

## Work/life balance

Work/life balance is a broad concept that encompasses prioritising between *work* (including career and ambition) on one hand, and *life* (including areas such as health, leisure, family, pleasure and spiritual development) on the other.

There are also two key concepts related to work/life balance - achievement and enjoyment. *Achievement* can be related to setting and achieving the goals we have in life i.e. buying a new house, job satisfaction, further education etc. *Enjoyment* is related not just to happiness, but also pride, satisfaction, celebration, love, and a sense of wellbeing.

Life will often deliver the value and balance we desire when we are achieving and enjoying something every day in all the important areas of our lives.

Therefore, a good working definition of work/life balance is *meaningful daily achievement and enjoyment in each of our important life quadrants*. These *life quadrants* will vary for each person but may include, for example, work, family, friends and self (WorkLifeBalance.com).

## Time management

Time management is the act or process of exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase efficiency or productivity. Initially, time management referred to just business or work activities, but the term has now broadened to also include personal activities.

## Time management tips

Time management may be aided by a range of skills, tools, and techniques involving the following:

### Plan and organise

Using time to think and plan is time well spent. We should remember the five Ps - *Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance*, and organise in a way that makes sense to us.

### Set goals

Goal setting increases our motivation and gives our life direction, as well as directing the way we spend our time. We should set goals which are S.M.A.R.T - Specific, Measurable, Realistic, Achievable and Time bound, and our optimum goals are those which cause us to stretch, but do not break us.



*If we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier, and a great deal more creative (McGee-Cooper, 1983).*

## Prioritise

Prioritising our time means organising our work tasks in order of urgency or importance. By doing this we can be sure that our most important jobs are finished on time and not left to the last minute.

We should also apply the *80/20 Rule*, originally stated by the Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto. He noted that 80 percent of the reward comes from 20 percent of the effort, so the trick to prioritising is to isolate and identify that valuable 20 percent.

## Use a 'To Do' list and/or calendar

By using and applying these tools, we will be aware of what needs to be done and in what time frame, to ensure deadlines are being met and tasks are getting done as required.

## Be flexible

Allow time for interruptions. Remember that nothing goes 100% right 100% of the time! Be prepared, and factor in the possibility of distractions and setbacks.

## Avoid being a perfectionist

Some tasks do need to be closer to perfect than others, but perfectionism and paying unnecessary attention to detail, can take valuable time away from addressing other more pressing matters/tasks.

## Conquer procrastination

Procrastination is the art of convincing ourselves that we can put off until tomorrow what we should be doing today. It is the thief of time, and can result in other issues apart

from simply racing against time to get a job completed (e.g. impacting project deadlines for other team members at work).

### Learn to say 'no'

The first thing we must be convinced about is that our priorities are important — this seems to be the hardest part in learning to say 'no'. Once convinced of the importance of these priorities, saying 'no' to the unimportant in life becomes easier to do and manage.

### Delegate

Learn the art of delegation. We need to ask ourselves, 'What am I currently doing that someone else could do?'

### Celebrate achievements

Even for small successes, celebrate achievement of goals. We should promise ourselves a reward for completing each task, or finishing the total job. Then keep a promise to ourselves and indulge in our reward. Doing so will help us maintain the necessary balance in life between work and play.

### Motivation

Work/life balance, time management, and examining the impact of motivation on our behaviour are all linked. Motivation can be defined as providing an individual with a motive for taking action towards a desired state or away from an undesired state. It can't be directly observed, but can be inferred from an individual's behaviours (Macquarie Dictionary, 2003).

Understanding what drives our behaviour and choices allows us to recognise and change those behaviours and choices. The following information highlights some points that are worth considering in relation to the choices we make, and what motivates those behaviours (Hutchison, 2008; Bowman, 2003):

- Each person is responsible for the choices he or she makes within the limits of freedom.
- Each individual has the opportunity to define their behaviour and change it.
- People always have the capacity to change themselves, even to make radical change.
- Human behaviour is driven by a desire for growth, personal meaning, and competence and by a need to experience a bond with others.
- People are always motivated to do something.

To motivate someone to do something you have to provide a stronger incentive than they already have, not to do something.

- Humans are complex, and no two individuals are the same. Humans are also very changeable, and what works one moment will not work the next. Motivation is extremely contextual.
- Motivation is affected by intrinsic and extrinsic considerations, thus the individual and the environment both play a role.

### Summary

We have control over the decisions we make throughout our lives, and understanding those choices, where they might be coming from, what is motivating them, and the fact that we have the ability to exercise control, is important for our mental health and wellbeing. In so doing, it gives us charge over our lives, rather than being at the mercy of others' decisions, and enables us to more effectively implement strategies that can bring balance to our lives.

### References

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- WorkLifeBalance.com 2003, *Work-Life Balance Defined – What it really means*, retrieved 12 May 2010, <<http://worklifebalance.com/>>. otherwise stated, this workbook includes content developed

*This fact sheet is one in a series of different life skills topics, and is a 'snapshot' of the **Work/life balance** module that forms part of a range of training courses produced by the OzHelp Foundation as part of our Workforce Development and Graduate Development Programs. For more information, contact our office or visit [www.ozhelp.org.au](http://www.ozhelp.org.au). The information presented in this fact sheet was correct at the time of publication.*

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