

Creating an Action Plan to Achieve Balance

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Many of us are juggling so many different responsibilities that the slightest hiccup can threaten to throw our lives out of balance—and major problems can simply mean disaster.

If we want to regain control and achieve genuine long-term balance in your life, we need more than quick-fix solutions. It's time to look at the root of the imbalance and come up with a plan that will help you meet work, family, and leisure priorities and still have time and stamina for the curves life throws your way.

Tips and tools you can use

Identification of priorities is one of the key steps in your action plan. Recognize that your priorities won't necessarily be the same as everyone else's and will also tend to change as you move through life. Here are some tips to get you going:

Pick three or four top priorities in your life, and then separately add a list of four or five important but lesser priorities. Be specific. For example, instead of listing "Job", reflect whether your priority is to earn a living or to build a career. If you have a partner, be sure to also add any priorities they have that you haven't included.

Make a wish list. Write down the thing that your current life doesn't allow for, such as learning new skills or volunteer work. Add to this separate list any lifestyle changes that you wish you could make like moving to the country or town or going back to school. If this list has more than three or four priorities that aren't possible in your current life, ask yourself if you want to make a lifestyle change to achieve those things.

Reduce your commitments. Keep a log for a few days, showing where your time is spent. Be detailed—include time spent on the phone, in the car, or watching TV. Then ask yourself what you could eliminate to make more time for your priorities. Be ruthless. Say goodbye to the school fair or after-work drinks if they don't relate to your priorities.

Delegate. Can your children shovel the snow or collect dry cleaning? Can a cousin check in on an older relative? Ask yourself who can help ease some of your obligations and give you more time to focus on your priorities. You might even free up more time for your wish list.

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