



## **BLOG: WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING**

'Work-life balance' has become a popular term over the past few years, and it's an excellent concept – once we've figured out what it means and how to apply it to our life!

Essentially, good work-life balance means we have harmony between the various different aspects of our life. The benefits gained from each area support and strengthen the others; we feel in control, and comfortable that we are achieving what we want and need to. Often-times, though, our personal and work lives can feel at odds with each other – like there's just not enough time to do everything we need to do – and at least one side starts to suffer. That's when taking a look at our work-life balance is a good idea. Left unchecked, poor balance in our lives can cause stress; and too much stress is never going to be good for our mental health and wellbeing.

While the word 'balance' often brings up an image of something that is evenly weighted on both sides, that doesn't necessarily apply to work-life balance. The ideal is what feels right for you.

Below, we have some work-life balance ideas to get you started. You might like to do this exercise with others (whānau, matavuvale, family, colleagues) so that you can discuss the points and encourage one another, but as you work your way through, remember that everyone's sense of balance is unique, so don't be tempted to compare your answers with someone else's.

### [figure out your priorities](#)

Make the time to sit down and really think about what you want. For example; what is important to you, what do you value? How do you want to be spending your time? How do you want to feel, and what things make you feel that way? Consider your passions and interests – what makes you feel alive?

Firstly, make your list without critiquing it – capture everything you can think of. Then go back through your list and highlight the ones you think are your top priorities (start off with a maximum of around six).

### [do a time study](#)

Now that you have a list of what your priorities are, you'll want to have a look at how much time you actually spend on them. For a minimum of a week, take a note of exactly how you spend your time. At the end of that time, take a look at where your time went. How much was spent on the things that fall under your six biggest priorities? If there's good alignment between what matters to you and the things you did, that's awesome! If it feels like there was very little alignment at all, don't be too disheartened – it's only when you identify there is an issue that you can do something about it.



## addressing imbalance

Here's some ideas to consider. Feel free to add your own – you know yourself best!

### keep work at work and personal life at home

When you leave home or work, get into the habit of switching everything off – from your devices to your nagging thoughts. Give your full attention to the things and people you identified are your priorities. Ask your work not to contact you after hours, and in turn, ask friends and family not to interrupt your working day, unless it is an absolute emergency.

### learn to say no

Both in your personal life and your work life, learn to say a firm but polite no. It's very easy to over-commit, so keep your priorities in mind and only agree to those projects, appointments and activities which fit. Ask yourself how much you want to do whatever you are being asked to do. Will it add value to your work or personal life? Does it fit with your priorities? If not, say no thank you, politely but firmly.

### cut some stuff out

If you can see what your priorities are but not how you will possibly be able to fit them all in, it's time to take a good look at what you commit yourself to. It may even be time to consider some of the bigger things like whether you can reduce your hours at work, whether it's time to finish up with one of your sport commitments, and so on. Definitely look at cutting out the stuff you don't have to do and which you don't even enjoy.

### think about how you can get rid of 'lost time'

Some things may be sucking up your time without adding any value to your life – essentially it's lost time. These will vary from person to person, but one example might be the time spent travelling to and from work. Some people love the opportunity to read on the train or to listen to an audiobook in the car – it gives them a bit of 'me time' and helps them to separate home and work. But if you're not one of those people, consider the ways you might be able to recover some of that lost time: speak with your workplace about moving to a site closer to home, ask if it would be possible to work a day or more from home, or maybe you could add a bit of extra time to each day with a view to taking a day off when sufficient hours have accumulated. Ask what other flexibility they can offer.

### be realistic, but...

We all have times that are busier than others, and sometimes the best approach is to just hunker down and get stuck into whatever it is that needs doing. However, it's not practical to live under pressure long-term without expecting it to affect our health in some way, so make sure you don't let yourself see this as an ongoing option.

Hopefully these ideas have prompted some of your own and you're already thinking about what else you can do to take control over your time and create more balance in your life!

As a next step, you might find it helpful to carry out our easy-and-enlightening exercise, [Do you have balance in your life?](#)