

## **Warning signs**

Here are some warning signs that your work and family pressures may be out of balance in your own life:

### **Practical Signs**

- You can't attend to child-care emergencies.
- You rarely see your family any more.
- You can't accommodate family responsibilities that are important to you.
- Your spouse gives you an ultimatum.
- The spouse/family take care of big issues without your help.
- You feel tired when you wake up, and dread another day of work.
- Your family takes outings or small holidays without you.

### **Emotional Signs**

- Your life is not working the way you want.
- You feel you are working too hard for too little reward.
- You're emotionally drained at the end of the day.
- You're in a bad mood too often, or you feel resentment toward your job or your responsibilities.
- You suddenly notice you haven't enjoyed yourself for a long time
  - In extreme cases, you may get frequent migraines, rashes, or other stress-related illnesses.

*If you recognise that your life is out of balance, try not to make any rash major decisions.*

*Think things through carefully and try making small adjustments in several areas of your life.*

The ideas and strategies outlined in this brochure are often beneficial, but are not comprehensive. Assistance from a professional counsellor may help you to make quicker progress. Remember to use your workplace EAP is a resource.

**Call your EAP on  
1800 056 076**

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Gryphon Psychology provide a free professional, independent and confidential counselling and consulting service. This service assists employees in both the private and public sectors to find solutions to any work or personal / family problems that are affecting their quality of life and which may be impacting on their effectiveness at work. If needed, our counsellors can make referrals to specialist agencies for particular problems, or for ongoing support.

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***Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)  
is completely confidential,  
and provided by your employer  
at no cost to you.***

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# Balancing Work and Family



1800 056 076

**M**ost people admit that holding onto a job nowadays requires a large amount of time and effort. As jobs become more intense but less secure, there is a sense that we must devote even more time to the workplace to be seen to be a committed employee. Many people are beginning to talk about their private concerns of missing out in the home/family area.

Don't wait until your loved ones no longer respond to you - start taking an honest look at your life now and make some changes.

## ***Short term strategies***

Juggling your time and attention between work and family involves compromise and choice. To manage family and work requires the same skills that managers use to run large companies.

### **(1) Self management techniques**

Try concentrating on top-priority responsibilities, delegating more often, avoiding time-wasting meetings and phone calls, learning to say no, and intentionally giving a higher priority to family activities, events, and responsibilities. It can help to mark your family responsibilities on your calendar and treat them like important appointments.

### **(2) Change expectations**

Our changing society requires changes to our expectations of what it means to be a good spouse or parent. Trying to be 'supermum' or 'superdad' dooms working parents to a sense of failure. Change your expectations of yourself from *perfection* to

*good enough* and you may find yourself managing better at work and at home.

### **(3) Goal setting**

Everyone in the family has different needs and desires, and the extent to which these are met can determine satisfaction with family life. The secret to meeting everyone's needs and desires is to have well formed goals. This means:

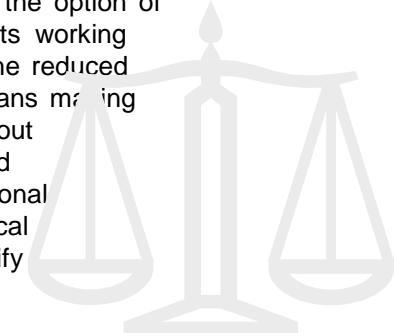
- stating what you want (rather than what you don't want)
- that achieving the goal is a true benefit to you
- knowing when you have achieved the goal because it can be seen, heard or touched
- having what is necessary (eg. money, time, energy, etc) to achieve the goal
- knowing how achieving this goal will affect the rest of your life

## ***Mid term strategies***

Where you have some control of your working life, take a look at the factors that create the imbalance. These include company policies, lifestyle choices, even day-to-day job activities. Don't try to change everything at once - make small changes to improve things a little at a time.

### **(1) Sharing part-time work**

Seriously consider the option of one or both parents working part-time. While the reduced overall income means making choices about economic standard of living, the emotional and/or psycho-logical benefits may justify



the financial sacrifice.

Families in this situation are able to share the parenting and other home tasks, and continue to earn income and develop careers, albeit at a reduced pace.

## **(2) Time and task management**

Write a list of all the activities that you and your family currently do. Include everything from sleeping to eating, and then brainstorm how each item might be better managed, i.e. are the children old enough to get their own breakfast, get dressed, pack their lunch? If they could be taught to do just one of these tasks, that time could be allocated for something else. Perhaps you prepare more than one meal at a time, and freeze a meal for later in the week.

You may find that almost every task can be approached differently for a better outcome. Try to focus on what is important rather than urgent (some things which urgently demand your attention turn out to be unimportant!)

## ***Communication***

A family diary in which all activities are listed is an essential first step toward effective family communication.

People in families also need to talk regularly - apart from the benefits talking together has on family health, it is essential for dealing with current issues, decision making and planning.

Finding time for talking together is becoming more of a problem for families these days. No longer is it the norm for the whole family to sit together for meals every day. So parents and kids need to know how to quickly arrange a time and a place to talk important things through when necessary.

Adult partners also need to prioritise time to nurture their relationship, rather than let it come last at the end of the day when both are tired. The partner / spouse relationship is the foundation of the family, and time must be allocated to nurture it.