



During the COVID-19 pandemic, your EAP is available for counseling sessions using video or phone

Balanced Living – December 2020

Living a Life in Balance

Do you feel like your life is too complicated? Are you often torn between your work and home responsibilities?

"If so, you're not alone, and you don't have to despair," says Odette Pollar, president of Smart Ways to Work, a personal productivity firm in Oakland, Calif., and author of *Take Back Your Life*. "You can gain peace and relief by making a conscious effort to reduce the complexities in your life and achieve balance."

Given all you have to do, it's easy to lose sight of what's probably your ultimate goal: to enjoy your life as you follow through on your personal and professional responsibilities in satisfying ways.

Here are Ms. Pollar's suggestions for successfully balancing your time and life.

Did You Know?

You have access to thousands of resources to help you live a more balanced life.

Learn to streamline

Speeding up and trying to force more and more into the same blocks of time isn't the best way to have more time in your life. According to Ms. Pollar, the best way to "get it all done" is to have fewer things to do by consciously streamlining your ongoing responsibilities.

Being selective about your choices and how you spend your time is important. And it's vital to keep your perspective and establish realistic expectations for yourself.

"Regaining balance starts with the awareness that something is out of kilter, that you have too much going on," she says. "From there you can identify what you want less of in your life."



Ask yourself questions

You can achieve balance by setting your priorities and creating a life around them. This is a long-term process and requires thought and insight.

As a way to get started, take some time to list three to five answers to these questions:

- What physical needs are important to you and why?
- What emotional needs are important to you and why?
- What mental needs must be filled to make you content?
- What causes the sense of frustration or depression you may feel?
- What does success -- both personal and professional -- mean to you?

Your answers will provide information you can use to make changes in your life.

Determine what you want

Before making any big changes, consider the results you want to achieve. This will give you a starting point from which to choose a direction and set goals.

For example, you might want to:

- Enjoy work and have enough energy left at the end of the day to enjoy your home life.
- Cultivate a better relationship with your children, partner, friends and extended family.
- Do more things you'd like to do and feel more content.

By reacquainting yourself with your needs, desires and feelings, you can make a plan with a systematic approach for achieving your goals.

Respect the process

Achieving balance is an ongoing process that requires your regular attention. As you move forward, talk with others about how they have achieved balance in their lives and share your successes.

As you continue on your road to a more satisfying life, remember the following.

- Keep your job and your life in perspective. Success at the expense of relaxation and enjoyment is not success.
- Take yourself less seriously. Learn to see and appreciate the lighter side of life.
- Learn to say "no." Be firm without apology or guilt.

"It's easier to balance a simpler life," says Ms. Pollar. "For a life worth living, eliminate the unimportant, whether it be relationships, tasks, responsibilities, possessions or beliefs."

COVID-19: Celebrating the Holidays at Home

For the better part of the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected our daily lives and social connections. Many people look forward to the holidays each year and spending time with loved ones. Though your holiday plans might be different this year, there are plenty of ways you can connect with family and friends. Even if you are choosing to stay home, you can still enjoy the holidays and create new memories with loved ones. Here are some tips on making the most of your celebrations.

Celebrate with Other Households Virtually

You may be choosing to stay home with only your immediate household, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, if you typically celebrate certain holidays with extended family or other households, coordinate a time to check in with them. You could plan on video chatting at a certain time, such as before or after dinner, to make it feel like you're celebrating together. Share what you cooked with each other, what tasty treats are on the menu for dessert, or show them any festive decorations you've put up.

Host a Party or Game Night

Give everyone something to look forward to by hosting a virtual party or game night. Even if you aren't with family or friends in person right now, you can still spend time together and create new memories.

Bring Dinner to Others

Consider cooking for extended family or friends who live nearby, especially those who are older and might not be able to cook a holiday dinner for themselves. You could let them know when you're dropping the meal off to avoid direct contact and say hello from a distance.

Holiday Shopping

The holidays are a fun time of year to be out and about and to see all the lights and decorations. However, consider doing your holiday shopping online this year to minimize your exposure. There are often many, if not more, deals online. Also, try supporting local and small businesses when possible that might be hurting due to the impact of the coronavirus.

Gathering Safely

If you do decide to celebrate the holidays with other households, make sure to consult your state's specific regulations. Consider gathering outside. All guests should wear masks at all times and keep a minimum of 6 feet apart. Make sure to wash your hands frequently. Read more comprehensive small gathering considerations at the CDC's website.