



Getting the right work-life balance can be hard. We have increasing pressures to perform brilliantly at work, but we are not prepared to sacrifice valuable time at home. Here are 13 things that you can start doing today to bring more balance into your life.

1. Set aside time each week to devote entirely to your family. You could make Saturday evening a games night or video night, or on Sunday afternoons you could all go for a long walk together. Let your family know that for that time you are thinking only of them. Make this time sacred and do not let work commitments spill into this time.
2. Get organised. Buy a large wall planner and include every family event on it. Hang this in a prominent place and encourage all members of your family to contribute to this.
3. Build a support network. We are all multi-taskers and all have skills that may be useful to others. Share this information with other people and form your own network. Keep a networking notebook that can be used as an easy reference guide of key service providers. Include key services such as electrician, plumber, childminder, taxi driver, etc, but also include core business services such as printers. Accountants etc. Remember to note who recommended these to you so that you can thank them when you have used them.
4. Involve your family in as much of your work as possible. Are there any aspects of your job that your children could help with? Could they accompany you when you drop leaflets? Could they stuff envelopes for you? Can they log your receipts? Not only will this increase the time that you spend together, but it will also give them useful business skills that they can use in the future.
5. Establish boundaries and **STICK TO THEM**. Decide today what is acceptable in your business. If weekends are dedicated to your family, then make sure that your clients know this and do not let business creep into this time.
6. Stop trying to be a perfectionist. There are certain elements to your business that must always be perfect and it is important that you constantly maintain high standards. However, there are undoubtedly other areas that do not need to be perfect, and valuable time can be saved in recognising these. Similarly at home, if your house is less than perfectly neat and tidy ask yourself whether it really matters. Prioritise your needs and stop try to be perfect in everything that you do.
7. Get some 'me-time'. It is vital that you look after yourself. Book me-time into your diary – take yourself off for a massage, read a book, have a leisurely coffee. To be good to others, you need to be able to be good to yourself.
8. Be flexible. In business one of the first lessons is knowing that things will change – no matter how well you have planned, and how in control you feel, things can change at a moment's notice. As a working parent, this is even more apparent. Children are often unpredictable, and you could find yourself playing host to a number of friends with no notice – it is important that you recognise this and build some flexibility into your diary. Established boundaries should not be flexible, but everything else must.

9. Arrange some great childcare. Even if your children are at school and do not need conventional childcare, there will always be times when you need someone to sit for you. Source someone today that you feel completely comfortable with and work on establishing a relationship between them and your children.
10. Value your own personal and professional needs as highly as you do others. Take a day out to set some really great goals that will get you closer to your ideal life and then set some actions that will bring you closer to that goal. If you can, work with a life coach and really make your goals SMART.
11. Learn to delegate. Despite how much you want to be able to do, you have to face facts – you are not superhuman; you cannot do everything. If you have not already done so, work out your hourly rate. For every job you are doing, can you pay someone less than your hourly rate to do that job? When the answer is yes, delegate. You are your best resource – do not waste it on menial jobs that can be delegated.
12. Work as a team with your family. Decide together who is responsible for household chores, set a rota and stick to it. Reward yourselves as a family when the chores are done.
13. There are times when you have to work late. Agree today what procedure you will follow when you have to work late. How much notice do they need, what happens about dinner, childcare etc. Perhaps you could have a 'working-late kit' which includes key phone numbers, dinner instructions and bedtime procedures.

Rachel Saint is Director of the Work Life Balance Enterprise Ltd and the sister company Busymummy. She is a qualified life coach and works with organisations and individuals to devise new strategies to improve work life balance.

For more information go to www.worklifecyclebalanceenterprise.co.uk or www.busymummy.co.uk