

20

Don't live your life by accident

We do have a choice about how we live our lives. For example, we can choose to focus on work. Alternatively, we can place a higher priority on family and leisure. Whatever our choice, how do we get the balance just right?



Here's a way of establishing whether you have the balance you want or whether you need to make some changes.

CHECK THE CURRENT SITUATION

There are 168 hours in a week, and you probably spend around 56 of them in bed. So, this leaves 112 hours for living in. Draw a table comprising three columns and three rows, resulting in nine square boxes. In each box write down an activity or area of your life where you currently spend your time, such as Friends, Relationships, Family, Alone Time, Work, Spirituality, Vision, Personal Growth, Health, Hobbies, Leisure, Creativity. If you need more squares just add them. Also include areas that you wish to get involved in, such as Fitness or Travel.

Here's an
idea for
you...

Create an action plan. All too often we talk about wanting to get fitter, visit friends or take up a new hobby, but another year passes and we never seem to get around to it. Head up columns with the areas you wish to work on, then create two rows for listing exactly how you intend to go about the change and when you intend to achieve this by. Also include a 'completed' box. The key is to break the path to success down into small, realistic and achievable steps.

working. The area that suffered as a result was his box marked Wife and Family. Following this realisation he resolved to refrain from watching TV between Monday and Thursday. He also committed to telling his boss that he was only going to work late three evenings a week and that he was leaving each Wednesday and Friday at five o'clock. He decided to ask for support from his team at work and to sit down with them to look at their work-life balance and to ask them what he could do to help them get their ideal balance. He planned to take his wife out for dinner once a month and decided he would tell his two sons that every other weekend they could

Now add the number of hours in a typical week that you spend in each of these areas. Then convert these numbers into a percentage of 112 and write the percentages into the appropriate boxes.

That's your starting point. You may wish to ask your partner or a work colleague to take a look at what you've written to make sure that you're not indulging in any wishful thinking. If the percentages are just as you'd like them to be, then well done – there's no need for you to continue with the rest of this idea.

One person I did this exercise with decided that he was spending too many hours watching television and too many hours

have half a day of his time to do anything they wanted to do, provided it didn't cost more than a couple of DVDs. His commitment to action made this exercise really work for him and his family.

Ensure that your work-life balance isn't affected by your disbelief in what you can achieve. Try IDEA 15, *Whose idea is it anyway?*

Try another idea...

PLAN THE FUTURE SITUATION

Now look at your own table and decide on the areas where you want to make adjustments. Remember that you'll need to counterbalance each area where you wish to raise the percentage. And resolve to get started on any activities that you've added that you currently don't do. Now translate the percentages into hours and see whether you think you have a feasible plan.



'We're so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget that the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it's all about.'

JOSEPH CAMPBELL, US expert on mythology and comparative religion

Defining idea...

How did
it go?

Q I'd really like to spend more time with my daughter, who lives half an hour away. Lunchtimes would be best for her because she works most evenings and weekends, but how can I ever manage it as I work during the day?

A You could start by explaining the situation to your manager to see if there's the possibility of some flexible working to allow you an extended lunch break or perhaps an afternoon off once or twice a month? Also, perhaps your daughter could come over to you sometimes?

Q I really want to get fitter so that I'll be able to play with my grandchildren and really have some fun with them. I've tried joining a gym, but it just doesn't seem to work. I start with good intentions, but then find it difficult to find the time to go. What would you suggest?

A It's often easier to make time for the things we enjoy most. Perhaps your difficulty in finding the time has more to do with the appeal, or lack of it, of the gym. Have you considered other ways to improve your fitness that might fit more easily with your lifestyle? For example, replacing a regular car journey with walking or cycling, taking the stairs rather than the lift, exercising whilst at home in front of the TV? I've just started playing golf and I love it – I feel really good about the exercise.