

For Americans, Work-Life Balance Is Becoming More Elusive

Many of us want more time with our families, for engaging in sports and leisure activities and even for an occasional vacation on a remote tropical island.

Instead we decide to spend more time at work. Whether it's for economic reasons or pressure from our boss to finish that big project ahead of schedule, indulging our workaholic tendencies seems to be an American obsession.

According to Boris Groysberg and Robin Abrahams [at the Harvard Business Review](#), “work/life balance is at best an elusive ideal and at worst a complete myth.” While we might want to work less, we Americans always seem to be working more.

Research supports this claim. [1 in 3 workers](#) complains that work-life balance has become less attainable.

[Another recent study](#) reveals that in the U.S. people who are busier in their work lives, have less leisure time and wear a hands-free Bluetooth headset are perceived as having greater social status than those who do not. (Odd, I always thought it was the opposite way around—that those with more leisure time had more social status.)

Unfortunately, the inability to find a work-life balance leads to some adverse effects. [Here are some](#) catalogued by staff at the Mayo Clinic:

***Fatigue.** When you're tired, your ability to work productively and think clearly might suffer – which could take a toll on your professional reputation or lead to dangerous or costly mistakes.*

***Poor health.** Stress is associated with adverse effects on the immune system and can worsen the symptoms you experience from any medical condition. Stress also puts you at risk of substance abuse.*

***Lost time with friends and loved ones.** If you're working too much, you might miss important family events or milestones. This can leave you feeling left out and might harm relationships with your loved ones. It's also difficult to nurture friendships if you're always working.*

***Increased expectations.** If you regularly work extra hours, you might be given more responsibility – which could lead to additional concerns and challenges.”*

So, what's the solution? Work less, play more? Perhaps.

One option is to ask your employer or the human resources department to start a work-life balance initiative, implementing some innovative policies, such as flex-time, on-site childcare, tele-work, job-sharing and a compressed work week.

Another option is to manage your time better. More efficiently completing work tasks and not bringing as much work home go a long way toward making the time you spend away from the workplace more enjoyable.

Also, consider unplugging from digital media once in a while. So often our work and colleagues haunt us in the digital realm.

“In our digitally driven world, it's imperative to maintain a work-life balance,” Jackie Stone, CMO of MiMedia, [reminds us](#). “I've worked in digital media for more than 20 years and as we become more connected, more people have decided that staying 'on' 24/7 is socially acceptable – and it's not.”

And finally, despite the Mayo Clinic's warning about the

increased risk of substance abuse, sit back and have a stiff drink once in a while. It can't hurt you if it's only one.

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