

## Avoid Commitment Overload

Are you overscheduled? A study in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* found that the reason people choose too many commitments is because they believe they will have more time or resources in the future than they do today. This thinking sets you up for too little energy and too little time to do what you thought you could. To avoid this trap, ask yourself five questions before attempting something new:

Keep Goals  
**REAL:**  
Realistic  
Explicit  
Actionable  
Livable



1. Does my current schedule allow for this commitment?
2. Why do I want to take on this responsibility? (Is it for career advancement, self-satisfaction, a sense of obligation or guilt?)
3. If I accept this commitment, what changes are needed in my current schedule?
4. What other tasks or projects can I eliminate to make room for this?
5. Do I currently have the resources I need to accomplish this goal?

The healthiest commitments are those you choose for yourself, not out of a sense of obligation to others. When you feel a personal connection to a project — that it helps you to better your life in some way, for example — you're more likely to stay motivated and to make any changes needed in your life to accommodate it.

## Headed for Burnout?

Ask for help. Whether through delegating, talking to a counselor or just asking a friend or family member to lend a hand with something, reach out for help when you're feeling overwhelmed.

## Easing the Work-to-Home Transition

Sometimes coming home is a challenge in itself — there's rush-hour traffic to contend with, dinner to get on the table, children to pick up and household chores to worry about. Take a time-out.

Try these ideas:

- **Before** leaving work, make a to-do list for the following day. As you make the list, allow yourself to let go of the day's stress and leave your job behind until tomorrow.
- **Leave** your work space neat, organized and ready for the next day.
- **Listen** to an audio book or soothing music during your commute home. If you take public transportation, read or catch a quick nap.
- **Institute** a "quiet time" policy that gives you 15 minutes to shower, change clothes, lie down, read the paper or watch the news when you get home — this gives everyone else in the family a chance to unwind too. Remember that a transition takes its toll on everyone.
- **Keep** cut-up vegetables and fruit, low-fat yogurt, whole-grain crackers, and pretzels on hand for healthy snacks so you can enjoy a little break before fixing dinner.
- **Organize** family time. Rather than everyone talking at once, draw numbers out of a hat and have family members talk about their day in order. Everyone gets a chance to speak and to listen.

**Don't go it alone:** Share household chores, driving and childcare. A home is more of a haven when everyone pitches in to keep it running smoothly.



# BALANCING ACT

WORK & FAMILY...  
MEETING THE  
CHALLENGE



## BALANCING ACT

Job, family and personal pursuits ... they're a nonstop juggling act. How can you care for yourself, excel at your career and be there for others at the same time? It's easier once you learn to make smart choices. The ideas in this brochure can help.



## Feeling a Little Out of Balance?

Everyone struggles to find enough time to pursue both work and personal goals. It's especially challenging for those who are also raising children or caring for disabled or elderly relatives.

You may be trying to do more than you have time and energy for — with unhealthy results. Sleep deprivation, eating on the run and stress all take a major toll on your physical and mental well-being.

**At those times when juggling job, family and personal life makes you feel overwhelmed, step back and consider your options . . .**

**Be aware of your limitations.** Accept that no one can do or have it all, and try to identify your priorities. Know what's important to you.

**Avoid bringing work home and home to work.** Make a conscious transition from each. Set reasonable hours for your job, for others and for yourself.

**Learn the value of planning and organization.** Don't just let stuff happen. If you establish and practice routines, you may feel like you have more time and less stress.

### Add fun every day.

Life is too short not to play and laugh. Learn to appreciate the comical side of situations each day. Laughter eases stress.

**Nourish your body.** It's the best investment of your time you can make. Nutritious foods, adequate sleep and exercise will reward you with added energy.

## 3 Ways to Simplify Your Life

- 1. Be selective** about what you want or need to know. **Examples:** Spend less time on phone calls, e-mail, Internet browsing or TV watching.
- 2. Clear the clutter.** Start room by room — clear every closet, shelf, drawer and file of items that aren't earning their keep.
- 3. Embrace your inner child.** Play with your kids, grandchildren, or nieces and nephews.



**Control time wasters.** Are you robbing yourself of time with unnecessary commitments, e-mails, phone calls, meetings or hours watching TV?

### Expect the unexpected.

Only in dreams does everything run smoothly. A good coping strategy is to stay flexible — a skill you are probably learning as you practice your juggling act every day.

**B-A-L-A-N-C-E can be elusive.** Recognize that it requires making choices and a willingness to change what isn't working.

## Finding ME Time

Do you feel guilty when you put your needs before the needs of others? Taking some private time may make you more productive in the long run. A little solitude can heal the effects of stress, restore energy and renew your spirit. The smallest actions — taking a 30-minute walk, practicing your golf swing or buying yourself a bouquet of flowers — can bring you serenity and a fresh outlook.

## Is Doing It All Wearing You Out?

Do you often feel you have two jobs — one at your workplace and one at home? Do you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by more commitments than you can handle? No matter how organized you are, you only have so much time and energy. The good news is that you can get all the pieces under control, enjoy a satisfying family life and be more productive at work.

## TAKING CONTROL: Where to Start

**Prioritize** by deciding what is most important in your life.

**Avoid** multitasking and trying to do everything at once.

**Learn** to say no.

**Delegate** whenever possible.

**Focus** on work at work.

**Allow** for the unexpected.

**Control** time wasters.

**Take** time to care for yourself.

## Caring for a Parent?

Approach the subject of eldercare with your parents early so you can understand their wishes. It's a difficult subject, but it's more difficult in the long run if you don't talk about it. If your parent needs more care than you can give, talk to family, friends or clergy who have experience with eldercare decisions.