



## Seven Smart Strategies for Less Stress and More Success

In a world where the professional and personal demands of our lives often collide and compete, we long for more balance.

Work-life balance is a common plea of overworked and overwhelmed employees. It's an expectation of the next generation of leaders who are not willing to sacrifice fulfilling personal lives for the sake of their careers. Many organizations recognize that addressing this critical need will attract and retain healthier, happier employees and increase productivity and profits. While they can offer help through flexible work hours, telecommute options and nearby childcare, it's up to employees to decide what balance means to them and take action to improve that balance.

Perfect balance will never exist and chasing after it only contributes to the frustration and dissatisfaction we sometimes feel. Instead, it's the small, conscious choices we can make each day that lead to less stress and more success. Before you can begin to strive for more balance, decide *why* you want it. What would you do if you had more time, energy and other resources? Knowing the *why* will keep you motivated as you make changes and develop new habits.

Then, identify and prioritize *what* you're balancing, such as your career, family, home, relationships, finances, health, spirituality, personal development and fun. Are you nurturing each of these areas in a typical day, week or month? What needs more attention? What might you do differently to get better results?

Finally, consider how these seven smart **Work-Life Balance Wisdom** strategies can help you manage your mindset, energy and time to support your balance.

### 1) **Get on Purpose.**

Why are you here and how does your work and life support that? What are you most passionate about? What brings you joy? When you know your life purpose, you'll increase your confidence, feel more fulfilled, and make better decisions about where to spend your time and energy.

***Want to improve your work-life balance?*** Define your life purpose by considering what motivates you, your values and your natural gifts. Write your life purpose statement down, post it somewhere you'll see every day and refer to it often for guidance.

### 2) **Create the Space.**

Clutter distracts and confuses us. It drains our energy and keeps us from doing what matters most. While most of us think of physical clutter, like a messy office and overstuffed closet, there's also technical clutter, like your over-reliance on your cell phone and too much time on the Internet, and emotional clutter, like regrets and toxic people in your life.

***Want to improve your work-life balance?*** Make a list of all your ongoing commitments, from your professional and personal memberships to committees on which you serve that are not directly related to your job responsibilities. Rank them on a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of importance and consider resigning from anything less than a 7. By cleaning out the clutter of unnecessary obligations—as well as other forms of clutter—you'll think clearer, have more energy, and be open to helpful opportunities, people and ideas.

### 3) **Manage Your Energy.**

Even more important than time management is how you manage your energy. Making empowering changes and maintaining healthy habits take vitality and commitment. When you're not strong, you will tend to slip back into your old routine. That's why it's so important to make conscious choices every day.

*Want to improve your work-life balance?* Start with the basics, including eating healthy, drinking plenty of water, being physically active and getting enough sleep. Then, go deeper by choosing to associate with people who live healthy, balanced lives; enjoying a hobby; and finding time to relax and recharge when you need it.

### 4) **Talk to Yourself.**

Studies show we speak to ourselves at least 10,000 times a day and 80 percent tends to be negative. That's because we're human and are programmed to protect ourselves by anticipating worse-case scenarios. Affirmations or positive self-talk counter those negative messages with empowering ones.

*Want to improve your work-life balance?* Overwhelmed by your work and home responsibilities? Start the day by saying: "I have more than enough time and energy to get the important things done today." Notice I didn't say "everything on my to-do list"? A simple affirmation like that will make you more calm and confident and prompt you to delegate and cross off your list some of the unnecessary things. By the end of the day, the important ones will get done.

### 5) **Be Authentic.** When your thoughts and actions conflict with the truth, you waste precious time and energy and tarnish your reputation. By increasing your level of integrity in thought, word and deed, you will transform all your relationships, including the one with yourself.

*Want to improve your work-life balance?* Have you ever set a goal because you thought you should—perhaps to please someone else—and never accomplished it? Make sure your goals are what *you* want and not what you think you should do.

### 6) **Stay Present.** Because our brains are sequential processors, we lose time and make more mistakes when we multitask. Staying present is about enjoying what is right now, instead of lamenting the past or worrying about the future. By being more mindful, you can reduce stress, capitalize on opportunities that might have eluded you, and increase your satisfaction with work and life.

*Want to improve your work-life balance?* Most of us hop from one accomplishment to the next, never savoring our successes or "catching the gifts." Think about how you can catch the gifts of a job well done, a genuine compliment from a colleague or at the start of a well-earned vacation. And, catch the gifts of lessons learned from your mistakes. That's the best way to keep from repeating them.

### 7) **Cultivate an Attitude of Gratitude.** What you focus on expands and what you appreciate appreciates. That's why it's so important to cultivate that attitude of gratitude.

*Want to improve your work-life balance?* Write in a gratitude journal, which can be a plain notebook, a few nights a week. Make a brief list of what you are grateful for that day and include at least one unique entry to increase your awareness. This simple practice will increase your positivity and put your challenges in perspective.

Even one of these strategies can improve your work-life balance and, together, they complement each other. Start with the one that resonates the most with you and then add another until they all become habits that support your success.

*Tricia Molloy is a corporate leadership speaker on improving work-life balance and the author of "Working with Wisdom." Through conference keynotes and employee development programs, she inspires professionals to be more positive, proactive and productive. Tricia also mentors professional women who crave more success at work and in life. Learn more and sign up for the Working with Wisdom e-newsletter at [www.triciamolloy.com](http://www.triciamolloy.com).*