

# The Balancing Act of Work and Family



What does riding a bike, using a wheelbarrow, arranging flowers, and placing furniture in a room have in common? All of these tasks require balance. It is hard to explain what balance is in each circumstance, but it sure is easy to tell when it's missing! The term work-family balance refers to the proportion of time and focus spent on work and on family. Research shows that family conflict increases when work and family time are out of balance (Chang et al., 2017). When work and family time are out of balance, both suffer.

Too often we think of balance as equal portions, but when achieving balance in life we have to focus on appropriate proportions. There is no one size fits all when it comes to balancing work time and family time. Re-evaluation from time to time is essential as the correct proportions change over time.

Here are a few tips to help evaluate and improve work-family balance:

1. Take the time needed to evaluate and think about work-family balancing. This sounds simple, but often when

under stress it is easy to feel there isn't time for this. Uninterrupted and unhurried time will allow for good thought processing, which can improve relationships and productivity at home and in the work place.

2. Gather feedback from family members and sincerely listen to what they share. Recognize what makes them feel second to work and listen for ideas for improvement. Make a plan together and evaluate it over time.
3. Explore what can be changed. A drastic employment change could be the key, but often there are many smaller changes that can be made with schedules, locations, setting boundaries, and using time more efficiently both at home and at work.
4. Technology makes it easy to stay connected to work around the clock and around the world. Remember to be at work at work and be at home when at home, in your thoughts and in your actions. Time fully away from work is important to work-family balance.

Remember that work-family balance is a process, not a one-time achievement (Lupu & Ruiz-Castro, 2021). Consistent small steps of improvement ensure that changes can be maintained long-term and improve family relationships.

## References

Chang, X., Zhou, Y., Wang, C., & de Pablos Heredero, C. (2017). How do work-family balance practices affect work-family conflict? The differential roles of work stress. *Frontier of Business Research in China*, 11(8). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s11782-017-0008-4>

Lupu, I., & Ruiz-Castro, M. (2021, January 29). Work-life balance is a cycle, not an achievement. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2021/01/work-life-balance-is-a-cycle-not-an-achievement>