KnowledgeCity®
Finding Your Work-Life Balance

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions

Table of Contents

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions

> *" Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important."*

STEPHEN COVEY

Educator, Author and Speaker

Introduction — Out of Balance

It's another typical morning. The kids are running around, talking all at once about what they need as you scramble to get them out the door. Your phone is pinging with texts you can't read at the moment as you realize that you are just not going to make it to this early meeting if there is heavy traffic. You are going over your presentation in your head as your child tells you he forgot his homework, and you must go back to the house to get it.

Sound familiar?

No matter what scenario you encounter every morning, it's more difficult to achieve a balance between your work and your personal life today than in the past. Technology, rigid work schedules and increased demands to be available 24/7 can cause guilt, conflicts and stress in your everyday life. The key is to achieve work-life balance, defined as integrating career, personal, family and pleasurable activities to achieve equilibrium. This doesn't have to be an equal divide. But if you feel one or the other is getting too much of your time, your work-life balance is out of whack.

Work-life balance shouldn't be a trade-off between the four areas of your life: work, home, community and private self. It's not a competition. The goal should be to integrate them instead of viewing each area as a separate domain. As you read on, you will discover ways to find the work-life balance you need to be successful in all aspects of your life.

KnowledgeCity® Learning Solutions
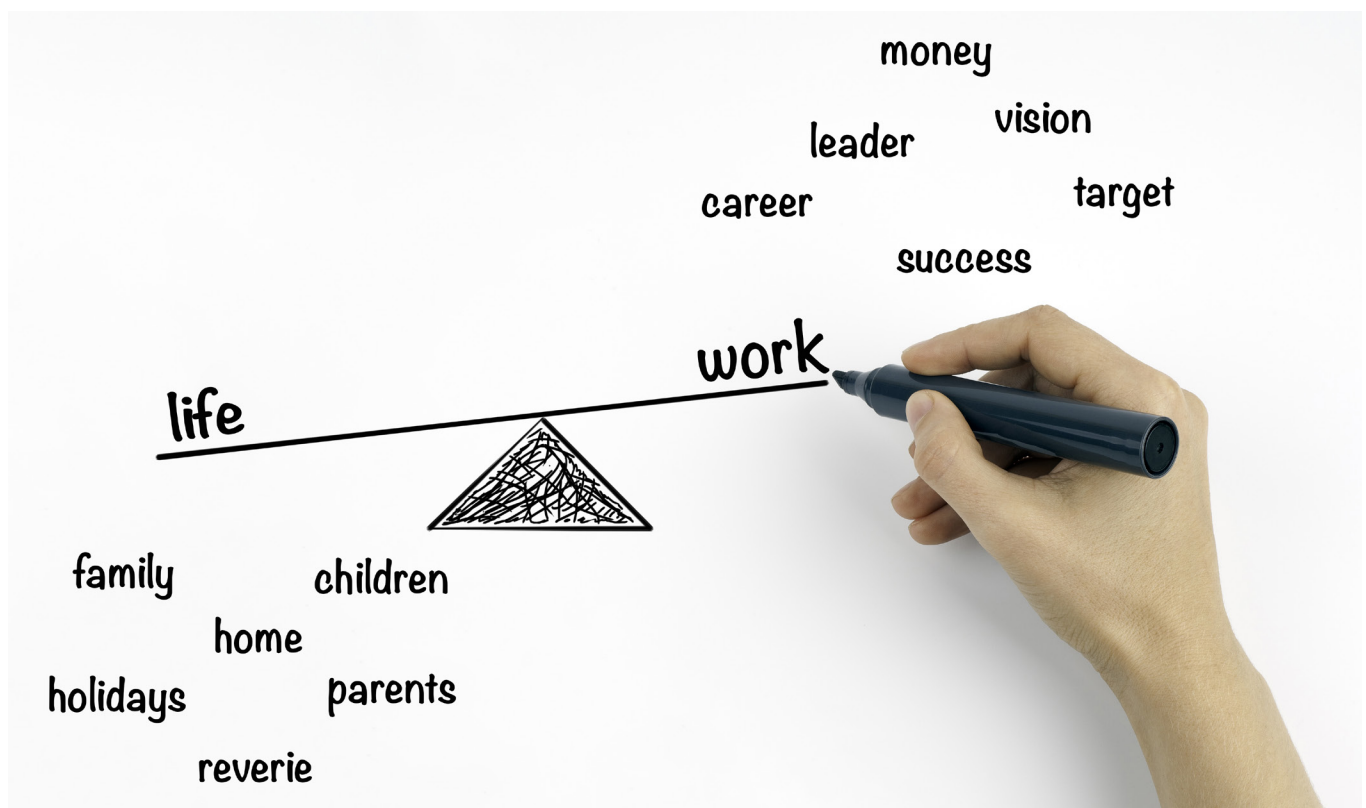
Why is Work-Life Balance Important?

Have you given up on trying to find balance in your life between work, personal life, family life and community?
When you're feeling stressed, something's got to give, and it can be a real dilemma trying to figure out what can go. For most people, it is the personal aspects: doing things that you like to do. But, constantly living in an unbalanced state eventually catches up with you, impacting your family life and relationships with coworkers, as well as your physical and mental health..
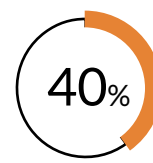
Those unbalanced feelings are shared by a large proportion of the population.
An April 2015 Workfront survey found:

89%
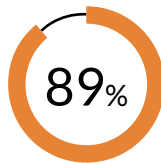
Of workers did NOT want to be contacted at home by their employers

50%

Missed important personal occasions because of work commitments

40%

Said work obligations ruined time with their families.

You are not alone if you think your work-life balance is skewed. Seventy-two percent of respondents to a Netsurvey said they do not have a good work-life balance. **Even more interesting is 77 percent of managers feel the same,** so your boss is not faring any better than you are in this area.

If you find yourself snapping at your kids or spouse for no reason when you come home from work, or if you get impatient with a coworker for an irritating but unimportant detail, your work-life balance needs some fine-tuning. Let's start with the work arena and look at some ways you can bring more balance to your workday.

Life Work Balance

Work

Self / Health

Family

Friends

Self / Health

Family

Friends

Work

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions

The Balancing Act at Work

It never fails — just when you think you have a handle on your workload, and you might be able to leave on time, something gets dumped on your desk and you can feel your blood pressure rising. Take a deep breath, center yourself and think about setting priorities. You set your priorities every day when you come in and then the inevitable interruptions begin.

Start by writing down job priorities before you start work. Writing down priorities gives them more gravity and helps you clear your head. Honestly estimate how much time your priorities will take. If you assign more time to a priority than you need, it gives you additional time to complete the next one.

Job stressors that impact your work-life balance can be clear or hidden.

For example, if you are dealing with a demanding, overbearing or just plain mean boss, your stress levels can skyrocket. Stick to your priorities and try not to let things get to you personally.

Inflexible schedules, overtime and vague job descriptions also contribute to work stress. What is the first step?

Tough as it may be, especially if you have a demanding boss, you start by writing down specific details about your stressors.

For example, if you find yourself being asked to work overtime without warning several times a week, try to figure out why this is happening. Identify the cause of the problem and talk about it with your boss clearly, calmly, and with a solution in mind.

Work stress

Inflexible schedules

Overtime

Vague job descriptions
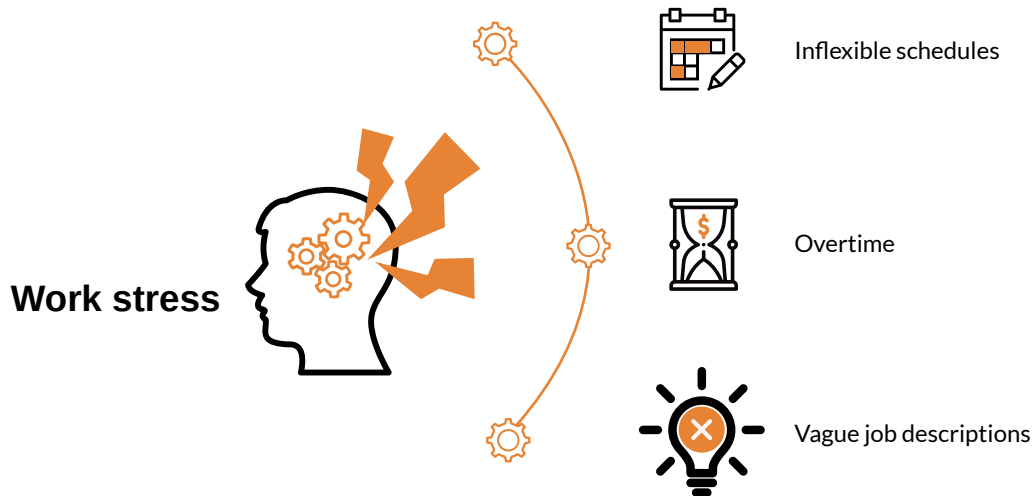
Let's look at some tools you can use to find better work-life balance at work.

KnowledgeCity® Learning Solutions

Tools for Obtaining Balance at Work

If talking to your boss is not an option, then concentrate on doing things for yourself that will help you to feel more balanced, in control and positive about your job. Write down a list of problems you regularly encounter at work that throw your work-life balance into a tailspin. Then, brainstorm and think of how these problems can be changed so they work for you.

Here are a few tips to feel more balanced at work:

1 Ask about flextime and/or telecommuting options

2 Take your lunch and get away from the office

3 Incorporate short breaks into your day and get away from your desk

4 Take advantage of on-the-job wellness programs

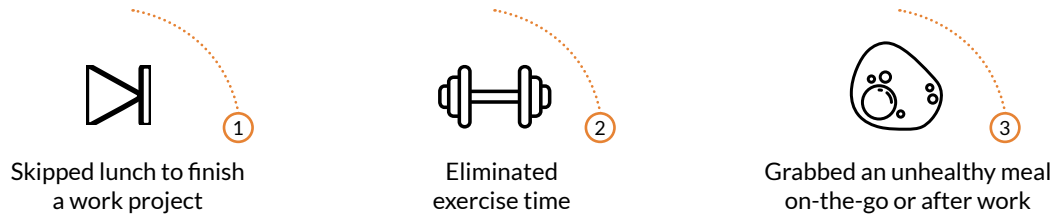**What about incompetent or passive-aggressive colleagues?**
One good approach is to keep a log of how someone else has negatively impacted your ability to do your job. While you don't want to be the office tattletale, discussing the problem with your supervisor in a calm, professional manner is the best approach. Don't finger point or blame. Simply cite how this impacts the company's reputation and productivity. Then, suggest a solution.

No matter how much we try to leave our work behind when we come home, if the workplace gets to you it will undoubtedly spill over into your personal life. Before you leave every day, take another deep breath and leave your job at your workplace. Easier said than done, so let's move on to the **"life"** part of the work-life balance system.

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions

The Balancing Act at Home

Keeping yourself healthy, eating right and exercising are key factors in coping with the work and personal stressors you encounter every day. You've probably done one of these things in the past week:

1   Skipped lunch to finish
a work project

2   Eliminated
exercise time

3   Grabbed an unhealthy meal
on-the-go or after work

When you're tired, stressed out and full of fast food, simple self-care like taking a walk or exercising can seem fairly unappealing. **So, what do most of us turn to?** Technology! That includes not only social media, but also using your phone, taking pictures, watching videos—you name it. A recent survey concluded Americans spend 11 hours a day using technology! Subtract the recommended sleep time of eight hours and that leaves a scant five hours to do other things. That's not a lot of time to spend with your family, exercising or even enjoying an outdoor activity.

What can you do?
Turn off your phone and other devices for short periods of time, gradually increasing the amount you are "device-free." Schedule some "me" time for yourself every day, even if it is only a half-hour before bed to read, meditate or just think. Let everyone know this is your time and not to interrupt you unless it is an emergency.
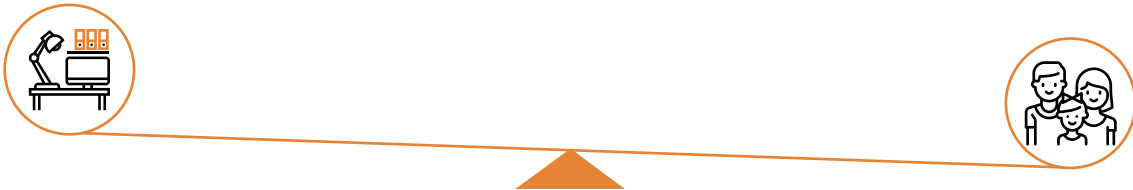
For some reason, we think scheduling time for ourselves, family and friends is not as important as scheduling work tasks. The time you allot to be with your friends and family is time that once lost, can never be regained. No one has ever regretted spending less time at the office and more time with their family and friends. Even though you may feel your job will grind to a halt without you being available 24/7, just remember that this old adage still holds true: The cemeteries are full of indispensable people.

By now, you may be identifying some work-life balance problems. **What are the signs that your work-life balance needs a tune-up?**

Slipping Out of Balance

With all our good intentions to keep things in balance, why do things go haywire?
The melting boundaries between home and workplace along with the nature of the global workforce contribute a great deal to this imbalance. With technology, the clear division between work and home are blurred. In a global economy, dealing with calls, texts and emails from different time zones can further distort these boundaries, impacting your work-life balance.

What if you turn off your phone and tablet?
In a culture of job insecurity, it may be necessary to keep your position, and that can mean being available 24/7. Technology has made it easy to do business around the clock with an expectation of constant availability, whether it is a weekend, holiday or even if you are home for any other reason.

Because of the recent recession, many jobs once done by two or three people are now being done by one person, putting additional strain on remaining workers and lengthening the workday. Many workers use weekends to catch up on what they couldn't accomplish during the workweek. No one wants to be labeled as uncooperative, so you continue the cycle until something happens that stops you in your tracks.

If you wake up in the morning and dread going to work, knowing you will be putting in long hours, and you are not sure what your job is based on an inaccurate job description, or are fearful of losing your job if you aren't available 24/7, you are experiencing the symptoms of work-life imbalance. Let's look at a few of these in more detail.

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions
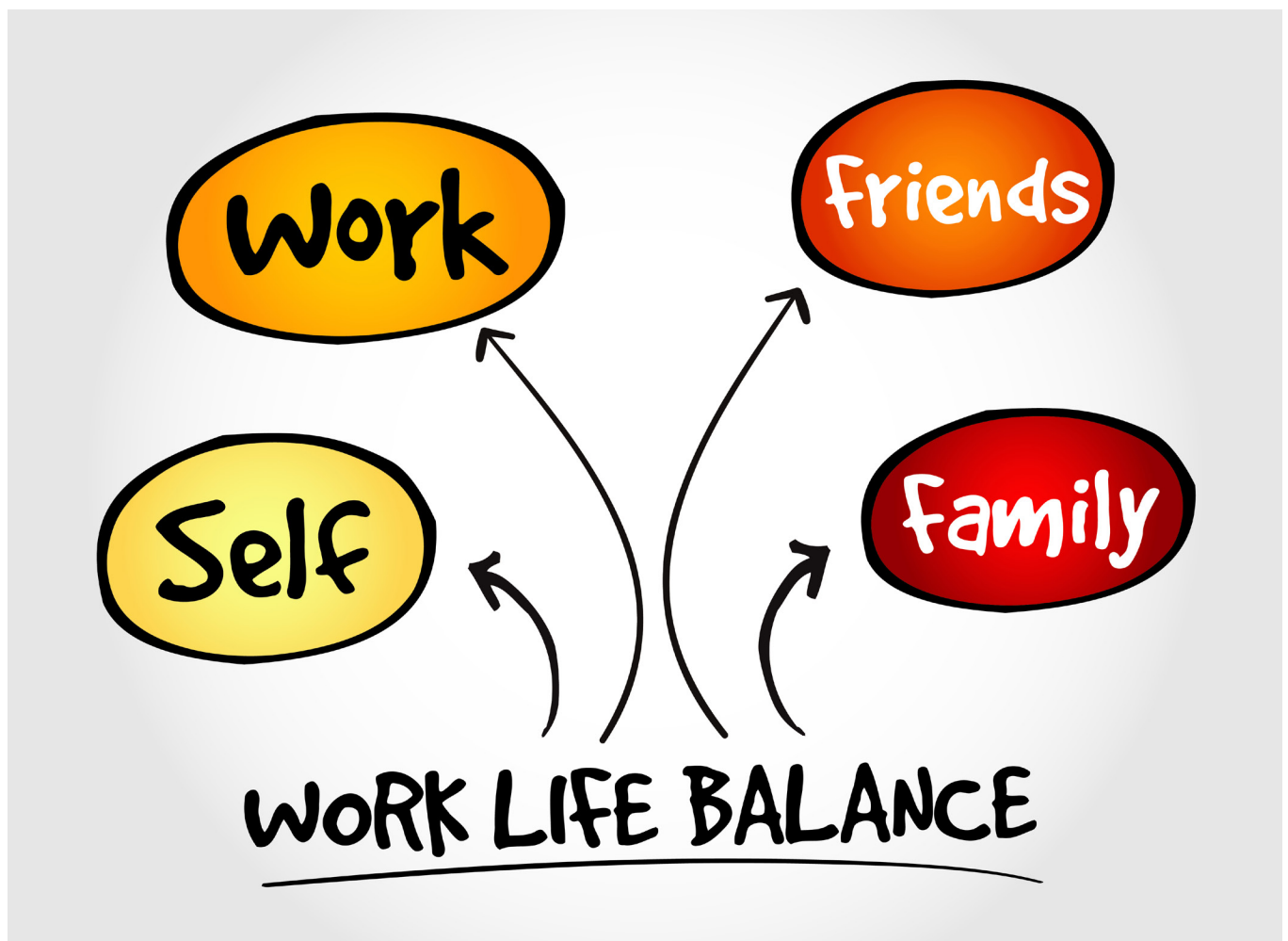
Signs of Work-Life Imbalance

What happens when you suffer work stress? Here are eight results:

Elevated stress can cause depression, making it more difficult to do your day-to-day tasks at home and work. Stress and depression can also suppress your immune system, resulting in physical illness. A rise in absenteeism may not be attributable to an actual illness. It may be the result of workplace stressors that overwhelm workers and force them to call in, despite fearing for their jobs.

Eating hurriedly at your desk, or not eating lunch at all, contributes to poor nutrition that also weakens your immune system and leaves you open to illness and a diminished ability to handle stress. Working late hours may find you hitting the drive-through at your local fast-food chain more often than you should, instead of relaxing over a nutritious meal.

Americans are suffering from a "sleep epidemic," finding it difficult to shut down. To get the recommended seven to eight hours a night, turn off your technology an hour before bedtime. Do something different, like reading or watching a relaxing television program.
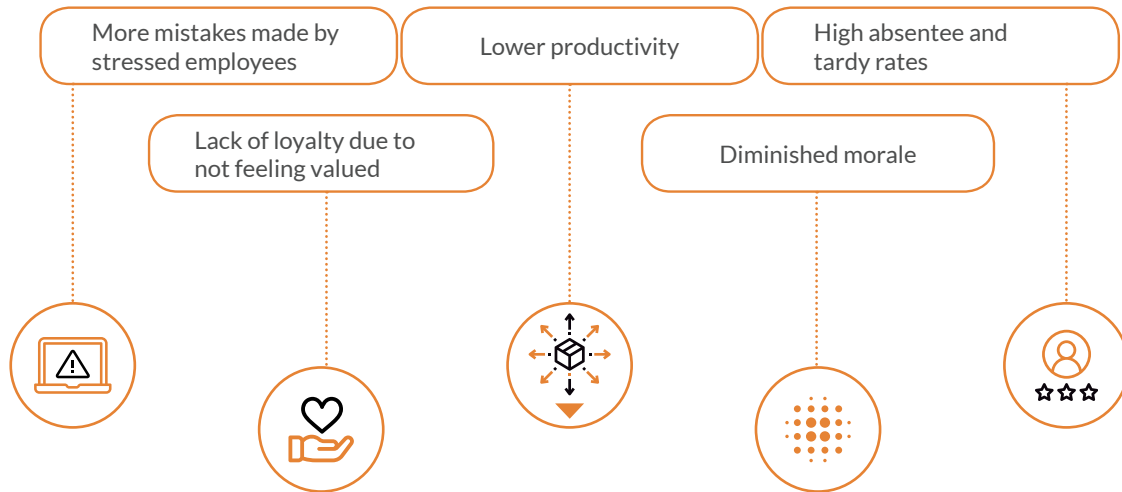
Burnout usually starts with not wanting to go to work, but it can also show itself in being short-tempered with coworkers or checking your social media accounts constantly instead of working. Boredom with your job can signal that it is time to look for a new one.

If you start to find yourself at odds with your family and friends due to work commitments, this is another signal that your life is out of balance. Working longer hours and missing important milestones in your loved ones' lives is a sign that you need to take stock of your work situation and think about making changes.

Work-life imbalance not only affects you and your loved ones, but it also affects your employer. Let's examine how this happens and the changes employers can make to mitigate the problems.

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions

Employers and Work-Life Balance

What are some of the results of poor work-life balance that impact employers?

More mistakes made by stressed employees	Lower productivity	High absentee and tardy rates
Lack of loyalty due to not feeling valued		Diminished morale

Even in a down economy, employees will leave jobs if they no longer feel valued and appreciated by their employers. What can employers do to change the situation? Minimal investments can produce maximum profits with employees' work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Employers can start by offering:

1 Flexible work schedules

2 Telecommuting options

3 Wellness programs

Start by offering flexible start-and-stop work schedules. If employees are available at peak times, adjusting their schedules makes a big difference in employee morale. If your company still uses structured time off, consider changing to a flexible time-off program that does not require employees to make up excuses to fit into the structure.

When scheduling meetings or events, be cognizant of timing. With flexible scheduling, meetings held early in the morning or late in the day can be changed to the core times when employees are onsite.
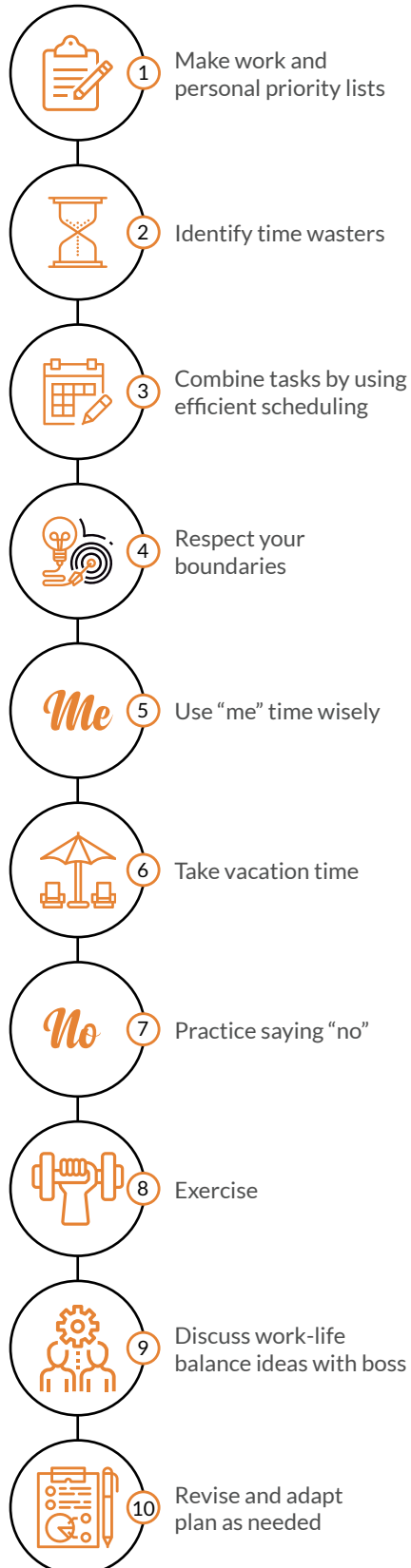
Telecommuting is the upside of technology and increases employee satisfaction and productivity. For years, companies judged whether a person was working by observation. New management techniques use objectives to measure whether the work is being done. In other words, it is not how long you sit at your desk every day, but the finished product that is important.

Healthy employees usually experience less stress on the job, so wellness programs can prove beneficial to providing a venue for exercise, information and getting employees away from their desks. Wellness programs provide an additional employer benefit by reducing health care costs.

If your employer begins to change, what tools can you use to start your personal work-life balance change? Let's find out.

KnowledgeCity®
Learning Solutions

Tools to Create a Personal Work-Life Balance Plan

Creating a work-life balance plan is an evolving process requiring regular examination and tweaking. Here are ten tools to get you started.

1. Make work and personal priority lists

2. Identify time wasters

3. Combine tasks by using efficient scheduling

4. Respect your boundaries

5. **Me** Use "me" time wisely

6. Take vacation time

7. **No** Practice saying "no"

8. Exercise

9. Discuss work-life balance ideas with boss

10. Revise and adapt plan as needed

Start by setting aside two hours when you won't be interrupted, even if it means you need to go to the local coffee shop or park. Write all the things you do every day on a regular basis, dividing them into work and personal categories.

Identify four items from the list that you consider time wasters. Eliminate two of those, and then look at ways you can combine these tasks, so they can be done at the same time, such as doing the laundry while answering emails. You can also eliminate time wasters by using efficient scheduling. Making a list of what needs to be done and arranging them in a logical manner will free up more time. Figure out the best way to get everything done in one trip.

Respecting your boundaries starts with you, and it can be difficult. Set aside the amount of time you need to recharge yourself. Let everyone know this is your time and you can't be interrupted unless it is a legitimate emergency. This may take a few attempts but keep at it until everyone is used to the process. **What do you do with your newfound "me" time?** That's up to you, whether it is taking a walk or having a family dinner. Remember, change is not easy, so don't try to do everything all at once. Start with one or two small changes and go from there.

Did you know 52 percent of workers took no vacation time at all in 2017? Why? Fear of losing their jobs or coming back to a work overload are two reasons. If your fellow coworkers don't take vacation time, you may feel guilty about taking time off, or even resentment. Taking vacation time has been shown to increase productivity.

Why is saying "no" so difficult? We all want to be team players, so when we get a request at work, we hate to refuse for fear of looking uncooperative. When someone makes a request, use these steps:

Weigh the request carefully

Don't react immediately

Yes/No If the request is high priority, say "yes"; If not, say "no" without excuses or reasons

This is not an easy habit but understanding how to prioritize helps make the decision easier.

Exercise – Yes, you know you should do it! For work-life balance, it is critical to find a way to incorporate it into your life without making it another stressor. Get away from your desk at lunch and take a walk, or get involved in a sport your family can enjoy together. You don't need a gym to exercise.

Discussing what you need to make your work-life balance better won't be easy. Before meeting with your supervisor, make a specific list of what you would like and give the reasons why it will make you more productive and a better employee. Last, but not least, keep revising your plan every month. Remember, it takes about two weeks for any change to become permanent, so keep at it.

KnowledgeCity® Learning Solutions

Balance Achieved!

With the tools you now have in hand, you can start finding a better work-life balance and making changes to improve your life. The hardest part is finding the time to get started on creating your plan. Finding a mentor who seems to have the work-life balance you want can help you get started and keep on track by making suggestions for your own plan.

If finding that elusive work-life balance seems out of reach, stop and ask yourself this question: What is most important to me for the life I want to live? As your life goes on, continue to ask yourself this question and adjust. Work-life balance is not about work and life in equal proportions. Just make sure one does not overtake the other to your detriment.

Achieving work-life balance is essential to your success in every facet of your life and career. With your new knowledge and tips, you are well on your way to finding the perfect combination of factors to help you achieve your personal work-life balance.

KnowledgeCity®
Finding Your
Work-Life Balance