



Keeping work at work is never as easy as it seems.

With increasingly competitive work environments and greater connectivity through technology, workers often seem tethered to work. Some people feel lost without a laptop or cell phone for easy access, while others are looking for a way to balance the demands of a career against a fulfilling family life.

Take this work/life balance quiz and see how you view work-life balance.

1. Do you check your blackberry or computer in bed?
2. What time do you get to and leave work each day?
3. How often do you cancel personal plans to meet a work deadline?
4. What do you do if there is a conflict between a work event and family reunion?
5. How aligned is who you "are" with what you do?
6. When you have a day off, how do you treat yourself?
7. What is it like when you come back to work after taking a vacation week?
8. What are your options for telecommuting?
9. Do you have a "second shift" when you come home from work?
10. Do you have time during the day to focus and plan without distractions?

While pressures are usually "self-inflicted," workers from entry level to upper management express having little time for themselves. With women serving as the primary family caretakers, they experience conflict in choosing between what is best for their families and what is best for their careers.

This article is designed to help clarify your own responsibility for creating work-life balance.

A – Ask three key questions

C – Commit to establishing boundaries

T – Take steps to achieve your own personal balance

S – Stay the course



A – Ask three key questions

1. What matters most to me or what gives me the most satisfaction at work and home?
Continue asking the question until you have 5 top priorities.
2. Of these activities, situations, and conditions, which ones replenish my energy? Examine these to determine which ones are also on your top priorities list.
3. How can I eliminate or reduce doing things that are not on my list?

C – Commit to establishing boundaries

Once you've identified your top 5 priorities, look for what engages you most and gives you a sense of satisfaction. Make a personal commitment to put the right things first. You may want to schedule and protect private time, ensure time for exercise or team sports, volunteer more regularly, or have more family dinners.

T – Take steps to achieve your own personal balance

You are the only person who can make changes needed to achieve balance for yourself. Remember, what is balanced for someone else may look unbalanced to you. Be aware of what gives you energy and what takes it away. List your energy sappers and energizers. When possible, space out energy zapping tasks between energizing activities during the day.

S – Stay the course

When you establish and commit to protect your personal boundaries, others might not like the change...it is a good idea to discuss what you're trying to do with significant others both at home and work. The results of better boundary management increases satisfaction in all areas of your life.

Navigating work-life balance issues is challenging for individuals and leaders. Remember, what is balanced varies from person to person and is determined by many factors including energy level, personal goals, activities that stimulate, and resources available at a given point in time. Use A.C.T.S. as a way of understanding what matters most, establishing clear boundaries, and taking steps to build a more satisfying life.

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