



Happy Staff = Happy School

5 Secrets to Improving WORK-LIFE Balance

Working in schools
can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools to reduce their stress and increase their sense of satisfaction from the important work they do. Your feedback is welcome!

Key points

Aim for SATISFACTION not balance

Monitor your self-talk

Look after your body - being busy is not an excuse not to exercise

Clarify your priorities and YOUR Golden Rules

Make the most of every day, don't wait for a life crisis!

Not life,
but good life,
is to be chiefly
valued.

Socrates

We're all BUSY! We all have lots of things that we must do, should do and could do with every second of every day! Despite the amazing technology that is available to us, almost all of us are busier than ever before.

Aim for WORK - LIFE Satisfaction NOT balance

For most people the term 'balance' immediately brings to mind thoughts of balance scales. Many people visualise our work commitments on one side of the scales and the commitments in the other aspects of our lives on the other side. We seem to constantly add more tasks to the WORK side and feel guilty that we need to create more time and space for the LIFE side to regain 'balance'. This guilt creates tension and stress.

Rather than focusing on 'balance' we should focus on gaining SATISFACTION from both our WORK and the rest of our LIVES. If you aren't getting satisfaction from your work it is worth serious reflection. Life is not a dress rehearsal - this is the real thing. Work is a large part of our lives. If you aren't getting satisfaction from your work, it may be time for significant changes.

Watch Your Self-Talk

That little voice inside our heads has a powerful impact on our attitude. We can certainly be our harshest critic. It is important to monitor our self-talk and watch that we are being fair and reasonable on ourselves. Watch for self-talk where you beat yourself up about what you haven't done today. Try to instead focus on what you have already achieved.

Look After Yourself

Your physical well-being has a direct connection with your stress level and mental attitude. It is vital that in times of stress we make time for physical activity, eating well, drinking two litres of water each day and the sleep our body needs. Alcohol Free Days (AFDs) are also strongly recommended. These areas need to be priorities - especially when we are busy.

Golden Rules

It is important to have defined some 'Golden Rules' to ensure that YOUR priorities are protected. Examples of golden rules include leaving school by 4 pm on at least one day each week, eating family meals at the table three times per week, turning off the mobile phone during meals and only checking work email once per evening. What are your rules? It is about working *smarter* - not *harder*.

Avoid Deferred Happiness Syndrome (DHS)

Many people suffer from DHS. "I'll be happy when the kids leave home...the mortgage is paid off....I'm on long service....when the holidays are here!" Instead of putting off your happiness, plan a list of things that you want to do in your life-time. Don't wait for a life-crisis before writing your 'bucket list'.

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Steve Francis is an expert in work-life satisfaction and is the author of three books, 'Time Management For Teachers', 'A Gr8 Life...Live it now!' and 'First Semester Can Make or Break You!'. He was a Principal for 20 years. Steve lives in Brisbane with his wife and two school aged children.

