

Work Life Balance

We have many roles and responsibilities in our lives. We are parents, children, siblings, friends, spouses, bosses, employees, and community members. All of these roles have different responsibilities that demand our time and energy. When the demands of one role become so much that you do not have the time or energy to fulfill your obligations in your other roles, you no longer have work life balance.

What does work-life balance mean?

Work life balance happens when — you feel a sense of well being because you are able to manage your responsibilities at home, at work, and in your community.

When you have balance you are

- satisfied with your work and home lives.
- able to fulfill your many responsibilities without guilt or regret.
- healthy physically and emotionally.
- in control of your life.

Loss of work-life balance produces stress which can cause physical diseases like

- high blood pressure
- stomach disorders
- heart disease
- allergies
- migraine headaches
- depression and anxiety
- drug and alcohol abuse

Loss of balance may cause you to miss work more often and not be as productive at work. Your involvement in the community may go down.

What Can Your Employer do?

Flexibility — Provide the opportunity for workers to change their hours of work so they can meet other obligations. This could include changing start or finish times, providing compressed work weeks to allow a day off during the week, or offering voluntary job sharing and reduced hours.

Family Leave/Policy — Let workers take sick time off for family illness or offer a number of personal days per year to be used for family related issues.

Workload Management — Ensure workloads are reasonable and work is distributed fairly. Working overtime should be infrequent and voluntary.

Communication — Provide adequate notice of shift schedules and ensure shift changes are agreeable to both parties. Let workers know of the work life balance policies and support the use of le•aves and flexible hours.



Use of Technology — If communication devices such as cell phones, blackberries, and laptops are provided, create a policy to ensure that they are used during

work hours only. No one in the workplace should be accessible on a 24 hour basis.



Supportive Management — Provide training to supervisors and managers about the symptoms workers may display when they do not have work life balance. Train supervisors and managers on the policies available to help themselves and workers maintain balance. Encourage managers and supervisors to be role models of work life balance. Do not reward those who work excess overtime or use technology to work on their time off.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) — Provide access to professional confidential counselling for all staff when needed

What can you do?

Learn about the kinds of programs offered at work and take advantage of them. For example, ask for a change in start or finish times and use sick time for family related illnesses if possible.

Take care of yourself. Remember to get enough sleep. Eat healthy foods and make time for exercise and relaxation



Evaluate how you want to use your time. Is there someone else at work who could help you with that project? Is it necessary that you attend every single one of your child's hockey games? Do you need to chair that committee?



Set priorities by deciding what is most important to you at this time in your life. If family responsibilities seem overwhelming at this time, is it possible to reduce your income to allow you to work less hours for a period of time so you can meet your family obligations?

Accept less overtime if possible. Working overtime can very quickly negatively affect the balance of work and personal life. Ask yourself if the extra money is truly worth your or your family's health.

For more information:

Canadian Council of Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS): www.ccohs.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca

Work Life Balance in Canadian Workplaces document: www.labour.gc.ca Click on Workplace Information and Innovation (left side of page) then scroll to bottom to click on document

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