

DO I WORK TO LIVE OR LIVE TO WORK?

A lot of workplace stress comes from the overall context of our work: for example, we sometimes feel that the “balance” between our lives at work and outside work is out of synch.

Once this feeling takes over it becomes a vicious circle, as we might find ourselves constantly frustrated by the monotony of routine. In extreme cases, we may feel that our lives consist of nothing else than the cycle of commuting, long days at work and evenings and weekends spent merely recovering. This can make us feel that our entire lives are taken over by work.

It need not be like this, however. Here are some strategies to fight back:

- **Change your perspective.** From the moment you wake up in the morning, imagine getting ready for an invigorating and stimulating day, not “just for work”. It’s a precious segment of your life and you can set your mind from the beginning to make the best of it.
- **Plan your time off.** Be as organised with your social life, relaxation and holidays as you need to be in your job. This can be hugely energising and motivating.
- **Take regular breaks.** It is proven that we are all more productive with regular breaks. Therefore don’t be afraid to acquire this habit, for your own health as well as your productivity (especially if you are in a sedentary role). Educate your colleagues if they don’t understand.
- **Make commuting fun.** You can turn it into exercise, listen to music or humour or use the time to develop an exciting hobby. Whatever you choose to do, it can transform your day and equally importantly, your perception of it.
- **Eat well at work.** What you eat and drink makes a huge difference to your energy levels and state of mind. Aim for plenty of water and juice rather than artificial stimulants, but give yourself moderate treats too. Take a good lunch, preferably out of the workplace.
- **Delegate time-consuming tasks that you don’t do well.** It is amazing how getting hired help in a few areas can free up your time and liberate you to do what you really want.
- **Maintain a sense of proportion and balance.** Be proud to leave work on time by being ruthlessly efficient. If someone else comments negatively on it, show genuine sympathy for the fact that they are not as organised or as well-informed as you are. Feel secure in your own ability to deliver results within the context of your balanced lifestyle.

Finally, please remember that there is plenty of help out there. If you feel uncomfortable talking to family or friends then there are also anonymous helplines to assist you. A good place to start is www.samaritans.org.

Disclaimer. This article is for general information only. We cannot be held responsible for any actions you might take as a result of it. Please seek medical advice before making any significant change to your habits or lifestyle.