



Front Line

aspirus.org

an employee assistance program newsletter

Make Work-Life Balance Second Nature

Do you crave work-life balance only when overwhelmed by stress? Put work-life balance on “autopilot.” 1) Do tiring or intense work tasks during the time of day you feel the most energetic and “up.” 2) Passionately engage in a goal, hobby, pastime, or sport *outside of work*—something magnificent that “calls your attention.” Make it something you can’t wait to get to, either before work or after. 3) Write down realistic goals for your work each day. (Without a daily plan, you won’t easily find an end to your day.) 4) Examine what underlies imbalance. For example, do you believe overwork is noticed and will eventually be rewarded? Do you work harder hoping others won’t notice the skills and abilities you fear you don’t possess? With these few changes, you can avoid “work strain,” burnout, and disillusionment with your job.



Conquer and Check Implicit Bias

Implicit biases are naturally acquired, mostly unconscious beliefs or views about others who are different from us. Research shows that all people have biases, but with education, awareness, and conscious use of self you can prevent their expression. Biases can sour interactions on the job, damage morale, and affect the bottom line. When bias is checked, employees remain focused and engaged and possess a stronger sense of belonging. And ultimately, those who are different from the majority come to believe their value is unconditionally accepted and their differences don’t matter.



Your Bucket Full of Vitamins

Many people take multiple vitamins, herbal supplements, and nutraceuticals marketed on television or suggested by others who swear by their benefits. Pills, powders, and super food concoctions are heavily promoted, and may not be regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Discuss supplements with your physician, and visit [drugs.com](https://www.drugs.com) to discover whether anything you are taking now interferes with something else you might be using. Fact: Did you know that vitamin C has known interactions with 27 drugs and medications?



Learn more: [drugs.com](https://www.drugs.com) [tab “interaction checker”]

Digital Timers for Boosting Productivity

Digital timers are desktop or smartphone applications that keep you focused so you produce more work and waste less time with fewer distractions. Beyond this basic goal, they collect start, stop, and pause data to measure, analyze, and offer insight into your behavior. This can improve awareness, create new work habits, save time, and help your employer with the bottom line. Timers for Windows applications can be found online, but even if you don’t use one, here’s a metric most have identified: You work efficiently and at peak for about 25 minutes. Taking a break for 3-5 minutes every 25 minutes will maximize productivity.



Learn more: “The Leader’s Guide to Unconscious Bias: How to Reframe Bias, Cultivate Connection, and Create High-Performing Teams”—coming April 25, 2023, by Pamela Fuller

Facing Loss During the Holidays



Grief often intensifies during the holiday season. And the dread that comes with anticipating the struggle can create strain. Those who have faced grief offer some tips. Acknowledge that this time of year is different and hard. Ironically, this self-awareness makes practicing other tips easier. Avoid “thought blocking,” stuffing feelings, and isolation.

Make a few choices about traditions. Keep ones that are meaningful, modify others, eliminate some, and start new ones. Again, it’s okay. What works for you is what works for you. Where will you physically be during the holidays? Trust your gut. If it feels easier to manage grief in a new environment, consider this choice. Don’t apologize for how you grieve or for acting on what feels right to you. Engaging with others, especially loved ones, along with the positive distraction socializing generates, is a healthy coping strategy. So, reach out for support, consciously nurture yourself, don’t resist participating in an activity that brings you joy, and let others know what your needs are at this time. If you are not experiencing grief, do you know someone who is? Reaching out to offer companionship and support is the most priceless form of caring.

Explore more: <https://parade.com/1308668/lisamulcahy/coping-with-grief-holidays/>

Reducing Holiday Financial Stress



Holiday cheer is often followed by post-holiday “jeer” when credit card bills come due. If you are inclined to overindulge in purchases, especially for loved ones, here are a few tips to reduce post-holiday bill shock. Decide who will get a gift, and who can receive your sentiments in another way. Recruit your family—use a team approach to buy into cutting back. Don’t be tempted by shopping deals that excite you to spend more, credit offers, or bulk deals you don’t need. When shopping online, enter the keyword of a gift item you are considering and click the “images” tab at the top of your browser. You will discover numerous images of the same item displayed by competitors—both online and at stores nearby. Now, shop by price. This trick to online shopping can lead to significant savings. Track holiday spending—it’s a restraining tactic to curtail buying on impulse. With these clever changes in spending, you will enjoy the holidays more and keep mindful spending habits year-round.

Source: www.henryford.com/services/sleep-disorders

Reduce Stress, Right Now

Focus on the Tension, Not Just Stress



When we perceive stress, it is the result of tension affecting us. The tension of being overworked creates the exhaustion (stress symptom) felt when you arrive home. So stress and tension (the source) are different. The desire to reduce stress may cause people to reach for relief—healthy choices like taking a walk, or perhaps unhealthy choices like substance abuse, which can bring temporary relief but then make circumstances worse. When stressed, consider what influence or control you have over the tension. Make it your first intervention. Ask: What element of the tension do I have the ability to shape, eliminate, reduce, or manage better? Stumped? Seek help from your EAP or another professional resource. Then develop the life skill of acting upstream to help prevent tension arriving downstream in the form of stress.

Fentanyl Education for Parents and Teens

Deaths of young people from fentanyl poisoning keep rising, at 41,587 deaths in 2021, a 20% increase over 2020. Most deaths are in young people 18-45 who unwittingly take lethal amounts—about the size of two grains of salt. A government report issued last month contains the results of a massive survey of young people that sought to gauge their knowledge of fentanyl. The survey shows a dramatic lack of knowledge of this killer drug. Only 36% of teens know fentanyl is sold as fake pills or mixed with other substances of abuse. Download the 75-question survey and use it as a conversation starter to help young people be more informed and less likely to be victims of poisoning. Download: Justthinktwice.gov [search “friends fentanyl”] “How Much Do Your Friends Know About Fentanyl”.

