

Alumni MasterClass



**Finding and
Maintaining a
Work/Life
Balance**



In the U.S., homebound employees are logging **three hours more per day on the job** than before city and state-wide lockdowns, according to data from NordVPN, which tracks when users connect and disconnect from its service.

BLOOMBERG

By early April 2020, about **45% of workers said they were burned out**, according to a survey of 1,001 U.S. employees by Eagle Hill Consulting. Almost half attributed the mental toll to an increased workload, the challenge of juggling personal and professional life, and a lack of communication and support from their employer.

BLOOMBERG

Remote work due to Covid-19 has meant longer workdays, with the average worker putting in **48 minutes longer per day**. This might not seem too bad, but when you consider that the average American worker works roughly 47 weeks per year, you're looking at about 188 extra hours per year. That's more than **four and a half extra work weeks**.

FORBES

STEPS TO FINDING AND MAINTAINING WORK/LIFE BALANCE

- 01 Focus on your day.
- 02 Practice saying no.
- 03 Calendar, calendar, calendar.
- 04 Schedule breaks.
- 05 Explore your values.
- 06 Establish transition cues.
- 07 Give up on perfect.



01 Focus **on your day.**

It's hard for many of us to live in the moment, instead of thinking about ALL of the things we want to accomplish.



The best defense against hectic yet unproductive days is a good offense in the form of a daily planning ritual.

- Pick just one big task per day.
- Stay focused by eliminating common distractions that pull you away from your objectives for the day — especially if the bulk of your work is done with a computer.

At the end of the day, I want to have **zero tasks** on my today list. The truth is that most days I don't complete everything on my today list and I postpone things. This isn't a negative thing. I see it as an **opportunity** to take stock of where I'm at, re-evaluate my tasks, and re-plan them.

AMIR SALIHEFENDIĆ, THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF DOIST

Bonus Content: *The Complete Guide to Planning Your Day*

02 Practice **saying no.**

Setting boundaries at work can be challenging, but without them, you risk burnout or quality issues.



POLITE WAYS TO SAY NO

1. Your supervisor asks you to take on a project that you may not have the time for.

"I would be very excited to work on this, and given my current workload on deck, I'd love your help prioritizing. Can we take a look at my deliverables together and rework my priorities?"

02 Practice **saying no.**

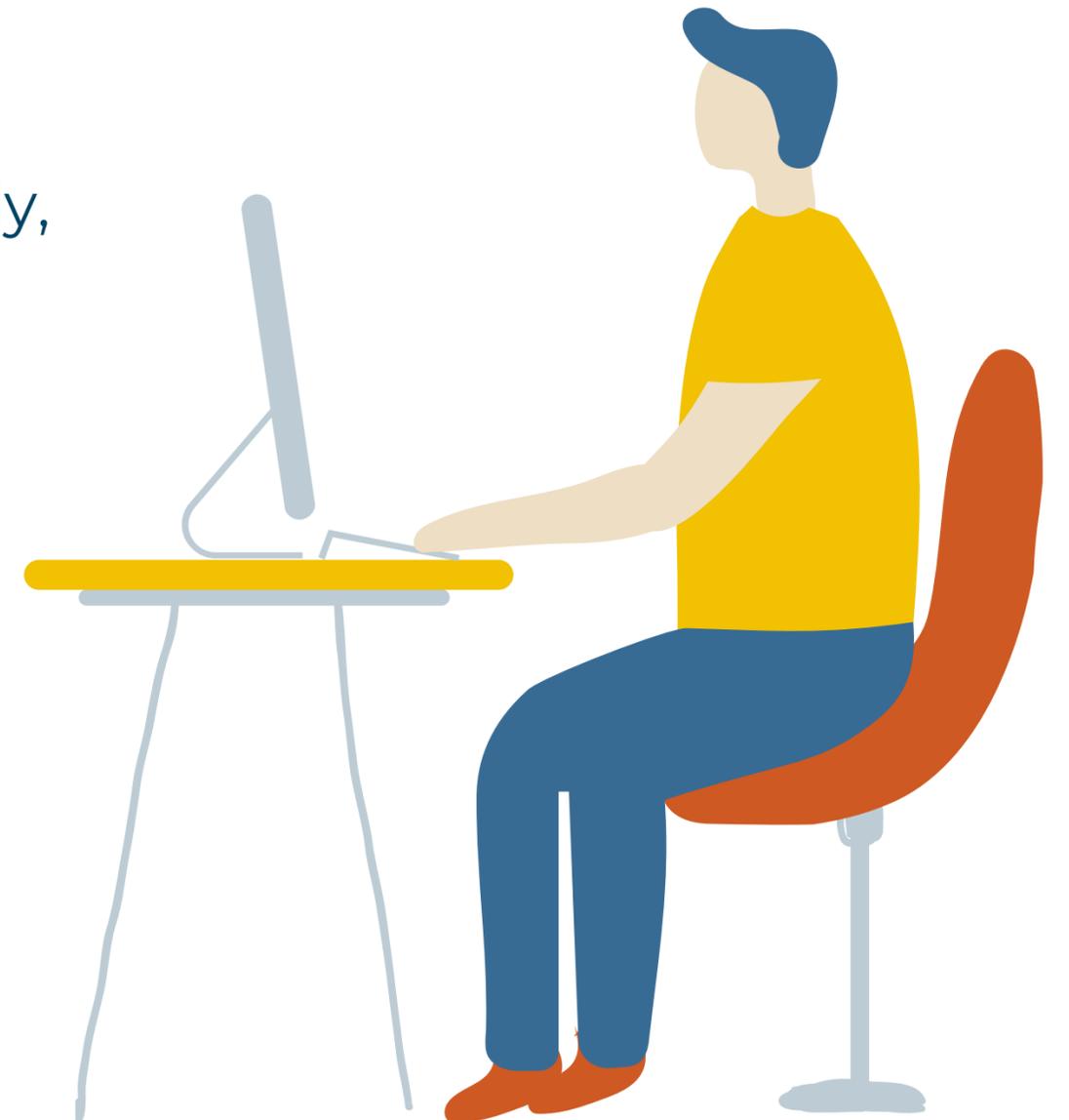
MORE POLITE WAYS TO SAY NO

2. You received a work email at 9:30pm.

Unless it is truly immediately pressing, wait until the start of business hours the following morning, and respond promptly, but don't apologize for the delay.

3. You have a coworker always wanting to chat despite you having a full plate of work.

Give them a minute, and if they keep going on and you don't have time for it, let them know that though you'd love to hear more about this, given your workload you can't be as present as you'd like to be for it at the moment. Ask if they're available later for a Zoom happy hour, or for you to ping them when you're more freed up... and get back to work.



Balance is not better time management, but better **boundary management**. Balance means making choices and enjoying those choices.

BETSY JACOBSON

03 Calendar, **calendar, calendar.**

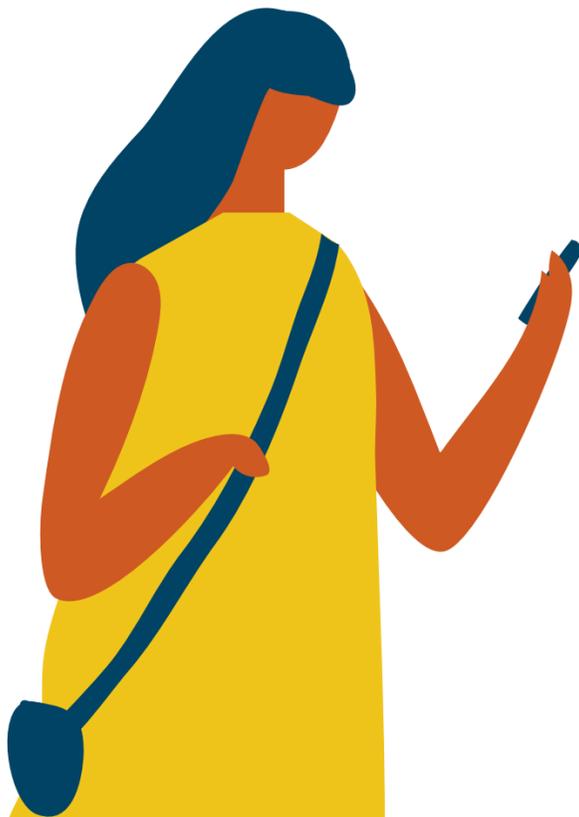
Time blocking is a productivity technique that helps you to gain more control over your time and energy throughout the day.



Take a good hard look at your calendar and your task list. How long will each task take to complete? Is your calendar full of meetings? Which ones can you shorten or reschedule so you can have more uninterrupted time in your schedule to focus and get some deep work done?

03 Calendar, calendar, calendar.

The majority of us struggle to fight off the busyness that comes with technology, connectivity, and our need to “have it all.”



Tasks that don't require full concentration, what he labels as shallow work, can quickly fill up our schedules and sideline us from tapping into the depth of our potential.

04 Schedule **breaks.**

One of the hardest things about working from home is that it removes all the normal structures that used to make up our days.

Whether you were commuting by train, driving, walking to work, or stepping out for lunch, the time we used to spend away from our workspaces was incredibly valuable for our productivity.

- *Plan a pre-work walk*
- *Take a real lunch break, go out and pick up lunch and take some real time for yourself.*
- *Sign up for a 6 p.m. yoga class, or make plans for a virtual drink.*



04 Schedule **breaks.**

One of the main culprits of blurred work-life boundaries is the constant use of technology (laptops, tablets, and smartphones) and social media.



- Declutter not only your physical space but your digital workspace (think unnecessary meetings, emails, and tasks)
- Physically closing your laptop at the end of the workday and avoiding your email inbox first thing in the morning are two very effective ways for setting a boundary between your work and personal life.

05 Explore **your values.**

Get clear on your values, which are present when you feel happiest. Take time to reflect on your top five to six, such as energy, service, flow, etc. Use your values as guideposts for making decisions.



- Ensure all of your personal and professional activities align with those values. This approach helps you make decisions about boundaries in the moment more easily. You'll be in control and your life will flow.

Bonus Content: [Life Values Inventory](#)

06 Establish **transition cues**.

You could be sitting at your desk but more preoccupied about a home repair than the assignment at hand, or you could be at the kitchen table thinking more about the proposal you have to finish than the people eating dinner with you. That's why transitions from work mode to personal mode are so essential.



- Have a starting work routine
- Make a plan
- Prioritize your communication
- Set a wrap-up routine

Read more [here!](#)

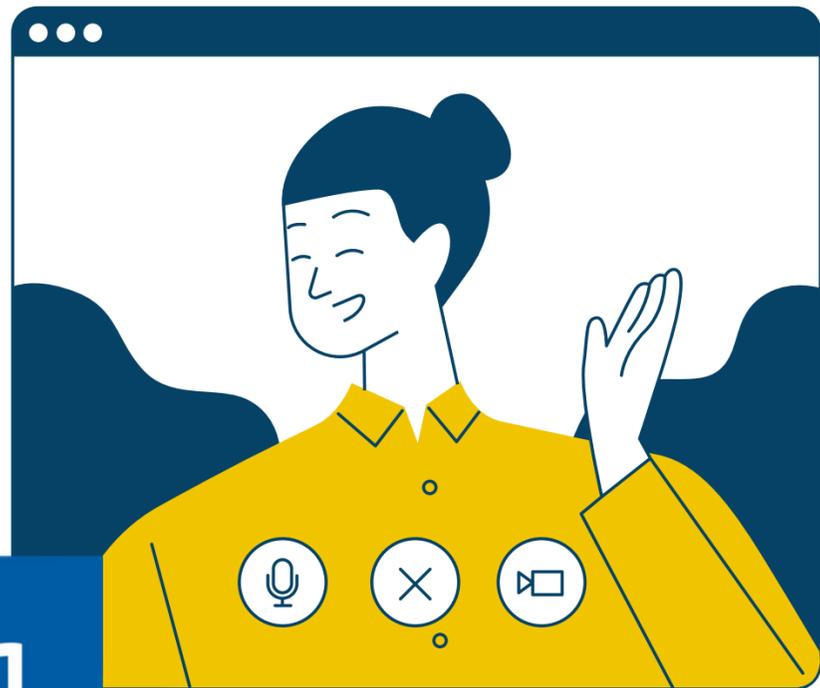
07 Give up on perfect.

When you hear "work-life balance," you probably imagine having an extremely productive day at work and leaving early to spend the other half of the day with friends and family. While this may seem ideal, it is not always possible.



Don't strive for the perfect schedule; strive for a realistic one. Some days, you might focus more on work, while other days you might have more time and energy to pursue your hobbies or spend time with your loved ones. Balance is achieved over time, not each day.

WHAT CAN THE CAREER CENTER DO FOR YOU?



- [Drop-In Career Coaching](#) (no appointment necessary!)
- [Virtual Appointments](#) with Career Community Advisors
- [Email Resume Review](#)
- Access a [Career Library](#) of 50+ Handouts and Videos
- Search for opportunities on [Handshake](#), our careers platform
- Network with Alumni on (ASK) or [Alumni Sharing Knowledge](#)

careercenter.depaul.edu

CAREER WORKSHOPS

These 45-minute workshops offer tactical advice for every stage of your career journey! Anyone who RSVPs on Handshake will get a recording of the session with supplemental materials!



RSVP on [Handshake!](#)

CAREER LIBRARY

The DePaul Career Center recently created a library of 50+ handouts and 14 two-minute videos focused on every career readiness topic, ranging from resume basics to exploration to building your brand!

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are a low-pressure, highly productive way to learn about a field, get career advice, build your network and hone your interviewing skills. Reach out! It's easy and fun.

Informational interviews are an opportunity for you to talk with professionals about their career path, profession, organization and industry. These conversations can take place via phone or email, but it's much more fruitful when conducted in person.

Follow these simple steps to get started:



Step 1

LOCATE THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO MEET

Search for emerging, mid-career and established professionals in roles or organizations that interest you. Recent graduates that are emerging in their careers have first hand knowledge about existing pathways. Mid-level and advanced professionals have large networks and can share their views about how industries are changing.

- Definitely consider targeting DePaul alumni. They are often the most open to speaking with students and recent graduates of their alma mater.
- If you're still in school, DePaul faculty are an excellent place to start—ask your professors if they know of any contacts in your field of interest.
- DePaul's ASK (Alumni Sharing Knowledge) network and LinkedIn are excellent places to find professionals whose pathways align with your passions.
- Don't be afraid to be bold—is there a well-known person in your field of interest whose perspective would be helpful, interesting or inspiring? Reach out to them! You have nothing to lose and much to gain—the worst that could happen is you get a "no."

GRADUATE SCHOOL 101

In many fields, earning a graduate degree or certificate is a benefit and competitive advantage. In some, it's necessary for advancement.

Getting accepted into your preferred program requires research, differentiation and extreme project management skills. Here are some tips:



Selecting the right institution and program

Chances are, you'll want to apply to multiple programs to maximize your options. Which are the right ones? There are a number of factors to consider.

- 1 Faculty** Your relationship with faculty will be a huge factor in the educational experience. Learn the names, departmental positions and academic credentials of the professor or professors you'd be working with.
- 2 Resources** Research can require significant out-of-pocket costs. Find out if there are resources available at the institution that can reduce these costs.
- 3 Community/Location** Take a look at the on-campus and off-campus communities. Is the on-campus culture—faculty access, social life, etc.—what you're looking for? Does the local area have the amenities you want and need? Is it in a city or a small college town? Does the program offer online courses? How would these factors contribute to your quality of life?
- 4 Cost/Funding** The tuition and fees will be an obvious consideration, but you should also take into account living expenses, which can vary widely by region. What sort of stipends and funding programs are available? What are the work requirements?
- 5 Career Outcomes** What are the career outcomes for program alumni and how does the program support students and alumni in professional development?

PERSONAL IDENTITY AND YOUR BRAND

Your identity, whether based on your gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, faith, or another element of your background, is fundamental to who you are. Deciding when and/or how to integrate your identity into your brand and job search can be a meaningful part of navigating your professional life.



In the Career Center, we often work with students and alumni who ask about the risks and benefits of sharing personal details about their identities. Whether it's a recent alum who is non-binary, or a single mother who returned to school to complete her degree after spending years caring for her children, every individual has the power to shape a specific and compelling authentic professional identity that includes (or does not include) personal information.

While we understand that identities are intersecting and not binary, below are some general tips that we hope are helpful in navigating discussions around career development.

Connect who you are to what you do.

If your identity or background links to why you have selected a career path or professional interest, you can differentiate yourself from other applicants with a "why statement," which illustrates your personal commitment to that role or career. For example, in a cover letter, you might include a statement like this:

"As a first generation college student navigating the opaque space of higher education without the insights of parents or a network of college-educated adults, I am passionate about providing support to under-resourced students, helping them succeed academically and thrive socially."

"I am particularly interested in this role because I recently returned to college to complete my degree in Health Sciences after providing care for my disabled sister for five years. This experience taught me the value of a holistic approach to caregiving, and I am eager to use these skills to enhance the patient experience at Good Samaritan."

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. That's why it's important to put careful thought into how you dress for job interviews and meetings with business contacts.



General Guidelines

Dress codes in the workplace have relaxed considerably in recent years, which can make it tougher, not easier, to decide what to wear. While it's definitely better to over-dress than under-dress, looking too formal for an interview can suggest that you're not a good fit for the culture. That said, here are some general guidelines:

- Clothes should be in good condition, fit correctly, and be clean and lint free
- Wear dress shoes that are comfortable and clean
- Hair should be well groomed
- Fragrance—a light touch is better
- Bring essentials only—a professional bag, briefcase or portfolio
- Cellphone off

HOW TO RESEARCH EMPLOYER DRESS CODES

If you have an interview or it's your first day and you're unsure what to wear, here are a couple of ways to get an idea of what staff wears on an everyday basis.

✓ **Check out their social media accounts** Many employers post images of employees at work or at business functions. Look for everyday-type images (not dressy corporate events) to get a sense of the culture. Be sure to look for staff in functions similar to yours, as some teams' dress codes vary.

✓ **Call the hiring manager or HR department** You can ask explicit questions about an employer's dress code. Questions like: "How formal is the dress code?" or "Do most interviewees wear a suit?"

WORKING REMOTELY: THE BASICS

Working from home is common now, and with the pandemic, it's even more so. The number of remote roles has increased by 173 percent since 2005, and most experts expect this trend to accelerate. This is the future of work.



Set up your workspace for success.

Whether it's a home office, a commercial co-working space, or a table in a coffee house, your workspace has a lot to do with your effectiveness. Make sure your space:

- Is comfortable and ergonomically sound
- Is quiet and able to accommodate phone conversations or video conferencing without distractions
- Gives you room to move around—cramped quarters can increase fatigue!

Get the right equipment.

Make sure you have the right tools and technology to do your job well:

- A computer with a camera.
- A reliable internet connection—nothing is more disruptive to a video meeting than a connection that drops.
- Remote-work software
- LinkedIn Learning is an excellent source for technology tutorials and tips, including entire courses, to support remote-work success.

SOFTWARE SUGGESTIONS

Video conferencing/screen sharing: Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, JoinMe or others

Communication: Slack or others

Project Management: Asana, Trello, Mondays

Cloud Computing/team sharing: Basecamp, Google Drive, Microsoft Teams, Box

Check it out here: go.depaul.edu/careerlibrary



Thank You!

