

Achieving Balance in Your Life

By Kathleen Barton, MBA

Do you feel burdened with too many responsibilities and not enough time for personal enjoyment? Is so, then you are not alone. According to Schor, the author of *The Overworked American*, hours worked have risen 20% and leisure hours have declined 37% since 1970. With two-career families and single-parent households on the rise, it's no wonder we feel overloaded, overextended, and even overwhelmed. The key to avoiding this is to create balance in our lives.

What is Balance?

Balance is managing our various roles, activities and responsibilities in a way the results in harmony between our personal and professional lives. This requires that we take care of ourselves. We all need some private time – time to do something for ourselves that renews and refreshes us. For some, this may be golfing or gardening. For others, it may be painting or reading. Those who take leisure time are more effective in their various roles in life. They are less stressed and experience greater peace and harmony.

How to Achieve Balance

You can't do it all! The notion that you *can* do it all is a fallacy. Therefore, you need to focus on the most important things. Achieving balance and harmony involves a three-step process:

1. Determine what's most important
First determine what is most important to you. Take some time to think about your priorities. What are the most important things in life? Make a list. Think of "things" in a broad sense. They could be tangible things such as a nice house, or intangible, such as a happy family.
2. Prioritize
Review your list of important things. Which are most critical? Draw an asterisk next to the five most important things. The next step involves the difficult task of prioritizing your top five in priority order (1 through 5).
3. Determine how to spend your time
Once you determine what's most important, then determine how to spend your time based upon your priorities. Most people do not keep their priorities in mind as they go about their activities each week. Look at your calendar or schedule for the past week. How did you spend your time? Look at your top five most important priorities. Are these two aligned? For most people the answer is "no". If that's the case, then you need to make some changes. Sometimes this means saying "no" to other activities. If you are letting other less important activities get in the way, then you are not honoring your priorities.

Where are your priorities and your time out of alignment? Where do you need to spend more time? Where do you need to spend less time? Set a goal for yourself. Maybe you'd like to take two hours on the weekend just for you – to do anything you want.

Take action and track your progress. By aligning your time with your priorities, you will experience greater peace, harmony and balance in your life.

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