

Life Balance: Yes, It Is Possible!

Learn how you can run a quality, profitable practice, enjoy and cultivate your outside interests, and take care of yourself.

Find out how to surround yourself with people that you trust and can delegate tasks to with ease and comfort.

Discover how to manage your time to make the most out of every moment of your day.

I have a friend who joined Toastmasters International. Her very first speech was to introduce herself so that others could know her better. Do you know how many “hats” my friend wears? 12 and counting! How many hats do you wear? My friend listed mother, stepmother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, employee, supervisor, even perfectionist. She said that the perfectionist was one of the toughest hats because she was so tough on herself that it made all the other hats hard to wear sometimes. She also said that sometimes her mother hat would sneak in under her supervisor hat and make it hard not to act like someone’s mother when she was coaching at work. Do you find it hard to wear all of your hats?

In today’s society, being a workaholic is admired. One could be called lazy if they didn’t work two jobs and take care of a family. It is assumed that to be successful you need to be busy. Perhaps it is time to redefine successful. We have all heard that no one says they wish they spent more time at work – it is always, they wish they spent more time with family and friends. Let’s redefine personal success for you.

Without a sense of self, how can you lead your team? Stay current as a clinician and surgeon? Without passion you cannot thrive in this wonderful profession. You end up in the survival mode. In most cases change starts when you feel a sense of urgency. There are steps that you need to be willing to take on to make change. The first starts with realizing it is a process. So the good news is you start the process. The bad news is you will never be done. It must become part of your new life style.

Time Management is necessary. There are too many things and too many people wanting your time. You need to set boundaries on your time, if not; you only end up resenting all those people and things that eat up your time. You set boundaries by prioritizing, delegating and working more efficiently. Stephen Covey has a simple Time Matrix to help you understand what you need to manage. Ask yourself, is it urgent and important (like a crisis or a deadline), or is it urgent but not very important (such as emails or interruptions), or maybe it is not urgent but still important (such as goal setting or tending to a client or child). Assessing the situation and deciding which quadrant it fits into will help you prioritize all the millions of things bombarding you each day.

How do you prioritize? Jake Canfield suggests you focus. Focus on what behaviors are simply habits you have, and are those habits good habits or bad habits. Identifying your habits is the starting point. Next you need to make a “stop list” by asking yourself what it is that you want and why you want it. You need to find your purpose and identify it. Without knowing yourself, how do you know where you want to go? How can you prioritize if you have no clue what you want?

Next you need to take action. David Allen has a suggestion for getting things done; it is called Allen’s Workflow Diagram. It takes into account deciding if something is urgent or important and then assessing what action or behavior is needed. For instance, you have a client walk in without an appointment. This could be urgent/important or it could be not urgent/important. What action do you take? This is where

knowing yourself and being able to take appropriate action comes into play. Some of you can already feel your neck bulging and your muscles tensing. How dare that person just walk in and want to be seen! Others have thrown their hands in the air and decided they may as well see them so they don't complain. Either way, you have failed to set boundaries so now you are reacting and regretting. Allen suggests you have three choices. You can "do it", you can delegate it, or you can defer it.

If you choose to "do it" then make sure you know yourself and you have prioritized and focused yourself so that you are not doing it out of fear of reprisal or you feel you have no choice in the matter (because this will only lead to resentment). Doing it with the proper thought in mind will result in personal success for you, rather than feeling taken advantage of and angry.

If you choose to delegate it then make sure you have surrounded yourself with people you trust and you feel you can delegate to. This goes back to leadership skills and team development (it can also help on the home front too). Knowing you have someone to cover your back makes it easier to communicate with them and delegate some situations to them. Perhaps you have an associate who has the time to see this client or the two of you can quickly assess your schedules and figure out who does what.

Defer it is another choice. Can you defer the client to another day? With good communication and proper assessment of the needs of the client you can have your team talk to the client and make the proper arrangements without starting a conflict.

These same steps apply to home too. When your child or spouse or friend needs your time you can assess the urgency or importance, and since you know yourself and set some boundaries, you can respond with the appropriate action. Sounds simple? Not really. Setting boundaries is a tough thing to do. Without setting boundaries you end up feeling drained.

In today's society it has become increasingly difficult to separate work and home. Many people are doing work from home. Some people spend so much time at work that the work groups start to be more of their family than their actual blood relatives. H. Cloud and J. Townsend, in their book "Boundaries", state that you should be supported and nurtured at work. However, it should relate to work (i.e. learning, improving your skills, getting the job done). Work is not able to replace things you should get from home. Home relationships should provide a different type of nurturing and emotional support. Set your boundaries and keep work-related issues at work, and visa versa.

If you find yourself feeling guilty then take action. Others cannot make you feel guilty, you need to be aware of the guilt and its origin, then turn to building a strong support group and set some boundaries. Are you feeling resentment? Cloud and Townsend say this is your early-warning sign that your boundaries are being crossed.

Proactively make the decision for life balance and then go for it!

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