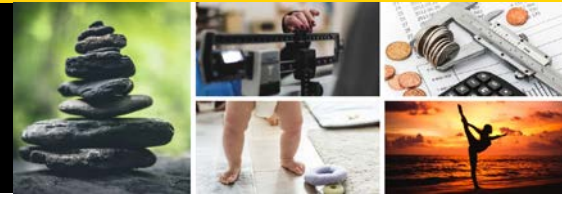


Balance



Creating a Better Work-Life Balance

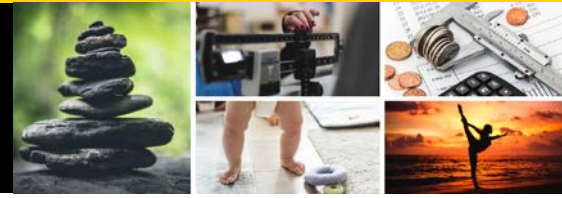
Have you been burning the candle at both ends to meet all of your work deadlines and personal obligations? Juggling a career and personal life can be a challenge, but not maintaining a healthy work-life balance can have serious consequences, including:

- **Fatigue** – Overworking yourself can cause fatigue and exhaustion, which in turn can affect your productivity and ability to think clearly and make sound decisions.
- **Poor health** – The stress of managing an ever-increasing workload can take a toll on your immune system and worsen your symptoms when you are sick. Stress also puts you at greater risk for substance abuse.
- **Lost time with loved ones** – Overworking may lead to missing out on important events and milestones with family and friends, which may leave you feeling left out and potentially harm your relationships.
- **Increased expectations** – If you never say “no” to taking on additional work, you may be given even more responsibilities, further throwing off your work-life balance.

It's important to set limits and organize your schedule in a way that allows you to get your work done while still making time for things you enjoy. Consider these strategies:

- **Manage your time** – At the office, where possible, eliminate or delegate activities you don't enjoy or can't handle. If that can't be done, brainstorm and share potential solutions with your supervisor and coworkers. At home, determine the most efficient way to accomplish household tasks—pick up a little bit every day rather than cleaning the whole house on your day off, run multiple errands during the same trip out, fold laundry as it comes out of the dryer, etc.
- **Make a list** – Making a daily to-do list or keeping a personal planner can help you maintain focus. Put important work and family events on your list so you know how to plan your day/week/month.
- **Learn to say “no”** – Stop accepting additional responsibilities—whether taking on an extra project at work or agreeing to organize your child's class party—out of guilt or a false sense of obligation. Remember it's OK to respectfully say “no” to ensure you have time for what is meaningful to you.
- **Leave work at work** – While technology and the ability to be constantly connected make it easy to blur the line between work and home, make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time.

Balance



- **Reduce email access** – Limit yourself to checking emails no more than three times per day. Also consider waiting to open your inbox until late morning; accessing your email first thing in the morning can redirect your focus from being proactive about your own needs to responding to other people's issues.
- **Take advantage of your options** – The more control you have over your schedule, the less stressed you'll likely be. If possible, flex your work hours, telecommute, or work a compressed workweek.
- **Shorten commitments and minimize interruptions** – To maximize your focus and concentration, try to time tasks to 90 minutes or less. After 90 minutes, a person's ability to retain information decreases dramatically. Also, prevent and avoid interruptions during focused time; after being interrupted, you will need double to triple the time of the interruption to regain full concentration on your task.

In addition to the above, maintaining a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, making time for daily relaxation, and leaning on your support system during trying times can help you achieve a better work-life balance. Remember, maintaining work-life balance is a continuous process. Periodically examine your priorities and make any necessary changes to stay in balance.

If you feel your life is too chaotic to manage on your own, consider speaking with a professional. Caterpillar's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free, voluntary and completely confidential service provided to employees and their eligible family members to help meet many challenges at home and work—including struggling with work-life balance. The EAP is available 24/7 by phone at **866-228-0565** and online at **CaterpillarEAP.com**.

Sources: Mayo Clinic (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/work-life-balance/art-20048134>)