

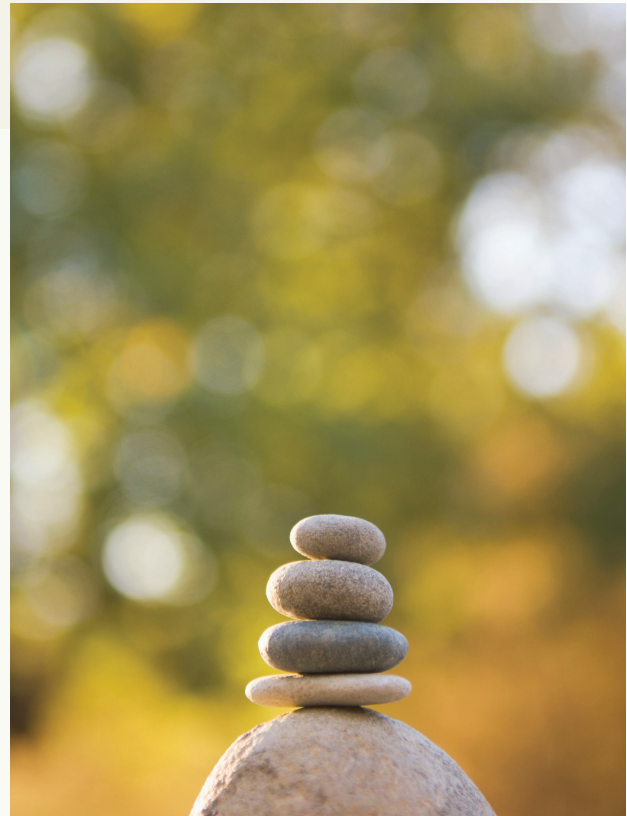
[One1]

Balancing Life and Work

Is It Really Possible?

Q&A

SUCCESS brings
you answers from
the experts.



Q: As I advance in my career, working eight or 10 hours a day isn't enough. I'd like to get some exercise, cook a nice meal, share quality moments with family and maybe have some time for myself. Is there any way to do it all?

TONY JEARY: My friend, top business trainer Myra Ketterman, once told me, "You can have anything in life you want—you just can't have everything!" We are pressured daily from all sides to do more than we have time. There are real instances when our plates get too full and some things need to be delayed. However, the real issue usually relates to poor clarity and focus. When we're not clear about what we want to do, focus isn't possible. If you can't focus, it's difficult to execute.

Success and failure are determined by what we actually do today, not by what we intend to do or would like to do tomorrow!

So, get clear on what you really want in all the categories you mentioned. Determine the value and purpose of each in real terms. Then you'll be able to focus on what really matters and execute.

SUSAN FLETCHER: Trying to cram everything in leads most people to give up quickly because they get so overwhelmed! Get clear

first about what you value and where you want to spend your energy and attention. It isn't about balancing your time. It's about balancing your energy and attention. Make small changes to help you focus on what's important. Some examples:

- **Commit to not** using your laptop or BlackBerry at home on specific days. This will help you give your full attention to your family.
- **Read, but don't answer**, e-mail first thing in the morning. You are better able to manage your attention and stay focused if you set aside a designated block of time during the day to answer e-mail. Reading and answering e-mail in the morning and whenever they arrive is likely to get you distracted and off-task, which will decrease your productivity throughout the day.
- **Schedule** lunch or dinner with friends on a regular basis and don't let anything interfere. Every time you meet, coordinate your schedules and set a date for the next get-together.
- **Minimize unproductive** side conversations at work that take your energy and attention. Stay focused on what needs to get done so you can feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day.

COLEMAN PETERSON: At your present pace, you won't have to worry about food, family or workouts because you'll certainly keel over from exhaustion! As a practical matter, we all make trade-offs, but to what degree? Certainly not to the point that our families and our personal health suffer.

The starting point is to accept the reality that you cannot do it all, and that this is OK (I mean really OK). Then work backward; that is, set a very short period for your own exercise regimen (it's amazing what you can accomplish in 30 minutes). This will cause you to feel better instantly. Next, set a special time (or two) per week when you commit to family or time with friends. The result of

having other-life activities will energize you in all aspects, including your work life, and may very well increase your productivity.

Q: I work in a fast-paced environment with intelligent, can-do people. When I go home, I have a hard time slowing down my pace, even my speech, in what should be casual conversation with family members. A lot of this occurs when I'm trying to get a lot done in the limited time I have at home. I get impatient with them, and they get frustrated with me or offended. They think I'm talking down to them when I'm just being direct. What can I do?

T.J.: Your question is interesting in the way you presented it. You seem to be saying the people you work with are smart and capable but the people you live with aren't. People form their opinions of us based on what they see us doing and what they hear us saying. In the case of your family members, it's no different. How do you feel when you're having a conversation with someone and you have a sense they haven't really heard what you said to them? My guess is that you would become frustrated or offended.

Your work environment and your home environment are two different places. Each requires its own application of communication skills. The solution will be found in what you believe about the importance of each. I hear a subtle implication in your question that you feel your work environment is more important than your home environment. I suggest you create a values inventory for each. Make a list of the things at work and home that are most important and why. I think you'll see that each has its own reward, and it will help you become more effective in giving your at-home relationships the same level of attention as work.

S.F.: This is very common with people who are high achievers. It's difficult to wind

down and change your pace. Here are some ideas to help make the transition from work to home:

- **Make sure you're** getting enough sleep at night. Part of what keeps you keyed up at the end of the day may be exhaustion. Getting enough sleep will help keep your rhythm at a steadier pace.
- **Over-stimulating** yourself on your way home will make it harder to make the transition. Keep the radio off and don't use your cell phone. By keeping quiet, your vital signs will slow down, and you can think about how you want to spend time with your family. Push away the thoughts about the day and be ready for casual conversations at home.
- **Have things going on** at home that use other parts of your brain. Have an ongoing game of Rummy Cube or a 1,000-piece puzzle to work on with the family. Give yourself something to look forward to with people who want to enjoy your company and attention in the evenings.
- **Get outside** of your head and don't take yourself so seriously.

C.P.: Gosh, I really relate to you on this one! So many of us have this challenge to the point that our spouses or family members have to remind us, "Hey, you're not at the office and I'm not one of your employees!"

My thought is that you already are on the first leg of recovery because you recognize the problem. Next, I would suggest that you get agreement with your spouse or family that the first 30 minutes you're home will be transition time. This will allow you to arrive, put your briefcase down, change into casual clothes and become a home-based, rather than office-based, personality. Try it. It has worked for me. **S**

THE EXPERTS UP CLOSE



Tony Jeary, coach to top CEOs, prolific author and presentation strategist, is happily married with two children.

Susan Fletcher is a practicing psychologist, speaker, consultant and author. In addition to being the CEO of Fletcher & Associates Psychological Services and Smart Zone Solutions, she's also a wife and mother of three.



Coleman Peterson, retired executive vice president of people for Wal-Mart Stores, is president and CEO of Hollis Enterprises, a human resources consulting firm. Married for 32 years, he has a daughter and a son.



SUBMIT A QUESTION TO OUR EXPERTS:
successmagazine.com/udecide