



Your Own Personal Secret to Work Life Balance

Helene Fronek

Google "Work Life Balance" and up pop 20,600,000 entries, many of which have tempting titles like The 5 tips to Work Life Balance. The way I see it, if it were as easy as 5 tips, we would have figured it out by now.



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So, what exactly is the secret to that elusive work life balance that we all strive for? During a recent workshop, I asked a group of physician leaders to experiment with the physical act of balance. Go ahead – try this yourself. When we stand on one leg and attempt to balance, we find that it is not a rigid or static state. It involves constant movement and continuous rebalancing. If someone hands us a ten-pound weight (or our secretary suddenly quits or a child or parent becomes ill), we get thrown off balance and need to shift in order to feel balanced again. So, why do we expect ourselves to maintain our balance at all times? Another thing we notice while standing on one leg is that when we contract our core muscles, balance is easier to maintain. Similarly, when we live according to our core -- when we view our life and make decisions through the lens of our core values -- balance is easier to achieve and maintain.

Values are those principles or ways of being that make our life worth living. When we allow our circumstances to prevent us from honoring our values, we feel stressed, unhappy and disconnected from the life we are living. A person with a strong value of family might feel oppressed working 80 hours a week, while another with a value of achievement, working on a meaningful project, might find those same 80 hours exhilarating.

Defining some of our values is easy, since we may naturally pay more attention to them. Family, spirituality, being fit, service and learning are values that might be detected in how we spend our time. Other values such as justice, humor, connection, adventure and freedom may be discovered in what we long for. Yet another method of mining for values is to recall a time when we felt terrific -- when life seemed great. What was going on? What values were you honoring?

Below is a partial list of values. Take a minute to circle your top 10 values.

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|-----------------|----------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Humor | Family | Integrity | Achievement | Excellence |
| Honesty | Accuracy | Spirituality | Creativity | Independence |
| Joy | Beauty | Risk taking | Recognition | Tradition |
| Freedom | Harmony | Success | Contribution | Fairness |
| Innovation | Kindness | Best for life | Learning | Connection |
| Physical health | Service | Adventure | Responsibility | Compassion |
| Free spirit | Romance | Order/Serenity | Intimacy | Authenticity |

Now, consider how well you are living those values at home, at work, and throughout your life. Use your creativity to find one thing that you will do this week to bring your values into those parts of your life where you are not fully honoring them. Although this sounds easy, it requires tremendous discipline and commitment. But just like that subtle shift you made when you were standing on one leg, those small adjustments may be all you need to bring true balance to your life. **V**

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