Definition

Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance means different things to different people. Essentially it is about balancing the major components of life by investing appropriate amounts of time, energy and attention in all of them.

Generally, the major components of life can be categorised as:

- work
- family and friends
- health
- nutrition
- physical activity, sport, recreation
- beliefs, values, thoughts, feelings
- relaxation and rest.

Assessing Work-Life Balance

Assessing and Achieving Work-Life Balance

Some days or weeks may be more heavily weighted towards one part of life than another. That doesn’t mean that life is unbalanced. What it means is that it is important to set a reasonable time frame over which to assess how balanced or unbalanced life is.

Your initial assessment of the state of balance in your life needs to be based on how life has been over the past few months.

Subsequent re-assessments of balance should then be done on a monthly or quarterly basis. This will be frequent enough to keep you in the habit of checking and re-adjusting your life without being so frequent that daily or weekly changes constantly upset your idea of balance.

Your initial assessment of how balanced your life is needs to start with a conscious and deliberate decision to reflect on your life. Changing or re-balancing aspects of life can’t happen if the specifics aren’t thought through carefully first.

This reflection can then set the scene for you to do an “audit” of where and how you currently spend your time, energy and attention. Identifying what needs to change, setting SMART goals and implementing change can then start.

Balance is not a fixed concept. Every day is different. This is why it is important to assess balance over a period of months.
Where to Start

Specificity

Most people strive to have a good, healthy work-life balance. But that is a general, over-arching goal. To actually achieve a good, healthy work-life balance, you need to be specific. What specifically needs to change or be re-balanced for a good, healthy work-life balance to be achieved overall?

Specific goals with specific outcomes can collectively result in the general goal of a good, healthy work-life balance being achieved.

Without specific goals, the strategies for change also remain general - ie, too general to be acted on. For example, “something” or “everything” needs to change but what is “something” or “everything”? So, thinking specific is an important starting principle.

Multiple Work-Life Balance Goals

Setting SMART Work-Life Balance Goals

Work-life balance goals need to be SMART goals - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Framed. Most people will have a few or several SMART work-life balance goals which when combined and achieved will result in a good work-life balance.

Examples of SMART work-life balance goals include: “Starting next Monday, I will leave work by 6pm every night” or “I am going to do three 30-minute walks every week from this Saturday”. The SMART aspects of each of these goals can be clearly identified. For instance, with the 30-minute walk goal you can see that it specifies how many walks and how many times per week.

It is also measurable in that the walks can be diarised and then ticked off when completed. It is achievable in that it can be slotted into most lifestyle routines, and it is realistic in that it doesn’t presume a high level of fitness. Finally, it is time framed. It specifies starting this Saturday and continuing from there.

What are your SMART work-life balance goals?

“Your initial assessment of how balanced your life is needs to start with a conscious and deliberate decision to reflect on your life.”
Achieving SMART Goals

Goal Management

Achieving your SMART work-life goals requires a similar approach to any other SMART goals you may have - eg, at work or with any particular project. SMART work-life goals require both project management and time management.

Your SMART work-life goals and achieving a good, healthy work-life balance is your project.

Project managing your SMART work-life goals may involve:

- overcoming obstacles
- managing pressure
- dealing with competing demands
- prioritising
- scheduling
- taking advantage of opportunities.

Achieving Work-Life Balance

Let’s say that your goal is: “to do three 30-minute walks every week from this Saturday”. Now let’s have a look at how how project and time management skills can be applied to this goal so you can achieve it.

Firstly, think about what the current obstacles are to walking three times a week - eg, lack of time or lack of motivation. Analyse these. Are they really obstacles or are they reasons or excuses that could be overcome with some effort and organising?

What about diarising your walks as appointments with yourself - ie, prioritising and scheduling?

And how about walking in different places with different friends on different days - ie, variety and motivation?

Add some positive self talk and reminders to yourself of the health benefits of exercise.

And finally, think about altering how you see exercise and start looking upon it as a healthy goal orientated opportunity rather than a chore.

Approach all your SMART work-life goals this way and you will be closer to achieving your overall goal of a healthy work-life balance.

“Your SMART work-life goals and achieving a good, healthy work-life balance is your project.”

FitSense Australia
Your Accredited Corporate Wellness Provider
Most people know what the benefits of balance are. That’s why we all strive to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

The benefits of a healthy work-life balance include:

- increased happiness and sense of well-being
- better health - physical, mental and emotional
- reduced stress
- improved perspective, confidence and self-efficacy
- more energy and motivation
- more variety and greater appreciation of life.

Other tips for achieving balance include:

SLOW DOWN - Reduce the intensity of your life by doing less and allowing more time for each thing.

START SMALL - Making big changes all at once are less likely to be maintained than small, sustainable ones.

STAY FOCUSED - Keep “balance” as your overriding goal and achieving it your project.

TALK - Discuss your balance goals with the people who are most important to you. Engage them and their support in your drive for balance.

NEW THINGS - Try something new. It may help you to change your perspective and re-apatportion how you spend your time, energy and attention.

LISTEN - Make a conscious effort to listen to others and to talk about issues and current affairs. This will help you broaden yourself as a person, and help you develop a bigger picture of yourself and your life.