Six Tips For Work and Life Balance

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Ask a Specialist: Six Tips for Finding Work/Life Balance

In a growing number of families, all adults in the household are employed outside the home. Balancing demands of work, family and the rest of life can be a challenge and can create stress. This can be especially true when trying to take advantage of upcoming summer activities. Additionally, too little sleep, lack of exercise and infrequent personal time can add to the stress.

When stress is not managed well, individuals can become overwhelmed and experience emotional exhaustion, burnout or other negative feelings. Fortunately, there are ways to cope with work-life stress and aim toward a more healthy balance. Consider these six tips to find balance and enjoy the coming summer months:

1. Discover values and current priorities. Oprah Winfrey once said, “You CAN have it all. Just not all at once.” While most people generally know what they value, depending on the current situation, priorities may change. For example, for some people finding balance might mean dividing time equally between paid work, family, school and volunteer opportunities. Others might choose to devote their non-work time to one specific area such as school or family. There is no “right way” to prioritize, but rather each individual and family must determine a balance that is comfortable for them.

2. Set realistic goals and expectations. Many individuals have high expectations for themselves to perform all their roles well, to be everything to everyone or be perfect. These unrealistic expectations can create conflict and stress. It is possible to change attitudes and expectations that no longer support current priorities. For example, this may mean that the kids get to school on time, but the dishes don’t get done in the morning.

6. Keep a sense of humor. Humor can help manage stress when things don’t work out as planned. Consider, “How will I think about this situation a year from now?” And as William Arthur Ward once said, “A well-developed sense of humor is the pole that adds balance to your steps as you walk the tightrope of life.”

While there are many approaches to creating balance, what works for one individual may not work for another, and life challenges and possible solutions may change with time. Creating and maintaining a balance in life is an ongoing process; if the current approach isn’t working, try something else. The balance may not always be perfect, but small efforts toward balance can still have a tremendous impact on life satisfaction.

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