



YWCA CANBERRA

# Online Mentoring for Women

## Healthy Life Balance

We've probably all got an idea of what is meant by work-life balance: "juggling work and other commitments", "balancing family and other responsibilities in our busy, modern lives", "finding time for activities outside of the workplace".

The benefits of healthy work-life balance to staff, employers and society are now widely recognised, with employers and governments increasingly introducing measures in support of work-life balance.

So, why then, can we feel so stressed out and overwhelmed in our lives and at work? Why do we feel like there's not enough time to do the things we really want to do, and the things we need to do? Even if we don't feel stressed out, we still may have a nagging feeling that things are not quite right. Are we really achieving balance in our lives? How do we achieve it? Is it achievable?

Life balance involves all components of our life. For many, this includes career or paid work, child raising or elderly care, though not always, of course. No matter our circumstances, life balance is an important function of feeling satisfied in our lives. When our life balance is out of kilter, we might feel resentful, disappointed and burnt out, and our physical and psychological health may suffer.

When we work towards attaining greater life balance, we are nurturing our holistic well-being, and creating an environment where we can better achieve our potential. When we attain balanced satisfaction, we may feel:

- Less stressed
- Less pressured by time
- Like we have more time for ourselves, or to do the things we want to
- A greater sense of involvement in the things we do, and a deeper sense of satisfaction from them
- Happier, more content, invigorated, inspired!
- A greater overall satisfaction in life.

Of course, what a healthy life balance looks like and how we achieve it, is going to be different for each of us, and will change too, as new priorities arise in our lives. Factors such as the needs of our loved ones, and the practices and policies of our employers, may also influence how we maintain a healthy life balance. In reality, we may not always (if ever!) be able to achieve and maintain what we consider to be a perfectly ideal life balance.

But there are ways we can change or tweak what we do, and the way we do it, to ensure that we are getting closer to what we want and need, to achieve a healthy life balance? Here are some ideas.

- Reflect on your values and set priorities. Our values are integrally linked with our sense of integrity: if the way we are living is reflective of our values, this can help us feel satisfied, balanced and even. Have a look at the Values module and make some time to do the exercise below.
- Exercise! Keeping fit is a great way to cleanse your mind and maintain healthy energy levels. Go for a walk at lunchtime, or join a gym. Always try to eat well too.
- Don't procrastinate! Procrastination can consume a lot of valuable time. Often we procrastinate when we fear the thing that we need to do. Confront your fears. Be brave. As the saying goes, feel the fear and do it anyway!

- Make time for yourself... and for the things you really enjoy doing. Make space in your diary for “me time”, which might be for reading, going to the gym, sitting in a café, taking a walk, lying in or whatever ‘you’ want. Remember to schedule in regular breaks and holidays.
- Engage in something of interest to you. Like a club or group, a weekly or fortnightly activity that you commit to and benefit from.
- Get organised. Organise your desk or workspace, organise your bag, organise your pantry, and organise your home! Reduce the clutter which piles up around you. You’ll be amazed how the clutter in your head clears when you reduce the material clutter in your life!
- Plan... your day, the week ahead and beyond.
- Write a list. Update it daily or weekly, and enjoy ticking tasks off!
- Share the load. Delegate. Ensure household chores are shared, and avoid feeling ‘indispensable’. Feel empowered by saying ‘no’ from time to time.
- Be realistic. Avoid expectations that are destined to disappoint.
- Acknowledge your successes. Spend a few minutes each week reflecting on your successes. We often emphasise what we failed to achieve and forget to acknowledge and celebrate what we have achieved.
- Be confident. And optimistic. Visualise where you want to be. Know your worth!
- Get help. If things are really too overwhelming, seek help. You may have friends, family or neighbours who you could talk to, or who could lend a hand. Don’t be afraid to ask for help.

Remember, life balance involves all components of our life, include work and non-work roles, the responsibilities we have in life as well as the things that we do for enjoyment, relaxation and respite.

They may include things like:

- Board involvement
- Child-raising
- Community involvement
- Dance
- Elderly care
- Exercise and fitness
- Family
- Friends
- Groups and clubs
- Hobbies and recreation
- Holidays
- Household work
- Music
- Nutrition and healthy eating
- Paid employment
- Pet care
- Reading
- Social activities
- Spirituality, Yoga, meditation
- Sport
- Study
- Travel
- Voluntary work
- Writing

### **Exercise: Reflecting on your values and setting priorities**

This is a great exercise to generate thinking about the things that are important to use, and that are likely to influence our life balance.

- What is important to you?
- What else is important to you?
- Now write the list again in priority order, starting with most important.
- Think about how you spend your time and energy, list the three things that take up most of your time and energy, in order.
- Compare the two lists – are you spending your time and energy on the things that are most important to you?
- You may want to make some changes in your life so that the way you live is more in line with your values.