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.
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.
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.
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?”
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**
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?
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.
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
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!
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.
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