

Work-Life Balance – A Continuous Journey

By Nancy H. Verhoeven

I have a family, 2 children under 5 years old, my own business and I want to enjoy all of them to the fullest. So how do I do this? This was my initial question to myself. I want so much yet there are only so many hours in a day. How can I get there?

I once thought that I could define my ‘balanced life’ and then just get there by prioritizing. What I didn’t realize at the time was that once I arrived at the ideal, something else changed and the initial definition of balance was no longer valid. That is when I came to understand that finding a balance in your life is not something that you can define once, but rather it is a journey and an ever-changing target which requires continuous effort and adjustments.

How do we manage the stress versus being overwhelmed by it? Stress has a very powerful and often negative impact on each and every one of us. It is impossible to completely eliminate the stress that we feel from combining work with family and other outside interests and we probably even need a certain degree of stress in our lives to challenge our perception of what we are capable of, and help us reach new levels of performance.

So here are some of my tips for managing the stress and creating balance.

Identify your priorities

Identify the 10 most important areas of your life and rank them. Then specify how much of your time you would like to be spending on each of these followed by how much time you are actually spending. After doing this you can work on bridging the gap.

Identify the Stress Factor

What, exactly, is stressing you out? Is it your job? Your home life? Your relationships? It is important to identify the source of your stress. If you are having difficulty identifying the source, seek professional help from a personal coach or counselor if necessary.

Take Breaks When Necessary

Sometimes you need just a short break from whatever you are doing, take a quick walk, go get a cup of coffee and allow yourself to breathe deeply.

Address the guilt!

If you are feeling guilty about how you spend your time, then this is probably a sign that you are not spending your time where you would ideally like to. Address this and do something about it.

Exercise Regularly

If you don't have one already, begin an exercise program. Exercise helps release endorphins, which relieves stress.

Let Go When Necessary

Recognize the difference between the things you can control and the things you cannot. Make a list of the 2 categories and make a pact today with yourself to stop stressing about the things in your job or elsewhere you have no control over.

Say No Sometimes

When you are overwhelmed with work and personal obligations, make a list of your priorities and what absolutely needs to get done and say No if necessary to other things or delegate whenever possible.

Find Quality Time

Try to make sure that as much of your time doing something is quality and not just quantity. If you spend time with your kids – really spend time with them and avoid taking phone calls or doing other things at the same time. One hour of quality can be much more important than three hours of just quantity.

Don't Forget the Other Joys in Life

Job stress builds when our minds are constantly focused on work. Strive for balance in your life and make that a priority. Make time for family, friends, hobbies and Fun!

Readjust when necessary.

Creating balance is not a stagnant one-time event that you organize and then just sit back and enjoy. Balance comes from being able to find harmony between the many forces and priorities in your life and these may shift or change from time to time so be sure to reassess your situation when you start to feel the balance shift.

Nancy Hughes Verhoeven is a certified coach specializing in Executive and Personal Coaching. She is professionally trained as a coach from Corporate Coach University (CCU) and is certified as an Associate Certified Coach with The International Coaching Federation (ICF). She can be contacted at nancyv@vincerecoaching.com