

## Health and Wellness Article for March 2010.

### **How to Achieve Work-School/Life Balance**

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For many, achieving work or school/life balance is a constant struggle. Our everyday routines and responsibilities demand so much of our lives that it's almost impossible to set aside quality time with our families and let alone ourselves. But with stress becoming one of the largest factors that contribute to chronic illnesses, it's more than vital to create balance in our lives.

So what exactly is Work/Life Balance?

*Work-life balance is a **self-defined, self-determined** state of well being that a person can reach, or can set as a goal, that allows them to **manage effectively multiple responsibilities** at work, at home, and in their community; it supports physical, emotional, family, and community health, and does so **without grief, stress or negative impact.***

Government of Canada- (<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/lp/spila/wlb/faq/01individuals.shtml#1>)

In order to achieve a healthy work or school/life balance you must start making choices and having a willingness to change what isn't working. You must determine what is most important to you. It's easy for many to leave work at 5 in the evening, but long after they have left the office they're still "working," by keeping their blackberries or cell phones turned on, checking email frequently or taking phone calls after the kids have been put to bed. Does this sound familiar? If so, it's time to step back and incorporate some healthy and helpful tips so that you don't neglect family, friends and most importantly you and your health.

#### **1. Ask Your Employer For Help**

Many employers have policies in place to help their employees achieve better work/life balance. Most businesses recognize that employees perform better when they are healthier and in balance. It increases a business's productivity, long term success and return on investment. Burnout, costs Canadian businesses an estimated \$12 billion each year in health claims, lost productivity and absenteeism.

- Start researching your companies policies and find out what they have in place such as flexible work hours, telecommuting (working from home) and job sharing.
- Determine what you need to achieve work/life balance in your job.
- Find the time to discuss your work arrangements and how you are feeling with your employer during a yearly review, a return to work leave or at the start or end of a new project.

#### **2. At Work or School**

- Schedule brief breaks throughout your day. Brief breaks throughout your work or school day will increase your productivity, mental alertness and will allow you to get more accomplished, even if it's a five to ten minute break away from your desk or work area every few hours.

- Create a to-do list at the end of each work or school day for the following day. Be realistic with your time and what you will be able to achieve the following day. Put the most important tasks at the top of the list and the least important tasks at the bottom that can wait.
- Respond to your email only one to two times a day if possible. After responding to emails, turn off your email system to avoid constant distractions.
- Address concerns about deadlines and due dates right away. If you feel as though a project deadline is unrealistic speak to your boss, professor, teacher or employer about extending the due date.
- Take all of your allotted vacation time. When you take a vacation you come back to work or school feeling refreshed and in turn you become more productive.

### 3. At Home

- Create a buffer between work or school and home. After work or school take a short walk, read a book, go to yoga, meditate or listen to some music before you begin your evening's routine.
- Decide which chores can be shared or let go. Determine which household chores are essential and which can be done by someone else. Let the rest go for another time.
- Shut off your cell phone or blackberry after a certain hour and spend time with your spouse, partner, family, friends or yourself.
- Exercise. Even if it's only for 15 minutes at a time, you'll feel more energized and refreshed.
- Create and implement a household budget. Start setting aside some money from each pay for your future to avoid financial stress.
- Make healthy food choices and eat at the kitchen table. Healthy eating will allow you and your family to have more energy. Try to eat dinner all together at the kitchen table to stimulate conversation and bond with one another about your day's events.
- Have a hobby. Try to find something you enjoy either with family, friends or on your own. Practice yoga or take up a new sport or activity, knit or join a reading club. Find something that allows you to relax and take your mind away from work or school even if it's one time a week for an hour.

For more information, comments or questions about this article or any Health and Wellness related questions please contact Vanessa at [vanessa@mokshayogamarkham.com](mailto:vanessa@mokshayogamarkham.com)

#### References:

Canadian Mental Health Association  
The Government of Canada

