



Tips and Tricks for Finding Balance and Getting Back Time in Your Day

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It's never easy...

- Worklife **imbalance** causes chaos, feelings of dissatisfaction & being overwhelmed
- This leads to a cycle of not accomplishing enough which leads despair which makes you even less productive...
- There are no foolproof methods for achieving worklife balance.
- There *are* tips that can help you manage your day and get back time to enjoy family and elements of life that make you *whole!*

Know your Internal Time Clock

- Are you a Morning Person? Does your energy peak in the Afternoon? Are you at your best in the Evening? Do you like to work Late at Night?
- Know your internal time clock and “strike while the iron is hot”!
- Use your high-focus periods for tasks that require a significant amount of mental energy.
- Save the times where you find yourself lagging for less important tasks (email, recording grades, etc.).

Deal with Email Effectively

- Check your Inbox 2/3 times a day (early morning, evening, late at night, etc.) *...or...*
- Keep tabs on it throughout the day.
- Learn to quickly sort emails – junk (delete), fast responses, high priority, larger projects
- Create a filing system (“To Do”, “Urgent”, “In-Process”, “Check Back”, “Waiting for Replies”, “Save”)

Kick-Start your Motivation

- Procrastination can derail productivity and waste time.
- If a task seems onerous, tell yourself that you will do it for *just 10 minutes* (you may find that after 10 minutes you can do it for longer...).
- Do the easiest/least onerous part first.
- Set deadlines for yourself – promise a draft or an update to someone by a certain time/date.
- Enlist collaborators – to brainstorm, review, advise, discuss...

Say “No”

- Why is it hard to say “No”?
 - You have to overcome feelings of guilt.
 - You might fear repercussions.
- BUT IT HAS TO BE DONE...
- Remember...overextending your commitments doesn't help you or them...you don't have time to do your best, you are too tired and stressed to do quality work, other commitments suffer...consequently so does your self-image and your attitude...

Ask for Help!

- Delegate, delegate, delegate...
 - To who? Spouse, significant other, parent, sibling, child, friend, colleague, secretary, maid, gardener...
- Don't fall prey to the excuses...
 - “I can do it faster myself.”
 - “It's my responsibility.”
 - “They will get mad at me if I ask.”
 - “They won't do as good a job as I will.”
 - “They aren't capable of doing it.”
- **LEARN TO LIVE WITH GOOD ENOUGH....**

Steal Back Time

- You spend lots of your day waiting....
 - at the airport, riding in the car
 - at the doctor's office
 - in the checkout line
 - in the drive-through at the bank, pharmacy, school
 - picking up kids from dance, ball practice, piano
- Use this time...what can you do in 10 minutes?
 - Read articles, review papers
 - Check email on your cell phone
 - Grade homework, labs, exams

Steal Back Time

- Be conscious of when you do your thinking...
 - Getting ready in the morning?
 - Driving to and from work?
 - When you go to bed?
 - When you first wake up?
 - When you get to work?
- Use this time to plan, solve problems, think ahead, practice, reflect...instead of worry or daydream
 - Keep a pen and paper handy to write things down

Think about how you Process Work

- You waste time and mental energy when you don't process work efficiently or process items multiple times.
- Lingering, unresolved tasks generate stress.
 - Use **FIFO** – First in, First out
 - Handle things once (Toss, Do, Delegate or Plan)
 - Keep to-do lists
 - Keep a work log (times, tasks) to gain a better understanding of how your process work.

Make Time for Yourself

- You have to refuel or you *will* burn out...stressed-out, unhappy people aren't effective...or pleasant
- Pick 1 activity that you like and make it a priority...
- Spend at least 15 minutes a day on something just for you, something you enjoy.
- Find ways to squeeze in other things you enjoy into your day – listen to music in the car or your office, read a book, play a game, take a bubble bath, grab a cup of Starbucks on the way to work, keep some chocolate in your office...

Stop Doing....

- Carefully examine your motives and self-expectations, your pressure points – why do you **HAVE** to do things that way...
 - Your mom always did it.
 - Everyone else does it.
 - I'm supposed to do it.
 - Everyone expects me to do it.
- Pick one thing...at home, at work, at your kids' school, at church...and stop doing it...

When its Too Much!

- Even the most poised, mature and with-it people will crack under enough pressure...
- How do you find balance in these moments?
Consider what would happen if it didn't get done.
 - Would your family really suffer if you order take-out for dinner?
 - Would your career suffer if you miss that meeting or don't get those papers graded?
 - Could you ask for an extension on that deadline?
 - Can you get by with 80% effort on that task?

Summary

- Know Your Internal Clock
- Deal with Email Effectively
- Kick-Start your Motivation
- Say “No”
- Ask for Help
- Steal Back Time
- Think about how you Process Work
- Make Time for Yourself
- Stop Doing
- When it’s Too Much!

References

- Leshko, Christina, “Tips and Tricks for Finding Balance and Getting Back Time in your Day”, (based on research of Deborah Carr), *Achieving Stability Between Work & Life Series*, Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, & Mathematics, Rutgers University,



Questions?

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