



Canadian Mental Health Association
Mental health for all

HOME ► MENTAL HEALTH ► **WORK-LIFE BALANCE: MAKE IT YOUR BUSINESS**

Work-Life Balance: Make It Your Business

If you're finding it difficult to balance the different elements of your life, you're not alone. 58% of Canadians report "overload" associated with their many roles – work, home and family, friends, physical health, volunteer and community service.

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

MENTAL HEALTH

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

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Are You in Balance?

A moderate amount of stress improves our efficiency and our mental sharpness. But how do you know when your everyday juggling act has stopped being a motivating challenge and started being harmful to your health? Here are some signs:

- You feel like you've lost control of your life
- You often feel guilty about neglecting your different roles
- You frequently find it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand
- You're always tired

A survey by Desjardins Financial Security showed that money is the main cause of stress outside work. Nearly half of respondents cited money issues as their top stressor.

Tips for Staying in Balance

Take control – there are ways to help bring yourself into balance!

At work

- Schedule brief breaks for yourself throughout the day. Your productivity and effectiveness will increase if you take even a ten-minute break every two hours and overall, you will get more accomplished.
- At the end of each day, set your priorities for the following day. Be realistic about what you can achieve in the time you have available.
- Only respond to email once or twice a day. Then, shut off your email program to avoid being distracted as messages come in.
- Make a distinction between work and the rest of your life. Protect your private time by turning off electronic communications. Don't be available 24/7.

At Home

- Create a buffer between work and home. After work, take a brief walk, do a crossword puzzle, or listen to some music before beginning the evening's routine.
- Decide what chores can be shared or let go. Determine which household chores are critical and which can be done by someone else. Let the rest go.
- Exercise. Even if it's only for 15 minutes at a time, you'll feel more energized and refreshed.
- Create and implement a household budget. Start by setting aside some money from each pay cheque for the future.

In Your Community

- Make choices. Social, community and volunteer obligations pull us in many directions. Choose the ones that are most fulfilling and learn to say "no" to the rest.

Work-Life Balance is Good for Business

According to Stephens and Joubert (2001), the direct and indirect economic burden of mental illnesses in Canada was estimated to be \$14.4 billion in 1998.

Get the support of your employer by:

- Being clear on what it is you need to ensure work-life balance
- Researching the programs, policies and benefits available
- Providing examples of practices that have worked in the past

Some of the options that might be available include:

- Flexible hours – flexible start and end times
- Telecommuting – working from home
- Job sharing – splitting a full-time job with another employee
- Graduated return – gradually building up to a full-time schedule after a leave

A global study by AC Nielsen, more than half of people making New Year's resolutions for 2007 aimed for a better work-life balance.

We all have mental health. And just like our physical health, we need to take care of it – which means reducing harmful stress.

According to Statistics Canada, employees who considered most of their days to be quite a bit or extremely stressful were over three times more likely to suffer a major depressive episode, compared with those who reported low levels of general stress.

Take an important step towards protecting your mental health by bringing all aspects of your life into balance.



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