

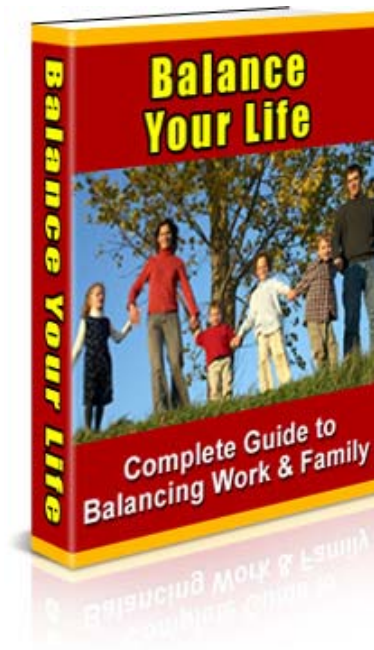
Balance Your Life - The Complete Guide to Managing Work and Family

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Balance Your Life



The Complete Guide to Managing Work and Family

By

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Introduction

"The trouble with the rat race is that, even if you win, you're still a rat" ~ Lily Tomlin ~

There was a time, in the not-so-distant past, when families were expected to give up everything in order to achieve the financial security they craved. Perhaps you remember those decades, perhaps you are too young to recall those times.

Those were the days when climbing the corporate ladder was a revered activity, and wives and children gazed fondly at pictures of the breadwinner in order to remember whether poor, exhausted Dad had blue eyes or brown.

Large companies moved employees from one city to another, like pawns on a chessboard and, if you had any hope of climbing the ladder toward upper management positions, you packed up the wife and kids and moved on from Chicago, to Boston, to New York, to Tokyo.

In the intervening years, the divorce rate climbed, fathers lost touch with their families and died of heart attacks and strokes at an alarming rate. When these men retired, they felt useless and unproductive.

Over the years, the identity of these men had become inextricably tied to their success on the job. New retirees found themselves wondering who they were, and why they were living with women who were complete strangers to them. And, whatever happened to those darling kids who used to live in the house?

Then women entered the workforce in earnest and joined the rat race.

Lest you think that this rat race has come to an end, look to the evidence of stress related death and illness, an increase in the average number of hours worked by employees in the U.S. and around the world, skyrocketing numbers of divorces and children in single-parent families.

And, let us not forget those of us who are responsible for the care of aging parents.

We live in a world of conveniences that were designed to give us more leisure time. But, it would seem that all the informational overload, whirring computers and media blitz has given us is more time for work.

It is not unusual for men and women to work sixty or seventy hours per week on average. Some of us work eighty or ninety hours without batting an eyelash. And, we fool ourselves into thinking we have a life!

If you are one of the enlightened few, you have already come to the conclusion that giving up a social and family life is too great a price to pay for career success.

Maybe, you have stress related health problems, perhaps you are not eating right, and you are probably fighting with your spouse, boyfriend or best buddy because you spend too little time with the people you care about most.

You probably can't find the time to return phone calls or send a birthday card to your Aunt Betty.

It doesn't matter if you are a lineman for a utility company, a pizza delivery girl, a corporate executive or an aspiring dancer.

In today's chaotic world, it is a safe bet that you don't have enough time for work, family and friends. And, since your boss holds a tight rein on your paycheck, it is likely that your family and friends are the ones that suffer.

You Are NOT Alone!

"The be-all and end-all of life should not be to get rich, but to enrich the world" ~ B.C. Forbes ~

Did you know that the Society for Human Resource Management has reported that 76% of American workers are considering looking for another job and, further that they estimate there will be 22 million new jobs created over the next ten years, but only 17 million new workers available to fill these jobs?

While every generation of workers has a different set of work expectations, the desire for work/life balance has become one of the foremost goals of every generation in the workforce today.

Baby Boomers are reducing work hours and many 'Thirty-Somethings' are starting their own businesses in order to have more control over their lives and schedules.

A recent study done by the Families and Work Institute illustrates that young workers just starting out in the workforce are choosing to turn down promotional opportunities to achieve greater work/life balance.

Why do you suppose these apple-cheeked, enthusiastic job entrants might take this approach? In a study done with young employees by Families and Workplace, work/life balance was among the top for both genders.

Most of these young adults were raised in families where both parents worked and they experienced the sacrifice and demands placed upon their parents, firsthand.

Not surprisingly, of all the generations in the workforce today, these young adults are the most likely to consider job flexibility and schedules when they look for a job, and it is key to employee retention for companies that employ this young workforce.

The point of all of this background information is to let you know that you are not alone in your desire to find balance.

All generations in all types of jobs are today, looking for balance, less stress, and more time with family and friends. Like you, these people are willing to give it their all when they are at work and they expect to work hard, but in exchange, they want a life.

In essence, YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

If you think that work and family life balance is a small problem, you may be interested to know that, in addition to the few companies that have recognized the issue and taken the lead in establishing life balance programs, there are numerous organizations, foundations, universities and groups doing research on this topic.

Organizations as diverse as religious groups, government agencies, human resource companies and behavioral scientists now study these issues and, not just because it is the right thing to do.

There are real economic advantages to companies that recognize the need for life balance and create a working environment to help their employees live their lives more fully.

Companies spend a lot of money training and keeping employees and happy employees will stay longer, live longer and contribute to the company longer.

But, we are just scratching the surface in understanding the true human toll that an unbalanced life takes. Many have studied the evolving societal issues and their roots in overwork and lost community connections.

If you WANT more balance in your life but you wonder whether it is all that important, let's talk about the reasons you NEED this balance.

"We are coming to understand health not as the absence of disease, but rather as the process by which individuals maintain their sense of coherence (i.e. sense that life is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful) and ability to function in the face of changes in themselves and their relationships with their environment" ~ Aaron Antonovsky ~

Health – Living an unbalanced life where work dominates can significantly affect your health. Long or stressful work hours can cause problems with your heart, your blood pressure, and your sleep cycles.

Studies show a significant increase in heart attack and stroke since the advent of seventy-hour workweeks. Long hours at work and lots of work related travel also encourages poor diet and leaves little time for exercise.

As we become more out of shape, sleep less and experience health problems, we are no longer the powerful asset to our employers, nor can we participate fully in a family and social life.

Emotional Wellness – Your ability to give back to your family, friends and community, and your own emotional stability depends on a balanced life.

As overly dramatic as it sounds, you are likely to experience emotional problems, need counseling and suffer from anxiety attacks or other problems if you have no time to decompress and relax.

There are numerous scientific studies on the benefits of relaxation, recreation and meditation.

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