

Work–life balance

Benefits of work–life balance

Work–life balance is the relationship between your work and the other important things in your life, like your family, sports and social life, household chores, volunteer commitments and so on.

If you have good work–life balance, you’re likely to feel:

- less stressed and tired
- more in control of your time
- better able to make decisions and meet commitments
- more healthy
- more able make time for your child, and be emotionally present when you do
- more able to have the time and energy to develop a better relationship with your spouse.

Tips for work–life balance: At work

Try to find out what family-friendly policies your organisation has in place by talking to your human resources department or your supervisor. Options might include:

- flexible working hours – for example, you might be able to arrive late and work late, or arrive early and leave early, which can make school drop-offs or family dinners easier
- working from home
- working fewer hours – for example, by working part-time or job-sharing.

Even if you can’t change your work hours, it might help to think how you can change your work habits to achieve greater work–life balance. Here are some ideas:

- Review the work day in your mind before you leave work. This can help you shift gradually to thinking about home and family once you leave office.
- If your family and care arrangements allow it, consider staying a little longer at work to finish up a task instead of taking it home. Longer hours might not be the best option in the long term, though.
- Try to arrange your work so you take on the most challenging tasks at the beginning of the day, instead of at the end.
- Take a moment in your work day to feel connected with your child. This could be as simple as looking at a photo or thinking about a special thing you’ve done together recently. This can help you remember the reason you’re trying to achieve work–life balance.

- Try to set some boundaries around how much work you'll do at home, including limits on checking and responding to emails or phone calls.

Tips for work–life balance: On the way home

You might feel more ready to connect with your children when you get home if you can 'put work to rest' in your head between work and home. Try some of these ideas on the way home:

- Turn off your work phone and tune out by listening to music, the radio or a podcast, or reading.
- Combine the trip home with some exercise if you can – if the distance is reasonable, try walking or riding a bike home, or at least for part of your journey.
- Think about ways to make travel time more relaxing. For example, join a car pool, use public transport or walk if your situation allows it.
- Switch your thoughts to your child as you make your way home. It might help to think how wonderful it is to have a child to come home to and share the world with.
- Do simple mindfulness exercises such as meditating or deep breathing exercises, perhaps, in your parked car or before you leave for work.

Tips for work–life balance: At home

Settling in for the evening might be easier with these ideas:

- Have a ritual or routine to mark the physical, mental and emotional move from work to home, from worker to parent. It can be something as simple as changing out of your work clothes.
- If you work from home, try to keep your work area separate from family areas. Additionally, put boundaries in place about start and finish times, and be clear with colleagues and clients about the times you aren't available.
- Ask whoever has been caring for your child to tell you about your child's day or anything that's happened that might affect your child's mood. This can help you get ready to give your child the attention she needs.
- Take the time to stop, listen and connect with your child. This reassures children that they're loved, safe and secure – and it might help you all relax and feel better.