

Balance

Think of your typical day. How many hours do you spend on work? With family and friends? Do you think you can contribute fully to all these areas of your life? What about your personal time?

Is YOUR workplace promoting work-life balance? Balance is present in a work environment when there is recognition of the need for balance between the demand of work, family, and personal life.

In addition to work, we often play a lot of different roles in our personal lives. Each of these roles has its own demands and requires our energy and attention. Maybe you are a parent, a caregiver to an aging parent, or you volunteer in your community. Even keeping up with tasks like laundry, dishes, cooking, staying active... all take up time and energy.

When workplaces value a healthy balance, employees tend to have higher morale, less stress and burnout, and miss less work days.

Given that workplaces can have varying demands depending on the time of year, or projects you are working on, what does a healthy balance look like? Let's look at an example.

This is Liliana. Liliana works at a high-tech firm, where work demands can change depending on how many contracts they get. Liliana has recently been working longer hours at the office to meet a deadline. She is becoming frustrated working longer hours than normal and not having as much time at home. Liliana is expected to meet the project deadline, but also knows her family is neglected... How can she balance these demands and how can Liliana's work help?

Liliana can talk to her family about the deadline she has and that sometimes her workload changes, but it is not a regular expectation. She may have to work more right now, but once this deadline is met, her hours will go back to normal. After speaking with her family, Liliana can discuss with her supervisor that she needs to be home for some family meals, events, and at least an hour before her kids' bedtime. She can ask her supervisor for help in managing the remaining tasks so she can have some work-life balance. They can discuss what tasks are a top priority. Or maybe extend the deadline to allow for more realistic time management. Perhaps there is an opportunity to work from home. Or maybe take some vacation time once the deadline has passed.

Other ways workplaces may support balance include:

- Offering flexible working arrangements, such as compressed work schedules, working from home, or job sharing
- Encourage management to not say that everything is "urgent"
- Encouraging employees to take their allowed breaks such as lunch and coffee breaks
- Encouraging employees to take their vacation leave and time off they have earned (or are given)
- Making sure that overtime is not an every-day thing, but just needed under tight deadlines
- Have on-site or nearby fitness facilities, get outside and use walking trails or do activities that can be done from their work area

- Support staff to share accomplishments that are non-work related

Work-life balance is different for everyone. It's important to know what this means to you and to have a conversation with your supervisor.

How will you improve your work-life balance in the next week?

Balance is one of 13 factors that support psychological health and safety in the workplace. Learn more at: [MentalHealthCommission.ca/NationalStandard](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/NationalStandard)(link is external)

For more resources for your workplace, check out [haveTHATtalk.ca](https://www.haveTHATtalk.ca)

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