

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Lunch and Learn Series



Missouri Department of
MENTAL HEALTH



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES**

WORK/LIFE BALANCE, HARMONY, AND INTEGRATION

Work/life balance isn't about a perfect 50/50 split—it's about creating a life that feels sustainable and aligned with what matters most to you. It influences your well-being, your relationships, your health, and your effectiveness at work. Balance requires not just managing time, but managing energy, attention, and presence.

True harmony means being fully engaged wherever you are—focused at work during work time, and genuinely present at home during personal time. When those boundaries blur, stress rises, performance drops, and relationships suffer.



WHY WORK/LIFE BALANCE MATTERS

Chronic imbalance drains us. When work overwhelms everything else, we see burnout, strained relationships, poor sleep, and declining health. But when people experience healthier balance, they show higher engagement, creativity, and resilience—both at work and at home.

Importantly, balance isn't a daily formula. Life shifts. Some seasons require more from work; others require more from family or health. The goal is long-term integration, not perfection.



RECOGNIZING YOUR CURRENT PATTERNS

Improving balance starts with honest reflection. Many of us fall into familiar patterns:

- The “always-on” worker who never disconnects
- The parent who misses key family moments for overtime
- The vacationer who works through trips or days off
- The partner who comes home too depleted to connect
- The perfectionist who says yes to everything

Tools like the Canadian Mental Health Association’s Work-Life Balance quiz (cmha.ca) can help you evaluate how you’re truly spending your time and energy.

A helpful perspective is imagining what you’d want people to say about your life at your retirement celebration. Would they remember quick email replies—or presence, connection, and meaningful moments?

SETTING PRACTICAL BOUNDARIES

Healthy boundaries protect what matters. Three types tend to make the biggest difference:

- **Physical boundaries:**
A shutdown ritual (closing your laptop, changing clothes, taking a short walk) helps your brain shift out of work mode. A dedicated workspace—especially at home—signals when work is “on” and “off.”
- **Time boundaries:**
Put personal activities on your calendar just like meetings. Build buffer time between obligations so you’re not rushing nonstop.
- **Digital boundaries:**
Limit notifications after certain hours. Use Do Not Disturb during meals, rest, or focused work. Decide when you check email—not when it demands your attention.

Working Smarter to Protect Your Life Outside Work

Efficiency isn't about doing more—it's about doing what matters with intention. Strategies like focused work intervals (e.g., Pomodoro), timeboxing, delegating tasks, and saying no to nonessential commitments help protect time for life outside work.

Reevaluating meetings can also reclaim significant time. Before scheduling one, ask: Do we really need this meeting, and what is the specific outcome?

Making Personal Time Truly Restful

Time off only helps when you're genuinely present. Consider simple strategies like the "phone stack" at dinner or carving out protected time for hobbies and rest. Aim for "active rest"—activities that restore you rather than drain you.

Sleep is foundational. Consistent routines, fewer screens before bed, and calming wind-down habits strengthen emotional regulation, creativity, and overall health.

Integrating Work and Life Through Changing Seasons

Sometimes integration works better than rigid separation. You might adjust your schedule to match your natural rhythms or family needs, batch tasks to reduce mental clutter, or plan recovery time after high-demand periods. What balance looks like will evolve as your life changes.



SHAPING WORKPLACE CULTURE TOGETHER

Individual efforts matter, but workplace culture does too. You may need to collaborate with supervisors or coworkers to create healthier norms—flexible scheduling, meeting-free time blocks, clearer expectations about availability, or improved coverage systems for personal emergencies.

Sometimes better balance comes from changing roles or organizations. Choosing a workplace that supports your well-being can transform both your professional success and your personal life.



ACTIVITY

YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE ADJUSTMENTS

Small, consistent shifts can have a big impact. Use this space to identify up to three realistic changes you can begin implementing over the next week. Choose actions that feel manageable and meaningful—not overwhelming.

Change # 1:

What I will do: _____

Why this matters for me: _____

When and how I will implement it: _____

Change # 2:

What I will do: _____

Why this matters for me: _____

When and how I will implement it: _____

Change # 3:

What I will do: _____

Why this matters for me: _____

When and how I will implement it: _____

Reflection Prompt

Before you move on, take one minute to check in with yourself.
Which change will I start with first, and what would help me stay consistent?

GROUP DISCUSSION & ONGOING PRACTICE

Share your ideas with coworkers and explore how your workplace can support healthier balance.
As a group, discuss:

- What small habits help you transition out of “work mode”?
- What workplace practices make balance easier—or harder?
- What is one thing we, as a team, could do to support each other’s well-being?
- What policies or norms would help protect time off and reduce burnout?

Use this space to capture ideas you hear from the group:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To explore more tools, and mental health supports, visit: ***dmh.mo.gov***.

