

# Tip SHEET

HEALTHY WORK HEALTHY LIVING TIP SHEET

## BALANCING LIFE AND WORK

Does it feel like you are always busy? Like you are always being asked to do more and more with your time, to be more engaged with your family, to be more focused at work, to be a better partner, carer, parent, member of the team?

We live fast-paced, busy and time poor lives. Effectively balancing life and work seems further and further out of reach; we know it's a worthy goal to aspire to, but we can be too busy even to try.

This ever-increasing pressure means that it has never been more important to stop, take stock of how we are spending our time, and set about achieving balance between the competing demands of life and work. It's important to find a balance that works for you because when you don't address the issues of work/ life balance, the stakes can be very high...

***"Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls - family, health, friends, and integrity - are made of glass. If you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered"*** - Gary Keller, founder of Keller Williams Realty International, the world's largest real estate company by agent count

How did it come to this? Maybe you received a promotion or took on a more senior role in a new job. At key stages in our life, think about entering into a new relationship, starting a family, moving to a new city, picking up new hobbies, going back to education, new demands on our time can conflict with our workplace commitments. Also, added responsibilities at work can take you away from your favourite ways to unwind and connect with people who are important in your life. Without making time for ourselves away from work, we lose out on doing the things that make us happy, on spending time with those we are close to and on rest which, as the quote above illustrates, can have major consequences.

### BALANCING STRESS AT WORK

With so much going on in our lives, it's sometimes difficult to get into the right headspace for a day of work. Then there's workplace stresses like a heavy workload, juggling multiple priorities, working in a team that might be in conflict or dealing with disgruntled clients.

***Balance is not something you find, it's something you create***

- Jana Kingsford, author and businessperson

Focus is an important tool for pushing back against stresses at work. Here are some quick tips on de-stressing and getting back to being focused when you start your work day:

- **Start the day focused:** Setting goals for your day and/ or reviewing your To Do List can help you start the day focused on what you need to achieve
- **Manage your time and expect the unexpected:** When you know what you need to get done in a day, it's easier to manage your time. However, you can minimise stress by setting aside time in each day to deal with the unexpected.
- **Accept unpredictability and lack of control:** By scheduling time for interruptions or unexpected work requests you can be proactive, rather than being reactive and stressed in response to sudden changes in your workload
- **Negotiation instead of conflict:** Stress at work and competing demands on people's time and clashing priorities can lead to conflict with your workmates. Look for ways you can work together and avoid confrontations and negative impacts on workplace relationships

***Always take some of the play, fun, freedom and wonder of the weekend into your week and your work*** - Rasheed

Ogunlaru, life coach, speaker and author

Happy and healthy workplaces understand that staff members can get the job done while sharing laughs, letting off some steam and focusing on friendships. Having fun at work takes some creative thinking and a willingness to try new things. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Create some 'happiness boosting' traditions:** It can be as simple as bringing in some snacks for your teammates, going on a mid-afternoon coffee run to combat three thirty-itis or joining a colleague for a walk around the block on a day that suits
- **Take a walk to the other side of the building:** Get up and go to talk to a colleague instead of sending an email. Having a quick chat is a great way to build a happy relationship with someone at work
- **Make your workspace your own:** Boost your happiness at work by decorating your workspace with holiday photos, thank you emails or pictures of your family, friends or pets
- **Be grateful and share your gratitude with your colleagues:** Thank people for a job well done and show appreciation for the effort people put into their work

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*Balance is not better time management, but better boundary management. Balance means making choices and enjoying those choices* – Betsy Jacobson, sociologist, author and business consultant

We need boundaries to achieve balance between our personal and professional lives. New technologies and our perceived need to always be connected make it harder than ever to achieve this balance. Here is some advice on setting boundaries:

- **Set boundaries based on your priorities or your daily To Do List:** When you set boundaries based on things you need to get finished (at work and in your personal life), you will feel more in control and find it easier to make decisions that meet your needs
- **Practice setting boundaries with others:** By sharing some details of your boundaries with the people in your life, you give them an opportunity to support your goals and to understand your decisions
- **Accept that you are probably going to fail at first:** Initially, things may not work out the way you hope. You may need to adjust your boundaries and goals to be more realistic and achievable

### AIM FOR BALANCE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

At the time of writing, there are two months until Christmas. This time of year can be overwhelming as we juggle end of year work deadlines, gift shopping, planning holidays and celebrations, increased spending, managing school holidays commitments and more...

Data from a Relationships Australia online survey in December 2016 showed one in three respondents felt their family relationships were highly negatively affected at Christmas due to work-life balance issues. You can stay happy, balanced and healthy this Holiday Season by:

- **Minimising money stresses:** Set limits around buying holiday gifts. Consider buying gifts only for children aged 10 years or younger or set yourself a strict gift buying budget and stick to it
- **Managing Christmas lunch/ other celebratory meal pressures:** Ask each person attending your celebration to prepare a dish so that you don't have to purchase and cook all the food

- **Manage pressures around family relationships:** Accept that long standing family conflicts won't vanish over the holidays. Avoid certain pressures or triggers by staying away from discussing divisive issues like past family arguments. Get everyone involved with fun and light hearted activities
- **Sleep:** The Sleep Health Foundation recommends that adults get 7 - 8 hours of sleep per night. To get the most out of sleep, consider: sticking to a regular bedtime, relaxing and unwinding an hour before you go to sleep; avoiding going to sleep on a full or empty stomach; not using your smartphone, tablet or computer before bed

Not everyone gets a break over Holiday Season. In industries such as healthcare, essential and emergency services, transport and logistics, tourism and recreation, hospitality and retail, workloads get busier at the end of the year. It's still important to get some 'downtime' at the end of the year. When your work doesn't stop, you can: apply for leave; arrange to work shorter hours or fewer days; plan a weekend 'staycation' by heading to the beach, organising a barbecue, playing sports, visiting a local winery or heading to a cultural site like a museum or art gallery.

### GET ADVICE AND SUPPORT ON MANAGING YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Are you finding it difficult to balance life and work? Is stress getting in the way of your success at work? Your workplace provides you with access to support from Converge International's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Our counsellors are here to give you support and advice across:

- Sleep and fatigue
- Money management advice
- Nutrition advice
- Health coaching
- Managing heavy workloads
- Mental health issues
- Motivation and self esteem, and more

You can speak to a qualified EAP counsellor at any time by calling 1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327).

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