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Improving Work-Life Balance

We have all spent the last several months facing new challenges, and through these challenges we have truly demonstrated our strength and resiliency, adapting to new or changed routines, schedules, isolation, and even technology, with unity and perseverance. We have come to accept it as our "new normal".

While the adjustments (or even the anticipation) of physically returning to work may initially be overwhelming, there are a few tips and strategies to make the transition from virtual interactions to face-to-face interactions as painless as possible.

▶ It starts with a Work-Life Balance!

Achieving a healthy work-life balance involves managing our professional and personal lives in sustainable ways that keep our minds and bodies healthy, that empower and motivate us towards fulfillment of goals, and don't deplete our much needed energy.

Steps to improve your work-life balance:

1. Log Your Time
Keeping a time log of everything you do for one week, ensuring all work-related and personal activities are tracked, will highlight how you use your time. Evaluating your present "work-life balance" is the beginning step in achieving a more positive work-life balance shift that is sustainable.

2. Redefine Priorities
With various roles and responsibilities, identifying the hierarchy of our priorities can be difficult, which can result in increased distress. Reflecting on what is most important to you and making a list of your top priorities at work and at home can have its benefits. Once the priorities are identified, ask yourself these key questions: What am I doing that is working for me? What do I need to start doing? Stop doing? Do differently? Exploring these questions will help you balance your time more effectively.

3. Set Specific and Realistic Goals
Once you have created a new list of priorities, its time to turn them into goals. To achieve work-life balance, these set goals need to be tangible and measurable. Allocate time within your schedule towards goal-specific activities; this not only makes you accountable to working towards successfully achieving your goals but also dedicates uninterrupted time.

4. Schedule Carefully and with a Set Intention
This step has two very important parts to it. First, get a day planner or an agenda if you don't have one already! Whether it is a paper or electronic day planner, having one that you can refer to will assist in transforming your priorities and goals into reality.

People that are identified as "successful" plan their work and then work their plan, which leads us to part two – time of reflection! Set aside 10 to 20 minutes at the beginning of each day (or the night before, if preferred) to plan for your activities and set tasks for the day and evening ahead.

5. Establish "Healthy" Boundaries
Boundaries are personal limits that we set for ourselves as individuals within a relationship, regardless of the relationship type. They protect our sense of personal identity and help guard against being overwhelmed by the demands placed by others. Boundaries are not just a sign of a healthy relationship; they are a sign of self-respect. It is a crucial component of self-care, so give yourself the permission to set fair and realistic limits on what you will and will not do both at work and at home. It is important to clearly (and directly) communicate them to your manager/supervisor/employer, co-workers, friends, partner, and family members. Establishing healthy boundaries take practice and takes some getting used to. To preserve your personal limits, set aside a time at home during which you will not check or respond to work-related emails or voicemails.

6. Take Care of Your Health and Ensure some dedicated "ME" time

Your relationship with yourself is constantly evolving and is the only constant relationship you have, making it your No. 1 priority. If you are not in good health physically, mentally, and emotionally, both your work life and your personal life will be negatively impacted. When we take care of ourselves, we are more useful and effective in our various roles, resulting in easier access to our innate ability to handle life's challenges.

Taking good care of yourself can be difficult during stressful times, but self-care can help you cope with problems more effectively. It's about knowing when your resources are running low and stepping back to replenish them rather than letting them drain away. There are many different self-care practices, and not all of them suit everyone.

The trick to self-care is to look for the little things you can do every day to help yourself feel well. The important thing is that you engage in intentional self-care activities, for at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted "me time". This type of self-indulgence will help you to thrive and build resilience.

7. Nurture Your Personal Relationships

Relationships with family, friends, and loved ones are, certainly for many, the ultimate source of inner satisfaction and happiness. While there are times when work does impact personal time, it's about making that "invasion" the exception, not the established rule or "norm".

8. Leave Work at Work

Develop a mental on-off switch, sticking to an established start and end to your workday. For some, establishing a transitional activity between the two lives can be helpful.

9. Know When to Ask for Help

If you are overwhelmed at work or at home, and it is causing undue stress there are support resources available. You do not have to work through this distress on your own.

There is no perfect science to achieving work-life balance. It takes effort, practice, and dedication. Even if you implement only a few of the above tips, they will have a positive impact in your life.

Be proactive and intentional with your time. Take control of your work and personal time and achieve a more balanced life.