

COMMUNICATION

Living to work or working to live?

LEVEL

Upper-Intermediate
(B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_3111X

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can discuss what it means to have a work-life balance.
- I can compare the advantages and disadvantages of prioritising a career.



Warm-up

Read the statement. **Discuss** the questions.

Finding the right work-life balance can be a challenge. Work is an important part of our lives, but so are our family and friends.

Do you live to work or do you work to live? What is the difference?

Do you find it difficult to balance the different parts of your life?

Has your work-life balance been different in the past?



strike a balance

When you **strike a balance**, you find an acceptable compromise between two different things. This is often difficult in today's world, where there are lots of demands on our time and energy!



We have to **strike a balance** between working hard and exhausting ourselves.



Reading

Read the text. **Answer** the questions.

Most people will spend much of their life working, but not every individual has the same approach to work-life balance. For some people, work is a priority in their life and for others it is simply a necessity. Different cultures also take varied approaches to work-life balance. In Europe work is an important part of people's lives, but it's also quite normal to have weekends and evenings off and to spend this time with family and friends. In the USA there are not as many laws to protect employees as in Europe. People often feel under pressure to work long hours in order to prove their commitment to their jobs. On average workers in the USA tend to have fewer holidays than in Europe.

Work-life balance also depends on the kind of job an individual has. Some jobs are more stressful than others, and some people are better at organising their time and setting priorities.

What different ways of viewing working life are mentioned in the text?

What differences between American and European working cultures does the text mention?

What factors can contribute to the kind of work-life balance a person has?



Discuss

Is working culture in your country closer to American or European culture?

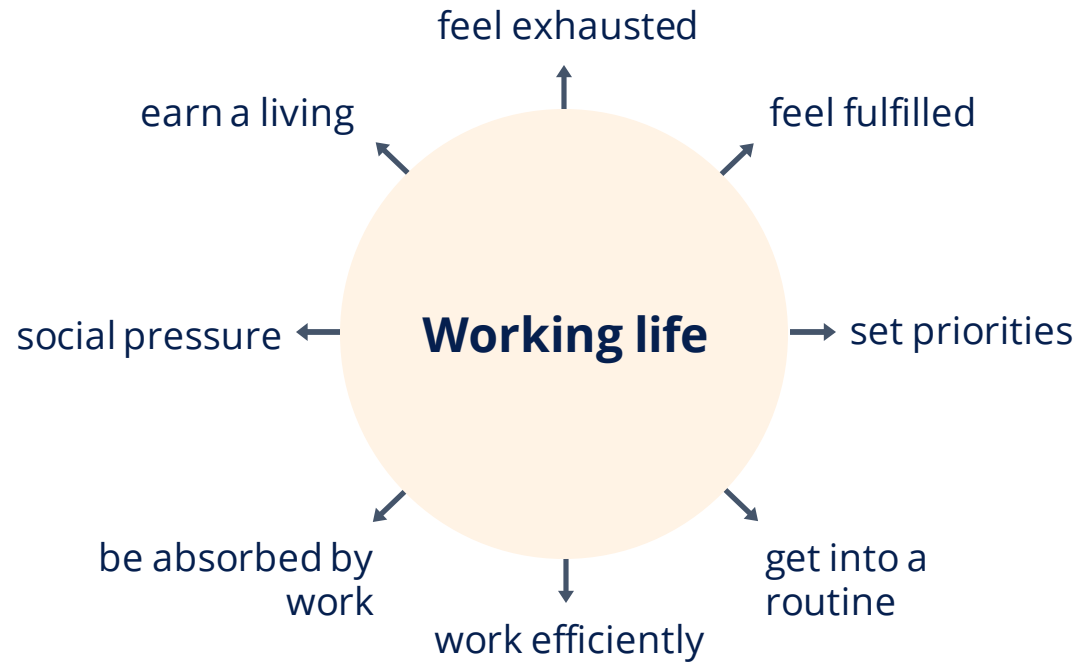


Have you ever worked in a country where the working culture was very different to what you were used to?



Vocabulary

Choose three phrases below. **Talk about** an aspect of your working life using these phrases.
Option: do this activity **in breakout rooms** and share what you learned about your classmate.





Fill in the gaps

Complete the sentences with the correct word or phrase from the box.
Can you **relate** to any of the statements below?

- 1 Although my job is difficult, helping people makes me _____.
- 2 My work is very challenging and there are always lots of different tasks to do, so it's important to be able _____.
- 3 When you work early shifts it takes some time to _____.
- 4 There's a lot of _____ to have a successful career and an impressive job title.
- 5 I haven't seen my friends for the past couple of weeks, it's been so busy at the office and I've _____ completely _____ by work.

to get into a routine

to be absorbed

social pressure

to set priorities

to feel fulfilled



Discuss

**What are some pros
and cons of
prioritising your job?**

**What are some life events that
can cause your priorities to
change?**



Reading

Read the text. **Answer** the questions.

Working hard can have its benefits. Some people choose to prioritise their job because their work is very important to them. However, for other people, life outside work takes priority over their job. Many people want to have a reasonable amount of time for themselves outside work to pursue personal interests.

The pros of prioritising work in your life are that you may earn more money, be promoted, have better job opportunities, and hopefully be doing a job you are passionate about! However, the cons of prioritising work may include missing out on quality time with family and friends, having a poorer social life, tiredness, stress and fewer interests outside work.

1. Which pros and cons are mentioned in the text?
2. Are they the same as you discussed on the previous slide?



burnout



Some companies have taken steps towards addressing the problem of stressed and **burnt out** employees.
What do you think these might be?



Dealing with stress and burnout

Discuss the points below.

- More and more people are suffering from **work-related stress** and health issues. It can be hard to know how to make changes to your **working routine** and have a **better quality of life** if you have a busy job, but it is possible!
- It is becoming more common for companies to offer **flexible working hours**, or the option to **work from home**, as well as **in-house support** and **relaxing activities** such as yoga classes!

Does your company offer flexible working hours?

Have you ever felt the need to change your working routine?

Which relaxing activities do you do to unwind from a busy day at work?



Defending your views

Read the opinions below, paying particular attention to the highlighted phrases.

1



For me, family life is my priority, that's why being able to work from home is so attractive.

2



In my opinion, you should push to find a job you are passionate about.

3



From my point of view, working long hours is worth it if it leads to a promotion.

4



I disagree with all forms of overtime. Your employer should never force you to sacrifice your personal life for work.

Giving your opinion

Read the quotes below. **Answer** the questions in the red boxes. **Which person** thinks...

1

“

At the end of the day, if you're stressed at work and can't cope with the pressure you can always change your job. It's not your employer's responsibility to sort out your life. People need to take some personal responsibility for their decisions.

2

“

Companies put pressure on workers and this has a negative impact on society. Companies have to start treating people fairly. People on low incomes, and those trying to juggle too many shifts alongside family obligations, are suffering.

...that **individuals** have the power to improve their quality of life through personal choices?

...that the problem of work-life balance is **systemic** and companies must take responsibility for employees' wellbeing?

What do you think?

Do you agree with either of these statements?



Striking a balance

Summarise the conversation. What do the speakers think? Do they agree or disagree?
Identify the phrases the speakers use for giving opinions.



I think it's really sad when people spend all their time working. They must be very lonely. Family is my priority and I don't let anything get in the way of quality time with my kids.

I disagree. A career can be a passion, and finding a balance isn't always easy! And others have no choice but to work long hours to support themselves and their families. It isn't always straightforward.



For me it is! I refuse to work after 5pm Monday to Friday. I just walk out the office. It's simply a matter of standing up for what you believe in!

In my opinion it isn't always that easy. Some people are scared of losing their jobs, or some people just don't have jobs that they can walk away from at set times!





Discuss

Do you know any jobs where it's often necessary to work longer than 9-5?

Are you someone who can walk out of the office at a set time and leave work behind?

Can you think of any jobs that could be particularly lonely?

What are some difficulties of juggling family and working life?



Give these people advice:

I've been offered a promotion at work, it's great money but means moving abroad for a year. I'm scared...

I feel really stressed at work, my boss keeps giving me more and more work. I feel like I can't cope...

I run my own business and work every day. I love my job but my friends don't understand that I can't see them as often as I used to...

I'm a doctor and I'm passionate about my job but I have to work very long hours. I find it really hard to unwind and relax...



End of the lesson

Idiom

All in a day's work

Meaning: Part of your routine tasks and responsibilities

Example: I delivered a baby this morning – all in a day's work!



Additional practice



Talk about your work-life balance

Answer the questions below.

- Do you feel like you currently have a good work-life balance?
- Is it easy to achieve this in your industry? Why or why not?
- Are there any changes you can see yourself making in the future?



to feel fulfilled...

to get into a routine...

to be absorbed (by)...



Giving advice

Your best friend has come to you for advice. They have been offered a new job which would be a big step-up for their career. However, it will involve very long hours, a lot of travel and a lot of pressure.

- 1 What questions would you ask your friend?
- 2 What are the pros and cons of your friend prioritising their job over other parts of their life?
- 3 What would you do in their position?





Answer key

P.8: 1. feel fulfilled 2. set priorities 3. get into a routine 4. social pressure 5. been ... absorbed



Summary

Working life:

- *to strike a balance; to feel exhausted; to feel fulfilled; to set priorities; to get into a routine; to work efficiently; social pressure; to earn a living; burnout*
- *I'm trying to **strike a balance** between success at work and happiness at home.*
- *There's a lot of **social pressure** to have a successful career and an impressive job title.*

Defending your views:

- *For me; In my opinion; From my point of view; I disagree*
- ***For me**, family life is my priority, that's why being able to work from home is so attractive.*
- ***In my opinion**, you should push to find a job you are passionate about.*



Vocabulary

to strike a balance

to feel exhausted

to feel fulfilled

to set priorities

to get into a routine

to work efficiently

to be absorbed

social pressure

to earn a living

burnout

