

## Making Time For Work And Play

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Maintaining a balanced life of work and play is not easy. This publication offers tips to help reduce stress. Results of a survey answered by professionals and lay professionals who experience stress in their lives also is provided.

Relationships with others, both at work and in your personal life, are an integral part of whether life will seem manageable and enjoyable. Nurturing and fostering interpersonal relationships take time and energy. People who do not achieve a sense of balance may feel fragmented or overwhelmed. Work and relationships will suffer if you are not managing to meet your needs and responsibilities, in addition to considering the needs of others at your workplace and in your personal life. Of course you cannot do everything! Ask yourself, “Am I doing things that are the most important to me? Am I spending time with those I love? Am I making time for both work and play?”

Having balance in your life will be easier if you:

- Know your values
- Identify priorities
- Reduce unnecessary things
- Set some goals and make a plan
- Revisit priorities and goals occasionally

A value is important to the person who holds it. What changes with time and growth is the ranking of values in relation to other values. Values are expressed:

- Through talk and action; how we use our time and energy
- Through actions at work and play (leisure)
- Through choices in the market place

Priorities are activities and relationships that receive first attention because you have ranked them as highly important. When setting priorities, ask yourself:

- Is this important? To whom? Is this urgent? To whom? Is this necessary at all?

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Unnecessary things in your life include some stressors, unresolved conflicts, bad habits, poor planning skills, and unrealistic expectations. For example, do you have unnecessary conflict with a co-worker or have unrealistic expectations by striving for perfection?

Finding balance with your work and personal life, including play, can be accomplished.

- Select goals and dreams that support values.
- Do things that will bring you closer to your goals.
- Take action to do things out of your comfort zone. Be willing to take some risks.
- Respond to challenges and disappointments positively. “What can I learn from this?”
- Share your needs with others and seek their support. Be willing to ask for help.

Getting a handle on the stress in your life will help you make time for work and play and feel good about your general well-being.

- Locate the sources of stress.
- Physically work off the effects of stress.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- Talk with someone you trust about your concerns or problems.
- Accept what you cannot change.
- Organize what you can, without being a perfectionist and unduly hard on others.
- Realize that you do not control the emotions or behavior of others; you influence others.
- Avoid self-medication and the misuse of alcohol and drugs.
- Make time for recreation and for having fun.
- Do something for others.
- Take one thing at a time.
- Compromise. You don’t always have to have it done your way. Agree to disagree.
- Get away from it for a while (this can be done on a tight budget with limited time).

Ask yourself these questions.

- What things cause me stress (my stressors)? How might I reduce my stress load?

- What are the most personal things (work, activities, relationships) to me?
- Is my personal life in balance? Do I feel good about my personal life?
- Is my work life in balance? Do I feel good about my work life?
- Am I spending time doing things (work, activities, relationships) most important to me?

### **Coping Well In Stressful Times**

It will be difficult to make time for work and play unless you cope well in stressful times. Mental and emotional health are important components of a person's overall well-being. Stress is linked to mental and emotional health and a person's overall well-being, and is a factor that can be controlled through learned behavior.

Stress influences personal health, communication and intimacy in partner relationships, quality time spent with family and friends, community involvement, and work enjoyment and productivity. Some individuals appear to thrive on stress while others do not function well when they feel overwhelmed.

Some stress is necessary in order to get things accomplished. There are positive stressors such as the stress of a daughter's wedding or starting a new job. Even having a day off of work may be stressful if there are many tasks to be accomplished. Other stressors may be negative such as an illness, unexpected bill, the loss of a job, or spousal conflict. Too much stress can be threatening to physical and mental health. Individuals must recognize stress factors in their personal and professional (or work) lives and learn ways to effectively manage stress.

In a study conducted by Dr. Kathy R. Bosch (2001-06), University of Nebraska–Lincoln, over 200 professionals and lay professionals were surveyed about their stress levels and stress management. One of the best ways to help ourselves and others in our circle of family and friends is to learn from others.

The majority of both educators (64 percent) and social workers (75 percent) were stressed at work. A higher percentage of social workers reported that stress negatively affected them at work at least half of the time (75 percent), compared to educators, 41 percent of whom reported being negatively affected at work at least half of the time. Despite their levels of stress at work, both social workers and educators coped moderately well with stress at work (Mean = 3.5). Scale of 1–5 with 1 = no stress while 5 = very stressed.

One person reported, *"No one else can understand my personal situation."* Another reported, *"Everyone has plenty of their own concerns to really care about someone else."*

When asked if they felt satisfied with their level of stress, educators were not satisfied with their (high) level of stress (Mean = 2.5 personal and Mean = 2.3 work). Social workers were a little more satisfied with their levels of stress (Mean = 3.0 personal and Mean = 3.1 work).

Social workers appeared to be more satisfied with their level of stress as they are trained to cope with high levels of stress due to the nature of their work and clientele needs. They

have annual trainings and in-services, in addition to having mentors and debriefing counseling after serving clientele. In addition, their educational background trained them specifically to deal with human problems, including their own personal and work stressors, contrary to many educators unless they were specifically trained in education or family studies.

When asked if stress has ever negatively affected the way they live, work, and play, social workers reported slightly higher negative impact in both personal and work lives as compared to educators (social worker Mean = 3.8 personal and 3.6 work; educator Mean = 3.6 personal and 3.4 work). Eighty-one percent of social workers said stress negatively affected them personally half of the time; 50 percent of educators reported stress negatively affected them personally half of the time. Social workers appeared to cope better (Mean = 3.7) with their personal lives than educators (Mean = 3.2). It appeared that personal/family life was a concern for many professionals with a feeling that they don't handle stress well on a personal level.

When asked if they had an adequate support network in helping them to manage stress and enjoy life, social workers appeared to have higher personal support (Mean = 3.7); educators had a moderate amount of support (Mean = 3.1). Both social workers and educators had a moderate amount of support at work (Mean = 3.0 and 3.4, respectively).

Both educators and social workers ranked financial problems, finding time to spend with partner/spouse and family, family disagreements or discord, children and grandchildren, and family or personal illness as their major personal stressors.

Both educators and social workers ranked overwork, unrealistic expectations, budget concerns, working well with supervisors, and staff shortages as major work stressors. Educators also listed concern with reports and professional publishing as major work stressors.

When asked how they would change behavior when not managing personal stress well, educators and social workers reported they would start an exercise program, make decisions more quickly, be more organized at home, develop more friendships, reduce debt, take time to enjoy life through hobbies and recreation, talk more and improve communication skills, work and nurture their partner/spouse relationship, reach out for more help (professional counseling), develop better relaxation skills, and have more prayer and faith in their religious life.

When asked how they would change behaviors when not managing work stress well, educators and social workers reported they would start an exercise program, stop procrastinating, try to use more humor, learn to say "no," try to let go, get more local support for programs, talk about issues more often, work with a supervisor more, have better organization, and develop better prioritization and decision-making skills.

When asked what support they need from others to make personal life less stressed and more enjoyable, both educators and social workers reported a need to have partner/spouse and family members understand them, to have more visits from family and friends, have others ask how they are doing, do more fun things with children, encouragement to have free time, encouragement to have more family trips.

*“Sometimes it is like you are caught up in a whirlwind and you just have to wait till you stop and then begin putting things into bite-size pieces. Then it becomes more manageable and enjoyable.”*

When asked what support they needed from others to make work life less stressed and more enjoyable, both educators and social workers reported they wanted fair treatment from others, needed more training at all levels, wanted coworkers to be held more accountable, wanted supervisors who listen, wanted more administrative support with their heavy workload and approval of earned leave, help from colleagues and administration to make program goals a reality, better communication between co-workers and supervisors, wanted more organized supervisors, help to prioritize and let me say “no,” and encouragement for regular work hours. Here are some comments from people about their work and personal life.

*“I’m very good at hiding what I feel. Most friends and family have no idea how I struggle emotionally.”*

*“It helps to have supporting friends.”*

*“It helps having a job that you truly enjoy doing. Without that, nothing is effective.”*

*“I take time to pray and ask for daily direction. That helps me the most!”*

*“Make goals to relax!”*

*“Having just one person who truly understands and gives moral support would eliminate a lot of stress.”*

*“Being successful would help to relieve stress.”*

*“I bring on most stress myself by setting high expectations for self and not learning to say ‘no.’ ”*

*“I would like to have more sex with my wife to relieve stress, but it doesn’t seem to work out.”*

*“Lack of time has restricted my circle of friends and the desire to have more fun with family and self.”*

These survey results show a need for stress management and prioritizing both on the personal and work levels for the general public and professionals. It also justifies the need for programming in strengthening communication and conflict resolution skills, to increase coping skills and decrease the negative influence of stress on both personal and work lives. Stress management has a social impact on individual

and family relationships, as well as an economic impact on communities by the increased productivity of employees in the workplace. Coping well with stress reduces health care costs by millions of dollars as stress is related to physical and mental well-being and overall general health.

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**This publication has been peer-reviewed.**

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**Index: Family Life Relationships**  
Issued January 2008

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## Making Time for Work and Play

**What are my priorities or the things most important to me?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Am I spending my time doing the things (people, work, other activities) most important to me?**

Scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=half the time, 4=often, 5=always

1      2      3      4      5

**What things get in the way of my priorities?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**What causes me stress (my stressors)?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Is my personal life in balance?** Scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=half the time, 4=often, 5=always

1      2      3      4      5

**Do I feel good about my personal life?** Scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=half the time, 4=often, 5=always

1      2      3      4      5

**Is my work life in balance?** Scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=half the time, 4=often, 5=always

1      2      3      4      5

**Do I feel good about my work life?** Scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=half the time, 4=often, 5=always

1      2      3      4      5

**What changes might I make to manage life more effectively or achieve more balance?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_