

WORK/LIFE BALANCE 101

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WORK/LIFE BALANCE

What is balance? If you look around, you'll probably notice that the happiest, most productive people you know are those who have learned to combine work, relationships with friends and family and leisure time into a satisfying whole. These "balance experts" know that each of these elements of their lives is needed to support the other two. People with balanced lives:

- ❑ Learn to evaluate priorities and focus on the "big picture."
- ❑ Know how to use long-range planning, prioritizing and organizational skills to make sense out of conflicting demands.
- ❑ See a warning light go off when the demands of work intrude on personal time, or when personal responsibilities distract them on the job.
- ❑ Know that leisure time—including private time away from friends and family members—is essential to rejuvenate their spirits.
- ❑ Approach their commitments with well-defined goals and a positive attitude.
- ❑ Value open communication with their employers, co-workers, friends and family members.
- ❑ Learn how to shift gears when it's time to refocus their priorities.

Hopefully, this Resource Packet will help you be more successful in all of these areas!

Remember, Claremont EAP provides the full-range of services to support you and your family members in terms of work/life balance and general well-being:

- ❑ Dependent care consultation and referral
- ❑ Counseling
- ❑ Legal consultations
- ❑ Financial consultations
- ❑ Community resources

Claremont distributes this information to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and personal matters.
For confidential help, call: 800-834-3773 or visit www.claremonteap.com.

Exercise: Balancing Work, Family/Friends and Personal Needs

Use this exercise to measure the degree of balance you have between the demands of work, family/friends and personal time.

Answer each question with a number from this scale:

ALWAYS	4	3	2	NEVER
5				1

AT HOME

- Do your family/friends complain that you don't spend enough time with them?
- Do you often feel anxious about the demands of your family/friends?
- Do responsibilities at home make you resentful?
- Do you expect your family to adapt to your career needs?

SUBTOTAL

AT WORK

- Do you feel frustrated because your income is not enough?
- Do you feel guilty about the time you spend on your career?
- Do you resent having to bring work home?
- Do you worry that your work interferes with family needs?

SUBTOTAL

PERSONAL

- Do you feel there's never enough time for yourself?
- Do you feel guilty about taking a vacation?
- Do you wish you got more exercise?
- Do you feel you never get to do what you like to do?

SUBTOTAL

TOTAL

A total score of less than 20 indicates you've learned to balance family/friends, career and personal needs successfully.

21-30 indicates a good balance with some need for improvement.

31-40 indicates a fair balance.

41-50 you're struggling to keep your life balanced and probably feel the strain.

51-60 shows that you're barely managing the juggling act of home, career and personal needs. For confidential help, please call Claremont EAP at 800-834-3773.

A high score in only one area indicates a need to organize your life so that area takes less of your time and energy. To maintain your health and well-being, stay committed to balance.

Balancing Your Two Lives (Home and Work)

Among the essential ingredients of a balanced life are meaningful activity, physical and mental health, satisfying relationships and peace of mind. To achieve that balance, you must successfully juggle the demands of your work, personal life, family and relationships.

"If you're spending too much time working, and your personal time disappears, it's likely you'll become exhausted, stressed and irritable," says Bee Epstein, Ph.D., a consultant and speaker in Carmel, California, who specializes in personal and workplace performance. "Each of us has an average of 112 waking hours a week in which to satisfy all of our responsibilities. The more successful we are at completing our work and taking time for ourselves on a regular basis, the more often we'll feel satisfied and in control of our lives."

Professional Balance

Dr. Epstein says you should do three things every morning to start your workday with a sense of balance and purpose:

- ✓ Eat breakfast.
- ✓ List your daily goals.
- ✓ Determine your top priorities to plan your day.

"When setting your goals for the day, ask yourself, 'If only one thing could be done today, which activity would it be?' The answer should be your top priority," she says. "To build your list, ask yourself, 'If only one more thing could be done today, what should it be?' It's best to prioritize your list according to importance, not how easily a task can be completed."

You may find you feel out of balance when your workspace is disorganized. The following organizing system, can make it easier for you to find things you need when you need them:

- ✓ Arrange a specific place for files and tools and put them back after you use them.
- ✓ Don't use your desktop for storage. It should hold only those items you use every day.
- ✓ Create a workable filing system to avoid paperwork pileup.
- ✓ Use color coding. It makes any item easier to find.

Don't save everything you think you might need someday. Clutter makes it more difficult to find what you really need.

Balancing Your Two Lives (Home and Work)

CONTINUED

During the last 10 minutes of every workday, make a list of what you have accomplished. "Give yourself credit for what you get done each day, and you'll go home with a sense of completion instead of frustration about what you didn't get done," Dr. Epstein says.

Then, outline what you need to tackle tomorrow.

Finally, make a list of the work-related problems you could be taking home. "Then tear up the list and throw it away to rid your mind of unfinished business and worries," she says. "Doing so will help you make a clean transition to your personal and home life."

Personal Balance

The greatest challenge for many of us is to carve out time for ourselves despite the unceasing demands of work, family and relationships. "But it's imperative you make time for rest and relaxation," Dr. Epstein says.

Begin by setting aside the equivalent of an hour a day in which you do things you want to do. You can schedule that hour before or after work. Treat these appointments with yourself with as much respect as you would a meeting with a client or supervisor. Studies have found that people who take time for physical and mental rejuvenation accomplish more and are happier than those who don't take the time.

Creative people often get their best ideas while taking a walk, gardening or taking part in activities not related to work. "People who use their evenings, weekends and vacations for personal rejuvenation are more energetic and productive at work and play because they're living a life that is in balance," Dr. Epstein says.

Ways to Achieve Balance

Life can be a juggling act. Work, family and personal needs compete for your time and attention, but a sense of balance can help you create a rich and varied life free from conflicting demands. Here are some ways to help you achieve balance:

At Home

- **Spend time with your children.** Strengthen your youngsters' self-esteem and build a positive relationship that will last a lifetime by spending as much time with them as you can.
- **Make meal times special.** Dine with loved ones several times a week. Make the dinner table a place for family members and friends to share news and excitement. Serve healthy meals that everyone enjoys.
- **Hold family meetings.** Use regular meetings to discuss goals, problems, family events and to assign household chores.
- **Maintain a calendar of family activities.** Use colorful markers to note all appointments, meetings and special family occasions. Post the calendar where everyone can use it.
- **Have fun with your family and friends.** Plan fun family activities. Exercise together; go on bike rides, hikes or day trips to relaxing places. Join fundraising walks and fun runs.

At Work

- **Plan, prioritize and organize your work life.** Make long- and short-range plans for individual projects. Prioritize each day's tasks, listing the most important jobs first. Set a deadline for each task so you can complete the project on time.
- **Take breaks.** Breaks help you concentrate. Get up and stretch or take a short walk, if possible.
- **Use your lunch hour.** Write a letter, pick up some groceries or make personal phone calls. Schedule a doctor appointment, read a book or think of ways to improve your work/life balance while you rest.
- **Sharpen your communication skills.** You'll have fewer problems at work (and at home) if you can express yourself clearly and understand others. Talk with your supervisor if you're having any problems at work.

Leisure Time

- **Cultivate personal interests.** Take time for gardening, golf or crafts activities. Sign up for art classes. Join a bowling league. Learn to play the guitar.
- **Build regular exercise into your routine.** Join a health center or explore other options for regular exercise. Put on the calendar the time you've committed to exercise. Make "exercise dates" with a friend to help build commitment and fun into your workout.
- **Take mini-vacations.** A day trip to the country can add variety and relaxation to your life at a low cost.
- **Use your employer's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** Claremont can help you find child care and refer you to social services, community resources, educational opportunities and seminars that can help you learn how to balance work and family demands. Call us at 800-834-3773.

The Family Stress Test How Stressed Is Your Family?

Take this quiz to help you evaluate your family's stress level. Score 0 if the statement is never true for your family, 1 if it's rarely true, 2 if it's sometimes true and 3 if it's always true.

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|--|--|
| 1. ___ We often talk about our feelings. | 2. ___ It seems like we argue a lot. |
| 3. ___ I know what's important to my kids. | 4. ___ (For couples) Sometimes marriage is disappointing. |
| 5. ___ (For single parents) I'm comfortable being single. | 6. ___ The kids get upset that we argue. |
| 7. ___ We have enough money for the important things. | 8. ___ We have conflicts about how much money to spend and on what. |
| 9. ___ Work is important, but family is our top priority. | 10. ___ We don't listen enough. |
| 11. ___ (For couples) Our relationship is strong. | 12. ___ (For single parents) My kids are upset when I date. |
| 13. ___ (For couples) We both feel good about our roles as parents. | 14. ___ It seems as if someone's always mad at someone else. |
| 15. ___ (For single parents) The kids like my choice of dates. | 16. ___ Too much work is getting to me. |
| 17. ___ Tension in our house is rare. | 18. ___ (For single parents) Being single has been very hard for me. |
| 19. ___ The kids are doing well in school. | 20. ___ There's never enough time. |
| 21. ___ Everyone in the family has a job and does it without being nagged. | 22. ___ (For couples) We argue about who should do what with the kids. |
| 23. ___ We eat together every day. | 24. ___ It's impossible to get the kids to do anything around here. |
| 25. ___ Vacations together turn out well. | 26. ___ I've been called in to school to discuss my child's behavior. |

Total Odd Score: _____

Total Even Score: _____

To score: Total your scores for odd-numbered questions and even-numbered questions separately. Your goal is to have a high odd score and a low even score. Both are positive signs of your family's stress skills.

What Your Scores Mean

For scores of 30 and above (odd) or 15 and less (even): Congratulations! Your family has good skills and attitudes which help you handle life's stresses. This makes your home-life rich and satisfying.

22-29 (odd) or 15-21 (even): You have a strong start. Try practicing your good skills and positive attitudes more to create even more harmony at home.

15-21 (odd) or 22-29 (even): You're probably under many stresses. Look carefully at these questions and think about way to improve your score. Remember: It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help.

15 and less (odd) or 30 and above (even): Taking action now is very important to your family's health and happiness. Reach out to friends, family or professional help for a great boost when times are tough. Remember, you have confidential counseling services through Claremont EAP.

Elder Care: Know Your Options

Many employees care for aging parents and relatives. Here is some helpful information to help navigate the world of elder care.

Where to Find Information

- Your elder's healthcare provider may be able to refer you to appropriate services.
- Call national, state and local councils on aging.
- Social service agencies, hospitals and religious, community and senior advocacy organizations can put you in touch with the resources you need.
- Claremont EAP can connect you to elder care resources anywhere in the country. Please call 800-834-3773.

Elder Care Services

Home-Based Services

Home health services allow seniors to remain in their own homes or in your home. Often coordinated through a home health agency, these services may include household help, physical therapists, social workers and skilled nursing. Community organizations also provide many free or reduced-cost home health services, including a friendly visitor program, emergency telephone response systems, meals-on-wheels and transportation.

Adult Health Day Care

Adult day care centers care for adults who are unable to remain at home alone during the day. For working people with frail parents, adult day care can be a compassionate alternative to 24-hour nursing home care. There are adult social day care centers that focus on the social and emotional needs of the elder but are more structured than a senior center. Social day care provides structured day supervision that includes enjoyable activities for the elder.

Adult Foster Care

These are programs that provide elders with a room, board and personal care:

Nursing Homes

Nursing homes provide 24-hour skilled nursing services to individuals who need extended care but not hospitalization. Nursing homes generally offer different levels of care, ranging from custodial care for those who need help with personal care, to skilled nursing care for those who require intensive care and supervision by a registered nurse.

Retirement Housing

Residential complexes for seniors provide housing in a non-institutionalized setting, with supportive services and skilled nursing.

Respite Care

These programs provide occasional, temporary assistance to you or your elder's caregiver.

**For confidential help regarding Elder Care and more,
call Claremont EAP at 800-834-3773 or visit www.claremonteap.com.**