

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Make your life work

Is work-life balance possible – given our busy schedules and the myriad tasks we have to do every day? How do we reach our goals and still live the life we have always imagined? Work-life consultant and career coach Cheryl Liew-Chng tells you how to do it.

How do I get a balanced life when my work seems to consume all my time? This is a question I get very often.

Darren, 33, is a busy executive who is thinking twice about life in the fast lane. "I don't have time for family, friends. I don't have a life!" he confides. "What can I do to relieve stress and still keep my job?"

Such concerns are becoming increasingly common among working professionals across the generations. Those who are part of Generation X and Y want a life outside work, while baby boomers, who have had enough of giving their all to work, are deciding that it is time for a new way of living.

If you are seeking a greater balance between life and work, here are some tips to help you get started.

Decide what is really important to you

What would be your ideal life? How would you spend your time? While an open-ended question like this may trigger fantasies of endless vacations by the beach, the truth is that a life of leisure quickly turns into boredom. Work is a part of our design, and being productive brings a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment into our lives. On the other hand, we don't want work to consume all our time and energy, to the exclusion of everything else that makes life meaningful, such as relationships and leisure.

Assuming that you sleep eight hours a day, you have only 112 hours of active time in a week. Decide how you want to spend that time. Decide how much time you want to spend at work, and how much time you want to spend on other pursuits. What would be the ideal or optimum amount of time you would like



to spend with family and friends, or on your favourite hobby? For example, your ideal might be to have dinner with your

family every evening, but currently you manage to do this only twice a week.

Another way to discover your values and priorities is to do a list of all the things you wish you could do more. If a certain area needs to keep popping up on your list, it is an indication that your values and priorities lie in that area. You should probably be spending more time in that area. For example, if you love to exercise but haven't had the time or energy to go for your regular jog or a swim, you probably would feel that something is missing.

Look for ways to free up your time

This requires you to look at the way you do your work through fresh eyes. For example, if you are in sales, perhaps a great deal of your time goes towards making calls to clients, only to find

that they are not available. Or perhaps you are being productive during the day, but your evenings are being burnt because you need to do a lot of documentation and reports.

Can you simplify the way things are being done? Can you find another acceptable time slot in which to do these time-consuming tasks? Or perhaps you can even delegate it to someone else. It is not easy to push for a change, but once you have your facts, you can negotiate with your superior or even look for another employer that gives you the flexibility in deciding how these things get done.

Re-allocate your time and invest in the things that really matter to you

Once you are able to free up some time, re-allocate it towards the things that bring you greater satisfaction, such as relationships, social life, self or health. Invest that time into something that is meaningful to you, be it playing your favourite sport, spending time with your kids, or volunteering for a cause.

- When you have time for the things that reflect your values and priorities, you will feel more alive and connected. You will feel that you are living life the way you imagined it to be.

At the end of the day, personal work-life effectiveness is the result of exercising personal leadership and choice over the issues of work and life, in accordance to your priorities in this season of your life.

Cheryl Liew-Chng

She is the founder and director of LifeWorkz (www.mylifeworkz.com) and a work-life consultant and career coach for individuals and organisations. She holds a graduate degree in Human Resource Development (MA HRD) from George Washington University, USA, and is an alumna of INSEAD.



Building Career Resilience seminar: 30% off for HomeTeamNS members

Cheryl will be conducting Building Career Resilience, a seminar on career advancement and work-life balance, on Dec 6, 9am to 3pm. HomeTeamNS members can enroll for the seminar at a promotional fee of \$180 (usual price \$250). E-mail customercare@mylifeworkz.com to sign up.

Have a question? Send it in and stand a chance to win a complimentary seminar pass!

Do you have a question on work-life balance or career advancement? We are giving away two complimentary passes (worth \$250 each) for the seminar Building Career Resilience. E-mail your questions to Contests@HomeTeamNS.sg by Dec 1.