

Working Toward Work-Life Balance

Neil Fiore, PhD

Are you: *Rushed, overwhelmed, and too busy to take care of your health and most important relationships?* Then use your optimal performance skills:

- 1) **Focus** on your **mission and vision for your life and career**
- 2) **Plan** and prepare for distractions—know your “favorites” and “defaults”
- 3) **Choose** what to let go of—focus on top priorities not the urgent
- 4) Develop **strategies** that are more effective than just putting in more time.

I. Put More Efficiency – Not More Time – Into Your Work

- Identify your Top Priorities in 3 categories: Family; Career; Health/Personal
- Keep top priorities at your fingertips—*not* on To-Do lists—the top actions in each category
- Use your calendar to record appointments and a *When to Get Started*-List
- Keep a To Do List for Low Priority chores—buy ink cartridge; update passport
- Decide which tasks deserve your time, which to delegate, and which to dump [3 Ds]
- Focus on *starting* at a specific time on your AAA priority task before lunch;
I choose to start for 15 minutes replaces I have to finish all this work.
- Record as "billable hours" every 15-30-minute segment of *uninterrupted* time on your top priority tasks, the ones that add to the bottom line. No credit for interruptions.

II. Put Your Leisure Time in Your Schedule

- Put in your schedule time for: sleep, meals, commuting, meals with friends and family; routine meetings; exercise and sports; and, blocks of free time on weekends and holidays.
- Don't procrastinate on living. Let your mind and body know that you *must* play.
Stop the message: *Your life is about work or worry about work with no time for play.*
- Stop immediately any leisure activity that is *not* High Quality and Guilt-Free
- **Separate your worth from your work and your net worth.**
- Accept the fact that you can't do it all. Humans must make choices. ***You're perfectly human.***
- Avoid putting out fires: know what is merely urgent, but not high priority.
- Give yourself one minute to transition between tasks and appointments; take 3 breaths before throwing your car into gear, checking your stock portfolio, checking email
- **Pre-program** your brain with solutions. Each night and every Sunday evening spend a few minutes seeding your mind with the top priority task you're start on tomorrow.

"Time is the most healing thing you can give yourself today." 🕒

- Give yourself one extra minute, or drop one "last minute" chore, before starting your day
- Take a 10-minute walk before collapsing in front of the TV
- Before starting your car take 3 deep breaths (about 15 seconds total)
- Honor transitions between projects, calls and clients with 6-12 deep breaths (30 -60 seconds) as you let go of the last task and get ready to start on a new activity
- Honor the Sabbath or Shabbat. Have nothing scheduled for at least 4-8 hours every weekend

Strategies for Practicing the Art of Balance

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1. **Do the RIGHT WORK.** Decide what is your bottom line work -- what is important, NOT merely urgent. Avoid the workaholic syndrome of continually putting out fires.

 2. **Distinguish EGO-ORIENTED WORK from RESULTS-ORIENTED WORK.**
Ego-defensive work is usually unnecessary. Often 50% of some tasks can be eliminated by concentrating on what really has to be done to simply complete the task than on trying to avoid criticism or to prove that you deserve praise.

 3. **THINK SMALL.** Rather than overwhelming yourself with the expectation of doing 60 hours of work -- or even 8 hours -- to *finish* the job, focus on when you can find just 30 minutes to *get started*. Ask: "When can I start?"

 4. **PREPROGRAM** your brain with solutions. Each night and every Sunday evening spend a few minutes seeding your mind with the top priority task you're start on tomorrow. When you are stuck, overwhelmed, or tired take 2 - 5 minutes to brainstorm how the job might be tackled, divided up, delegated, or reduced. Get in your mind the specific time when you will start.

 5. **Go from OVERWHELM TO OVERVIEW.** When you first approach a large task your mind will call for enough energy to try to finish it all at once. Use this agitated level of energy to overview the entire task and create a Reverse Calendar back from the future deadline to the starting point. Assign "start-lines" instead of deadlines to do-able segments of the task leading back to when you can start today.

 6. **DON'T PROCRASTINATE ON LIVING.** You cannot put your life on hold. It will backfire and reduce your efficiency and productivity. Remember to eat good, sleep good, exercise good, and make yourself leave the office for lunch, to walk, to take a break.

 7. **Keep the BIG PICTURE in mind.** Insist on time for your life, your family, your church, your career, and your relationship with your Self. Avoid the temptation to get lost in trying to do more work. LIVE NOW, the life you've always wanted -- a few minutes each day, a few hours each weekend -- in order to keep from burning out, resenting your work, and losing motivation.
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Effective executives know where their time goes; they set priorities and stay with them; they focus on those activities that bring results... they build on their strengths -- Peter Drucker, Effective Executive