

Compass

Make balance a priority!

If it seems like your daily busyness is leaving little time for you, maybe it's time to put balance at the top of your list from now on.

It's common for people to attempt to pull off a fairly heroic array of accomplishments each day. But when unexpected duties or events complicate your already lengthy to-do list, it's easy to feel like you managed only to wear yourself out by day's end.

Fortunately, there are some basic steps you can take to get your work and life in better balance. One way to attain better balance is to stop and consider each of your activities during a typical day—and honestly assess if they're valuable or not. Identifying your priorities in life can help you separate the necessary from the expendable.

In this edition of *Compass*, we offer practical techniques for getting more balance into your day, including:

- How to set personal goals that are realistic and achievable.
- The value of setting limits in your work and personal life.
- Tips for staying focused on your priorities each day.

Log on and learn! Look for *Work-life balance* on the Magellan member website under the Library/In the Spotlight section. The site offers many resources to help keep you well and in balance.

**Go Online to Access
More Information!**



Protect your valuable time by setting limits

Thoughtfully establishing boundaries around yourself can help you preserve more personal and family time.

Identify your priorities. Think about the things that are most important to you. Consider writing down your priorities list and posting it where you'll regularly see it. Avoid activities that don't fit.

Don't over-commit. Sometimes it's necessary to decline requests in order to maintain your balance. It's fine to say "no" in a thoughtful and gracious way. An example: "I'd like to help, but given my current commitments, I don't think I could give it 100 percent."

Ask if it can wait. Supervisors and customers often request work products "yesterday." However, when appropriate, tactfully asking if you can turn it in tomorrow may help you head for home at a more reasonable hour.

Establish off-limits periods. Try setting a certain block of hours each evening or on weekends during which you won't answer texts, emails or phone calls. Be fully present with your partner and/or family.

Establishing realistic goals

Sometimes people set goals that aren't realistic for them given their circumstances. It's better to establish reasonable targets that you're likely able to reach within a set timeframe.

Take a big-picture look at yourself

Try reflecting on what you'd like to accomplish in six months, one year, five years or ten. A good goal is one you really care about—not one you think would meet the approval of others.

"Realistic" is a SMART goal

The useful SMART goal setting process means your goals are: 1) Specific, 2) Measurable, 3) Attainable, 4) Realistic, and 5) Time-based. Realistic goals are those that aren't so lofty that you're likely to give up on them, or so easy that they won't require you to stretch a little.

Start with a single goal

Setting multiple goals at once, such as losing 40 pounds, getting a Ph.D. and learning conversational French, can be overwhelming. Don't insist that you change too many aspects of your life simultaneously.

Write down your goal and plan

Thinking about but not documenting a goal can cause it to slip away. Instead, write down your goal and your action plan to achieve it. (An action plan includes all activities needed to attain your goal by a specific date.) This will give you something concrete to review.

Set short-term milestones

Write down interim goals on the way to achieving your larger aims. For example, instead of planning to run a marathon, strive to complete a 5K event by the end of this year. Smaller, realistic goals provide more opportunities for achievement to keep you going.

Track progress, reward yourself

Mark even your smallest progress toward your goals. Take pride in your efforts!

Get the most out of your day

Morning planning is key. Take a few solitary minutes in the morning to plan and prioritize the components of your upcoming day.

Tackle priorities first. Whether they're enjoyable or not, start on your most important tasks first.

Stay focused in the moment. Even though there may be many tasks competing for your attention during the day, stay focused on doing what's most important now.

Minimize distractions. We all have things that routinely distract us and eat up productive time. Limit your texting, web surfing, personal calls, and social media activity only to brief, set periods each day.

Do something for you. Despite the daily chaos, try to carve out at least a little time for your favorite hobby or other soul-nurturing activity.

