



eBook

Improving Work/Life Balance & Overall Well-being



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Beyond Sales Tactics



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Introduction

Well-being and work/life balance go hand-in-hand. Intuitively that sounds right, however you might be wondering why, specifically, that's true.

Let's start with **well-being**. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "well-being is the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous." More broadly, well-being includes having the ability to manage stress, feeling a sense of meaning and fulfillment, and being satisfied with life.

Work/life balance on the other hand refers to feeling balanced between your professional responsibilities and your personal ones. This includes using skills such as time management, energy management, establishing priorities, and setting boundaries to ensure a compatible relationship between work life and home/family life.

In this eBook we will learn a little more about both, the relationship between them, and how to support work (from home)/life balance.

What does a healthy vs. unhealthy work/life balance look like?

Society has been talking about work/life balance for decades. Even so, the hustle culture is still a hot trend in the U.S. workforce. So what's going on? Why the duality?

There are probably a number of reasons, one being we just aren't sure what a healthy vs. unhealthy work/life balance looks like. Another reason is that perhaps there are not many role models in your organization that have a healthy work/life balance or value it. Perhaps we assume we have to give up traditional ideas of success, however that's not the case.

The key is to determine your boundaries and adhere to them without having an all or nothing or black and white mindset.

Here are a few examples of healthy vs. unhealthy work/life balance.

Healthy: Setting boundaries- Establishing clear boundaries with professional life and personal life. For example, define specific work times then refrain from accepting work calls or checking work emails after that designated time.

Unhealthy: Overwork- Working long hours, nights, and weekends without time for rest or engaging with family, friends, or hobbies. Some professionals are in an environment where deadlines and periodic times require extended hours. Ideally, overwork will truly be the exception.

Healthy: Time management- Allocating enough time to complete professional tasks and personal tasks as not to infringe on boundaries set for professional and personal time. Yes sometimes it may be necessary to shift the balance between work or personal. The key is establishing a workable flow and keeping your personal time sacred.

Unhealthy: Burnout- Overworking to the point that you are physically and mentally exhausted due to work related stress.

Healthy: Stress management- Implementing techniques that encourage physical, emotional, and mental balance and calm the nervous system. Examples are walking in nature, taking regular breaks, practicing meditation, and mindfulness.

Unhealthy: Lack of self-care- Ignoring the health of your body, mind, and spirit. Examples include not getting enough sleep and deprioritizing social connections or exercise.

Healthy: Flexibility- Having the ability to restructure your day without consequence if something personal comes up that must be taken care of.

Unhealthy: Rigidity- Overscheduling in your professional and personal life leaving little or no room for creativity, reflection, or emergency situations.

Hopefully this gives you some insight as to what a healthy work/life balance and an unhealthy work/life balance looks like. While there are more examples, these are common ones that frequently surface in my executive and leadership coaching sessions and are examples that most of us can relate to.

Thinking about these examples, how do you feel about your current level of work/life balance?

What are some areas where you have a healthy work/life balance?

Well-being vs. Wellness

Well-being and **wellness** are often intertwined and used interchangeably. There are similarities and differences.

Again, let's look at some definitions so we are on the same page.

Well-being is the state of being comfortable, happy, or healthy. Also, having a sense of purpose and meaning. Well-being is a state of mind.

Wellness is the state of being in good health, especially as an actively pursued goal. Meaning it is a set of habits and behaviors that are followed to achieve a specific state.

So yes, well-being and wellness are connected and one inspires the other. **Stephanie Cunningham**, well-being expert and founder of RevelationU Reiki & Wellbeing, offers this explanation, *“Wellness has to do with taking action; exercising, eating well, implementing mindfulness techniques & managing your personal energy. Well-being is about connecting with how you feel about yourself and your life (and all that entails). Wellness practices support positive well-being. Also, having positive overall well-being encourages us to take actions that are wellness centered.”*

Some companies have wellness programs and they are generally focused on diet and exercise—improving the functionality of our bodies, which we know supports mental and emotional health.

Well-being on the other hand is something that companies have traditionally left up to the individual employee. Conversations about “purpose, meaning, and fulfillment” are becoming more and more common in the corporate space. Some progressive organizations are offering coaching programs to help employees work on challenges as well as aspirations of their choice in service of helping coachees find greater purpose, meaning, and fulfillment.

We are seeing more firms hire coaches into their organizations. Coaching conversations are an elegant mix between functional and personal. Similar to the way wellness and well-being fit together, coaching supports implementing actions that will improve performance as well as taking into consideration the feelings and personal wants and needs of the coachee. Other leaders and teams are seeking out their own resources to partner with them on this journey.

While wellness and well-being are different, they are both necessary and deeply supportive of one another. Further in the eBook we will discuss how you can better support your personal or associate well-being in the workplace—with or without a formal program.

Tips to improve your work/life balance & overall well-being

Improving the balance between work life and home life can be challenging, especially if the scales have been imbalanced for a while. Imbalance is common no matter if you are a CEO, senior leader, manager, an entrepreneur, or an associate.

When you can't stop thinking about work during non-working hours, find yourself overworking, your relationships are suffering, or when you refuse (or are reluctant) to take sick days or vacations, it's time to make some changes. Here are a few tips to improve your work/life balance and, in turn, your overall well-being:

Make a plan

"If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else." Yogi Berra was right about that. We eat better when we meal prep. Our workouts are more consistent when we workout at the same time every day or week. Meetings go more smoothly if there is an agenda. Step one of creating a work/life balance that works for you is to make a plan. What do you want balance to look like, better yet, how do you want it to feel? If it feels good, you are more likely to stick with it.

Communicate your plan

Especially at the beginning you're going to need the support of the people in your work and personal life to make sure you stay on track. Communicate your plan to your partner, family, coworkers, direct supervisor, or your coach. Explain that you want to create a more balanced life. Ask that they respect your plan and also hold you accountable. They may even have some ideas to make your plan even better!

Create boundaries

If you go into work (or start work remotely) at 8am and stay until 7pm or 8pm, create some boundaries. Traditional working hours are in the area of 9am-5pm, your particular work or project may require a 10 or 12 hour day. Make a commitment to yourself and your family to leave/end work at a specific time each day and manage your time accordingly. This gives you an opportunity to connect with the people and hobbies you enjoy. Plus, your quality of work will likely improve when you set these boundaries.

Take breaks

Remember to give your brain a break. Give yourself permission to walk away from your work. Do you really have to work through lunch? Probably not. Even if it's 15 minutes to eat or take a walk, step away from your to-do list and give your mind a break. Even better, invite a colleague to lunch and connect about something other than work. This satisfies several of your needs: social connection, movement, and a much needed brain break.

HOT TIP

Find your workday flow

We all have a way of working that keeps us engaged and moving forward, personally & professionally.

Here's my preferred workday flow...

9:00am - 1:00pm: Work

1:00pm - 3:00pm: Lunch/walk break

3:00pm - 6:00pm: Work

What works for you? How do you keep your energy up & creativity empowered during each day?

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There is no shortage of advice on how to improve the balance between your family and personal priorities and your work ones. From asking ChatGPT to recommend some books or articles on the subject to finding a professional coach to help you sort it out, if you're feeling unbalanced, it may be time to take a different type of action.

Leaders- How to support the overall well-being of your team

There used to be a saying, “when you get to work, leave your feelings at the door.” Post pandemic has made this philosophy outdated. Yet since feelings are not tangible, logical, or something that can be fixed, many of you are not adequately prepared to address well-being from a ‘feelings’ stand point.

Leaders, you will find it beneficial to show care about your team members' feelings (not to mention your own) because feelings indicate which needs are being met during work or home and which needs are not being met at work or home. Feelings and unmet needs tend to drain you and your team of the limited amount of resources and energy we have to expend each day. So feelings may go underground where they can't be dealt with or they may come out sideways in conflict. For the individual as well as your team and possibly your organization it is worthwhile and encouraged to foster well-being.

Here are a few suggestions to help create a culture of well-being:

Checking-in

Take time to check in with your team, and your peers, to see how they are doing. Do they show signs of feeling stressed? Are your team members sharing (or complaining) that they've been working late for an extended period of time (versus a one-off) to ensure a project gets done on time? Listen to what they are saying and if possible, help find ways to balance or reprioritize their workload.

Encourage boundaries

Chances are your company has a set work schedule; 9am-5pm, 7am-3pm. Encourage your team to work during those hours and get lost after the “bell” rings. While you're at it, encourage them to leave their email at their desk. If possible, encourage your team to remove their work email from their phone and not check their inbox while offsite. There's usually nothing so urgent that it can't wait until tomorrow. Clearly define your working hours and stick to them as much as possible. This allows you and your team to create a mental separation between work and family time.

Encourage connection

Too often coworkers only connect in meetings, or right before or after. Encourage connections by scheduling a team offsite once a month, organizing an onsite book club that meets each Tuesday at lunch, or something else that resonates with your team. The idea is to inspire them to engage on a more personal level, if they choose. Try not to be the leader who complains that their team is wasting time talking to each other. These connections and seemingly casual conversations create a sense of belonging and make it easier to support each other. They actually reduce negative conflict.

Be the change!

You care about your team. You want them to feel good, take time out, have a work/life balance that works for them. You want them to feel fresh and creative when they work, and you want them to enjoy themselves while doing so. If this sounds like you, the best action you can take is to model what you ask them to do.

Don't take work home or work beyond your working hours if remote. Leave at 5pm. Take a lunch break. Manage your time appropriately. Most associates are going to take the lead from management/leadership. If management is saying one thing and doing the other, they are less likely to believe that it's really ok to leave at 5pm and not check email offsite. Especially if they want to move up in the company. Culture is about norms and actions, not words.

Prioritizing family and career as a leader

Supporting your team's work/life balance and overall well-being starts with you. When you model and value self care and well-being, your team is likely to follow.

Prioritizing family and career as a leader and understanding the role of self-care in executive leadership are crucial aspects of maintaining work/life balance and overall well-being. Here are some tips you can implement to have a bigger team impact:

Delegate and empower

As a leader, delegate tasks to your team and empower them to make decisions. This will help reduce the burden on your shoulders and create more time for your family. My leadership and executive clients typically think that they are there to solve their teams problems. In many cases guiding a team member to solve problems themselves sets them up to work autonomously. That said, there are times you will need to intervene. In those cases, involve them as much as possible. Insert yourself in the least possible way.

Quality over quantity

Focus on the **quality** of the time you spend with your family, rather than merely counting the **quantity**. Be present and fully engaged during family time to make it meaningful. Opportunities for this can be when your children walk in the door. Put your work aside. Let them hear you say, "May I call you back, my children/partner just got home."

Schedule family time

Just as you schedule work meetings and tasks, schedule family time in your calendar. Treat it with the same level of importance.

Communicate with your family

Keep an open line of communication with your family. Discuss your work commitments and schedule with them, so they understand your responsibilities.

Hire help/outsource tasks

Consider outsourcing or hiring help for household tasks or chores that take up your time, allowing you to spend more time with your family. What drains you? For example: Cleaning, cooking, and laundry can be hired out.

The role of self-care in executive leadership

The more responsibility and scope you have the more critical it is to take care of yourself. Here are some key areas my coaching clients address frequently:

Prioritize self-care

Make self-care a non-negotiable part of your routine. This can include exercise, meditation, hobbies, or simply taking time for yourself.

Time management

Efficiently manage your time to ensure you have opportunities for self-care. This might involve delegating tasks or reducing non-essential commitments. At the executive level, this also most often means scheduling time for building strategic relationships, focused work, or deep thinking.

Set realistic goals

Avoid overloading your schedule with work tasks. Set achievable goals and avoid overextending yourself, which can lead to a short fuse or even burnout.

Learn to say no

Be willing to say NO. You can build leadership skills among your team and give them exposure by asking them to sit in on meetings you are invited to yet don't feel bring you high value. Decline additional work or commitments if they will compromise your self-care routine.

Seek support

Consider working with a coach or therapist who can help you manage stress and develop self-care strategies tailored to your needs.

Regular check-ins

Periodically evaluate your self-care practices and make adjustments as necessary. What works for you may evolve over time.

Well-being and wellness require you to take a proactive approach and a willingness to make intentional choices to balance the demands of a leadership role with the need for personal well-being and family time.

Work (from home) / life balance

According to a [Pew Research survey](#), prior to the pandemic, 20% of U.S. workers worked from home. After the pandemic, that number went up to 71%. Still, only 54% said they would prefer to work from home after the pandemic is over. Many workers appreciate a hybrid option - including time at the office and ability to work part-time at home. The reasons vary, yet it's clear that working from home has its pros and cons.

Pros include having more flexibility with home tasks. You can throw in a load of laundry between meetings after all.

While cons include isolation and family interruptions, especially when your workspace is the dining room table.

Working from home can cause the line between work/life to blur even more. Not to mention some of us love working from home while others do not. You've probably heard people say they always thought they would love working from home yet when they got the opportunity it was really hard on their mental health.

It's important to take the tips we've shared in this eBook and incorporate them into your situation, regardless of where you work. In addition, it's even more important to make engaging with people offline a priority. Reach out to coworkers, family, friends, even strangers at the coffee house for a chat or schedule zoom coffee chats with no agenda.

We all need interaction and connection with other people. Some more or less than others of course. We also need fresh air, healthy food, brain breaks, and exercise. When working at home it can be easy to fall into a routine that doesn't TRULY work.

Make self-care and family a priority. Let your skills of time management and creating boundaries work for you. While working at home can make it more challenging, commit to making it work in a way that works for you.

Conclusion

Understanding how you personally work best and what you personally need is important to achieving a healthy work/life balance.

The most important part of work/life balance is your awareness. Stay present with your mind and your body to really notice what works for you. Listen to what your body needs and respect the boundaries of your personal spaces. Extend the same space and respect to your team.

We know this is a big, ever-evolving topic and you might have some thoughts, tips, or questions that can continue to move the conversation forward.

If you would like to contribute to the conversation, [email me](#) or connect with me on [LinkedIn](#) and comment on one of our posts surrounding this topic.

We are all in this together.



“Taking small steps in the right direction yields big results.”

-Barb Girson

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If you would like to help yourself and/or your team improve self-awareness, increase influence, gain executive presence and develop better communication skills, [contact Barb Girson](#) to learn more about our workshops and coaching in areas of executive, leadership, communication, business, career & sales.

Top 5 Areas of Coaching

Sought by clients

1. Improving Well-Being
2. Leading Others
3. Increasing Influence
4. Pursuing a Promotion/ Career Development
5. Improving Communications