



Focusing on what's important

It's easy to get overwhelmed by working too much and not spending enough time on yourself and your family. As part of our work-life balance topic, we're looking at how to focus on what matters and get some balance back in your day-to-day life.



Life versus work

In simple terms, work-life balance is ensuring a clear division between work life and home life.

The UK's workforce spends more time at work than any other European nation, according to analysis by the TUC.

Work stress costs the UK 10.4 million work days a year. According to a survey carried out by the Mental Health Foundation, a third of respondents felt unhappy or very unhappy about the time they spent at work.

In fact, their research showed that the more hours you spend at work, the more time you spend worrying about work. Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed reported that working too much had a negative impact on their personal life.

Blurred boundaries

One of the downsides of the digital age is the blurring of boundaries between life and work.

Thanks to smartphones and the always-on society, we are exposed to potential work pressure 24/7. Most of us have access to work emails on our phone and unless you're very strict, many of us check them.

In some jobs, you are rewarded for going the extra mile. Other employers may expect you to take work home with you because that's the culture of the organisation or the nature of your profession.

But if you're not happy with your work-life balance and if you're feeling stressed about at home when you're trying to relax, it's time to do something about it.

Your right to flexibility

It's important to remember that there are laws in place that protect your right to a personal life.

For example, you're entitled to make a flexible working request once a year, and there's a formal process your employer must follow in their consideration of your request.

If you're a parent, you have the right to parental leave, which gives you time off work to spend time with your children or take care of their needs. These rights at work allow you to balance caring commitments with the business needs of your employer.

What's important to you?

Figuring out your priorities in life is a helpful exercise. Take time to reflect on what's important to you and that will enable you to work out how to spend your time.

- Who do you want to spend your time with?
- How do you feel about work? Is it just a job, or a calling? Are you happy to bring work home, or do you want to be stricter about that?
- How do you want to spend your leisure time?
- Consider your home environment – is it set up the best way? Could you reduce clutter? How can you save yourself time?
- Do you need to digitally detox and spend time away from devices?
- What steps would make your life more manageable?
- What does your happy look like?

Tips to keep life and work separate

- Set and agree clear boundaries with your employer – e.g. tell them you won't be checking emails at night/at the weekend
- Find a way to bridge the change between work and home – listen to music or read on your way home
- Don't install your work email on your personal phone so you can only check them at work/on a computer
- Plan evening activities to take your mind off work
- Consider doing an activity that's designed to reduce anxiety and boost mental health
- Practise yoga – it helps to focus the body and empty your mind



Britons work the longest hours in Europe – the equivalent of another 2.5 weeks a year than European counterparts.