Q: This is a very busy time of year for our department, and everyone is feeling stressed. As a supervisor, what can I do to encourage healthy work-life balance?

A: Ironically, while more and more people are working longer hours and having a difficult time finding the “off switch” when it comes to work, numerous research studies have shown that the most productive employees have full and well-balanced lives. In fact, employees who feel they have a better work-life balance tend to work 21% harder than employees who feel overworked. Promoting a healthy work-life balance not only benefits employees, but it also helps the organization retain top performers, increases morale, and boosts productivity.

Supervisory support is critical in helping employees achieve work-life balance. So what can supervisors do to help?

1. **Be aware and open minded.**

Be aware of your company’s policies and options for addressing work-life issues, and encourage employees to use the resources available to them when needed. Even if your company does not have formal work/family policies, you can still create a supportive environment by showing concern and understanding. Employees who feel that they are valued and seen as people and not just as workers report a greater sense of job satisfaction and a higher commitment to the organization.

Be aware of the behaviors you positively reinforce and those you discourage. You may say you promote healthy work-life balance, but do you positively acknowledge the employees who stay late? Do you call employees at home when they are sick or send email requests when they are on vacation? Your attitude and actions are crucial.

Today the world constantly tries to throw you out of balance and sometimes no matter what you do, you still feel like your life is going in the wrong direction. Balanced living might seem like one of those theoretical terms that nobody can put into practice, but in fact, there is nothing simpler than living a balanced life.

It might take some work at first, but once you get in the flow and discover the simple ways to steer your life in your desired direction, you will feel empowered. You will be inspired and energized by every day of your life. Your life will be full of amazing adventures and events that will make every day memorable. You won’t be wasting your life anymore or spending gloomy hours contemplating the misfortunes that have happened on your way.

Does balanced living mean that your days will be full of only positive people and events that will bring you happiness every moment of your life? Not at all.

Balanced living is when you can offset negative events in your life with positive ones. It is also when you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Balanced living is when you are happy working and playing equally. If you picture happiness and everything great in your life as a diamond, then the negative things that happen are just the setting that makes this diamond shine only brighter.

If you want to live a balanced life, develop these five essential habits.

1. **Awareness and mindfulness.**

Awareness is the key to balanced living because it lets you see every moment of your life and appreciate it. A mindful person lives in the present and does not get obsessed with the future or the past. It’s important to plan for the future and learn from your mistakes in the past, but it is even more important to appreciate who you are right now and find joy in this state.

When you are aware of this moment you are calm and you do not make any decisions you may regret later. When you are mindful you are in balance with the universe.

2. **Appreciation of your body.**

If you are grateful for the very first gift that you received in your life (your body), then you must take care of it. This means making healthy choices, exercising, and being generally active, eating a balanced and healthy diet, letting your body rest when it’s tired, and pampering it every once in a while.

Your body is the tool that lets you experience so many wonderful moments in life, and you need to do your best when taking care of it. Balanced living is not possible without a balanced body.

3. **Creativity.**

Each day we face challenges and choices in life. If you approach each of the extra challenges as an opportunity to grow and learn, you will increase your chances of finding balance in your life.

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you challenges with creativity, your life will be filled with adventures. Creativity is a wonderful tool that lets us turn our dreams into reality, turn play into work and work into play, and enjoy life—even when it seems empty. Creative people are the ones who can make the exquisite setting for the diamond of their life.

4. Patience. With patience we can overcome almost anything. Without it, we can ruin almost anything.

Patience can help us turn our dreams into reality (losing weight, starting a business or blog). It can help us be better parents, spouses, friends, and even strangers (sometimes a smile from an understanding stranger can make the biggest difference when you are having a bad day). If you are patient you do not have to worry about the minutes you spend in traffic or in the line at the grocery store. With patience, you can see results in all your endeavors and you do not have to spend the precious time of your life getting mad or infuriated.

Patience leads to mindfulness, and mindfulness brings you in balance.

5. Simplicity. Simplicity is probably the most important part of life balance. When you build your life around simplicity, you reduce the number of out-of-balance things that can disrupt your happy living. In balance everything is simple. There are two opposites (like black and white) and you just have to pick something in the middle.

- Simplify your work schedule so you do not have to think about a hundred things at the same time.
- Simplify your relationships by connecting with people you truly care about and getting rid of the ones you don’t.
- Simplify your diet by choosing simple healthy ingredients that are part of balanced nutrition.
- Simplify your social media exposure and enjoy living life and getting things done rather than wasting time online.

Simplicity makes life balance simple.

These habits have been my lifeline for many years, and I cannot imagine a balanced (and happy) life without them. Living in balance is easy and very rewarding because your life becomes one of joy, happiness, and serenity. If you put some time and effort into turning your life into a balanced direction then you too will live a truly Zen life.

By Anastasiya Goers, ZenHabits.com

DECLUTTER YOUR LIFE

As you declutter your life, you’ll have more time and space to discover your priorities and your passions. Start decluttering these four areas of your life to make positive, long-term changes:

1. Your Schedule.

Learning to say “no” is essential to changing your life for the better. Start saying no to activities that aren’t important to you or you dread doing. I can’t stress this enough. You are either using your time to build the life of your dreams or to build someone else’s dreams...it’s your choice. Time is our most precious commodity—spend it wisely.

2. Your Environment.

Getting rid of items can be tough, especially when you have an emotional attachment to them. I’m pretty sentimental, so it was tough for me to get rid of some things, but I cannot even begin to explain how freeing it is to get rid of things. I started with my bedroom closet and have been working on streamlining my wardrobe. I highly recommend it. Getting rid of clothes that are outdated, fit poorly, or that are never worn, feels awesome. I’ve found that having fewer clothes, but all items I love, is much better than a closet full of clothes I feel “meh” about.

3. Your Mind.

How can you declutter your mind? Get rid of negative thoughts. Also, unplug at times. We are bombarded continually with information overload from all different directions. Unplug and be present. Freeing your mind from outside influence will help you discover what you truly want in your life.

4. Your People.

Look closely at who is in your inner circle. Who do you spend the most time with? Get rid of toxic people. If there’s someone toxic you have to see regularly (such as a coworker), decide to not let their opinions and attitude influence yours. Choose whose opinions truly matter in your life, and

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have a big impact on whether or not employees feel supported in their efforts to create a healthy work-life balance.

2. Be flexible.

As a supervisor, you may be able to provide informal flexibility that does not require a formal flex-time policy. To provide the flexibility employees need, you might allow them to leave early or come in late on occasion, or, if feasible, allow them to work from home from time to time.

3. Be a role model.

If you are the first to arrive in the morning, the last to leave at night, and you work most evenings and weekends, you are going to have a hard time convincing your staff that you value and support healthy work-life balance. These tips can help:

- Set healthy boundaries for yourself and respect them. Re-examine your work-life balance: Do you need to set some boundaries for yourself? Are you respecting the boundaries you have already set?
- Focus on the priorities at work to ensure you are working smarter, not harder. Take time to plan your day and prioritize the items that must get done. Then review how you spent your time to see if you were able to stay focused or if you were taken off task.
- Leave work at work. Give yourself, your family, and your friends the gift of being fully present during non-work hours. It will enrich your relationships, recharge your battery, and enable you to return to work more refreshed.
- Be self-aware and pace yourself. There are times when work demands increase and you need to adjust your boundaries and work schedule accordingly, but when demands begin to normalize again, adjust your pace accordingly.
- Keep in mind that there is no perfect one-size-fits-all balance. The best work-life balance is different for each of us and changes over time as we change.

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