

Overworked & Stressed Out? 5 Ways To Balance Work & Life

Donna Fuscaldo | August 01, 2012

Having it all is getting harder to do. In this hyper-competitive marketplace, people are throwing everything into their careers, letting their personal lives fall to the wayside. Just ask the doctor who works ninety hours a week, or the small business owner that's sending emails in the wee hours of the morning or the banker that hasn't had a weekend off in months.

Although the typical mentality is work, work and more work, not balancing your career and personal life can have a disastrous impact on your health, career and family life.

"If you are unable to [balance work and life](#), the one thing that will suffer, no matter which way the balance is skewed is your professional life," says [Joel Garfinkle](#), author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career To The Next Level*. "Whether you suffer from burn-out or are neglecting your duties for your personal pursuits, productivity will fall. This can then lead to losing your job and the financial challenges that are associated with that."

In a perfect world a 50/50 balance would easily be achieved, but since that's not going to happen, there are ways to reach an acceptable balance without one or the other suffering. Here are five ways to do it:

1. Choose a company that cares

With the current [state of the job market](#) pretty dismal, choosing between [jobs](#) doesn't always happen. But if you do get a chance to be picky, go with a company that values balancing work and life. According to Chuck Fried, president and chief executive of TxMQ Inc., a technology staffing company, a happy worker means a productive worker which is why he pays for all of his employees' gym memberships and will pay all of the fees to participate in any individual athletic event like a 5K. By doing that, employees understand the company values more than how much money they can make for it, says Fried, a father of nine and a triathlete. "The healthier and happier they are, the more they'll want to work here," he says.

2. Say no

You can't please all of the people all of the time, which is why saying no is important. Is it really feasible to agree to work all weekend on a project and at the same time agree to attend a social event in the evening? Does it make you a better employee if you blow off your son's concert to stay at work a few hours longer? According to Garfinkle, you have to accept the realization that you can't please everybody and be prepared to say no sometimes. "Set boundaries and say "no" when requests go beyond your boundaries or don't fit with your goals and priorities," says Garfinkle. "If you try to please everyone, the person who ends up not being pleased is you."

3. Find a passion

Work is undoubtedly important and for many of us very rewarding, but in order to have a balance between work and your life, you need to be more than your job. That's why it's important to find something that interests you outside of work and make sure to schedule it into your day. "For the most successful people work isn't 100%, there's something else that drives them," says Fried.

4. Embrace stress

We all know stress can kill us, but not all stress is bad. According to Paul Rosch, president of The American Institute of Stress, increased stress can boost productivity whether at work or at home, but it's only to a point. Once the stress point is reached, everything goes downhill pretty quickly from then on. You may actually become less productive if you are too stressed out or you may be more agitated at home if you are nearing work burn-out. "It's very much like the stress on a violin string. Not enough makes a dull, raspy sound and too much causes a shrill, annoying noise or snaps the

string. But just the right amount creates a beautiful tone,” he says. The key is to find that right level of [stress](#).

5. Prioritize and then do it again

There are only twenty four hours in a day which means you aren't going to be able to complete every task on your to do list. That's why prioritizing is the secret sauce to reaching a healthy work-life balance. According to Joel, you need to set personal and professional goals and priorities and make sure to dedicate time to both of them. It's also equally important not to beat yourself up if one of your goals isn't reached that day, week or month. Having a healthy balance means being able to tweak your priorities based on the situation at hand. “Work-life balance doesn't mean that equal time is spent on your professional and personal lives,” says Garfinkle. “However, overall, both parts of your life have their needs met, when you've achieved work/life balance.”