body and mind. Maintaining a balance in your professional and personal life will contribute to that outcome.

Follow these tips to help maintain balance between your work and personal lives:

1. **Limit work hours.** Leave work at a designated hour and try to include recreational or exercise activities in your routine.
 - If you're a workaholic, it won't be enough to say you'll try to work less; you'll need to make a concerted effort to balance your hours more reasonably.

2. **Turn off the cell phone, iPhone, or Blackberry after hours.** Unless you're a doctor on call, let your voicemail pick up any messages while you relax at home.
 - **Create this boundary early in your work career;** your family will thank you for it.

3. **Pick one day a week as your day of rest.** Traditionally, this is Sunday, but it can be any day of the week if you work an untraditional schedule. Take this day to focus on you and your family. Do something fun and enjoy yourself!
 - This means the computer, cell phones, and even the TV stay turned off – if you dare!

Engaging in a balanced workday and incorporating healthy activities will increase your enjoyment and satisfaction in both your career and personal lives. **Very often you'll find a renewed energy and love of life that you had forgotten even existed!** And you'll have some great stories to share with your family and friends.

Finances



Financial stress is probably one of the greatest stressors in life today. In this credit-obsessed society, many people spend what they don't have in order to keep up with the high level of consumption that has shaped our culture in recent decades.

Balancing your personal financial budget is extremely important. ***Making a conscious decision to live within your means is the first step.*** The next important step is to find other ways to seek satisfaction in your daily life.

Unnecessary purchases and eating out with excessive frequency may be signs that something else is missing in your life. What voids are you trying to fill with all these purchases?

Think about the money you'll save by choosing more frugal and personally satisfying activities. Set a goal for a monetary amount you can save by a certain date. Once you achieve that goal, repeat it or, if possible, increase the goal over the next few months.

Here are some other tips for keeping your finances in order:

1. **Balance your checkbook each month.** While this may seem trite and old fashioned in today's internet world, you still need to know and understand just how much money you spent compared to how much you earned.

- Looking at each expenditure, as opposed to just glancing at the current balance, will help you understand your spending habits.
2. **Pay cash for everything.** Ask yourself prior to each purchase if it's something you *need* or something you *want* and if you have the cash for it. If you pay by debit card, make sure you're aware of how much is in your account, as well as any upcoming recurring bills.
 3. **Eat meals at home.** Depending on where you live, a family of four can easily spend \$40+ for dinner out at a casual restaurant. And that doesn't include appetizers, beverages, or dessert.
 - Save that \$40+ by preparing your favorite restaurant dishes at home.
 4. **Create a budget.** This goes hand in hand with balancing your checkbook. Make a list of each and every household cost and trim expenses where you can. Lowering your cable package or canceling an extra phone can be done with a simple call.

Realizing that ***you can save money and still achieve satisfaction in the way you live*** will help you to better manage your finances and achieve a happier balance in your life.

Personal and Spiritual Growth

Personal and spiritual growth means different things for different people. Most will still agree that people are spiritual beings and that the spiritual component of who we are needs to be satisfied and nourished like other aspects of our being.

We experience personal growth when we learn what our potential is for success and happiness, and at the same time, what our limits are in reaching for that potential.

Personal growth occurs with time, effort, and a willingness to adapt.

Having supportive people in our relationships can also help us to grow personally.

When we feel spiritually drained, it's a sign that there is some personal growth that needs to take place. It's hard to get through serious challenges in life – whether it's professional challenges or personal tribulations – when you're already suffering on the inside.

When we understand our spiritual connection to our Creator, as well as those around us, we become inspired and encouraged. That new perspective can give us clearer insight into the issues before us and the steps we can take to adopt a more balanced approach to dealing with them.



A centered, spiritual focus can also inspire us to do more for those around us and help us focus less on the shortcomings and frustrations in our own lives. In becoming more caring people, we become more than just a workaholic or someone's sibling—we become part of a spiritual community that gives us strength.

Taking the time to reflect on your life is an important part of your development and growth. This is a necessary ingredient to achieve peace and balance in your life.

Conclusion

Life in the 21st century can be so complicated and fast paced that it's no wonder so many people are struggling to achieve balance in their lives.

The good news is balance is achievable if you:

- Recognize when there's a problem
- Communicate your issues and challenges to the people who comprise your most important relationships – both professionally and personally
- Pay attention to the health signals your body gives you, especially when you aren't following optimal healthy routines
- Make a concerted effort to curb your workaholic ways
- Spend within your means and take control of your finances
- Take time to nourish your personal and spiritual growth needs

Following these strategies can bring peace and harmony to your life and enable you to enjoy it to the fullest!