

# Work-Life Balance

In today's world, achieving a healthy work-life balance might seem impossible. With advances in technology, we have become accessible to everyone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Sometimes, just turning off the mobile for a few hours can cause significant mental stress!

Fears of losing employment can result in skipping breaks, longer hours, visiting the office on weekends, or being on-call during holiday leave. Stress from the ever-demanding workday can cause irreparable damage by affecting personal relationships, health and general well-being.

Finding a work-life balance will mean something different to each of us – here are a few tips to help put you on a path of discovering what's right for *you*.

## Finding the elusive Work-Life balance...

### At Home

When you finish work, also finish thinking about it. Try debriefing or thinking things over on the commute from work to home, e.g. "what went wrong -- what could have been done better?" Once you arrive home, stop thinking about work – your home is your *sanctuary* away from the workplace.

Other tips are:

- Don't take work home. If you absolutely *have* to, keep it to a manageable few hours and don't allow *homework* to become a regular occurrence.
- Commit to an enjoyable after-work activity such as walking the dog, work-out at the gym, swimming some laps or playing outdoors with your children.
- Plan time for fun -- with your partner, children, family or friends.

### At Work

- Take prescribed breaks! It is particularly important, as per Australian legislation, that workers follow OHS guidelines relating to appropriate work breaks wherever possible.
- When the pressure is on, take a fresh-air break -- have your lunch in a nearby park, or take a walk around the block.
- Learn to compromise – accept that colleagues can make contributions to lightening your workload; *you don't need to do everything yourself*.
- Examine your work relationships – practise getting along with the people at work.
- Practise delegating or saying "*no*". If you find this difficult, investigate your options for *assertiveness training* – or contact EASA.
- Strive to improve your communication and emotional intelligence skills.
- Maintain your professional development with regular skills training

### At Play

- Occasionally, social and recreational activities can place pressing demands and expectations upon us, too – commitments to matches, classes, social events and "save-the-date" invitations.
- Maintain an *event diary*, plan ahead and allow plenty of time for preparation, travel and (if needed) recovery.
- Take a time-out break *during* a social event and never try to *keep up* if your energy levels are low.
- Explore mindfulness and stress-reducing techniques rather than unwinding from your working week with alcohol or other substances – your body will thank you.

**Darwin (Head Office)**

P. (08) 8941 1752

F. (08) 8941 0746

easadarwin@easa.org.au

**Alice Springs**

(08) 8953 4225

easaalicesprings@easa.org.au

**Katherine**

P. (08) 8941 1752

F. (08) 8941 0746

Toll Free (NT only)

1800 193 123

[www.easa.org.au](http://www.easa.org.au)

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## The Working Parent

Most days don't end when a parent finishes work at the office. Work continues at home with making dinner, doing household chores, helping the children with homework, preparing lunches, driving the children to sports training, piano lessons, etc.

### Take pressure off yourself by:

- Knowing your limits -- learn to say "no".
- Accept that no-one is perfect – including you! -- you have both strengths *and* weaknesses.
- Plan a day for yourself, occasionally, to unwind either alone or with a partner.
- Limit time spent on chores that you don't enjoy.

### Have a good support network:

- People who actively engage with friends, relatives and neighbours are less prone to depression or illness.
- Have a *go-to* friend at work or at home for when things go wrong.
- *Thank* the people who help you achieve balance in your life, and also help them to achieve their own.

## Balance in your life means looking after your...

- **Basic needs:** having sufficient work, food and shelter.
- **Physical health:** making time for exercise, looking after your fitness, heart and weight.
- **Emotional health:** making time for love, relationships, family and friends.
- **Intellectual health:** using your brain for study, hobbies and stimulating conversations.
- **Mental health:** learning to manage depression, anxiety, stress and emotional issues.

## The Life Balance Wheel

Variations of the Life Balance Wheel have been around for millennia. The wheel identifies eight key areas of your life and invites you to rate your degree of satisfaction in each area, using a scale from 1 (least satisfied) to 10 (most satisfied).

What stands out to you as you see these rankings? Which areas are you most motivated to work on that would help you feel more complete, fulfilled, satisfied or happy?

