

Time to **Relax** and Re-charge

Consider a normal school day dashing from one classroom to another, grabbing a quick break, dealing with problems during lunch, and coping with the demands of marking and reports, all with limited time. You may also feel that you have to do everything, often taking on too much, trying to be a perfectionist and filling every spare moment of the day. If some of these resonate with you, test out some of the tips and ideas in this article to help regain the balance in your life, or fine tune areas of your life to create moments to relax. By **Gillian Burn**



Managing your work/life balance

Managing your work/life balance involves having time for yourself, for your work, for your family commitments and leisure. It involves feeling in control, being content, focused, having a clear head to achieve tasks, yet also feeling relaxed and calm to cope with different or challenging situations.

To achieve work/life balance, you need to be aware of your own warning signs, understand what may be jeopardising your health and well-being and clarify what you need to do. This will enable you to find time to relax and recharge so that you can work at your best.

Monitoring your pressure valves – the warning signs

Being aware of the warning signs in yourself, involves observing your own feelings, thoughts and changes in your behaviour.

When you get off balance you may become tired and irritable, and this affects those around you. Often your thinking, communication and performance suffers, and clarity of thought is reduced thereby affecting decision-making. You may miss deadlines, make more mistakes, and generally feel low, with poor self-esteem and confidence. Your health can also be affected as illness is often a warning sign of being off balance. For example, your immune system can be impaired making you more susceptible to coughs and colds. Sleep may also be affected and you may be tempted to indulge in more alcohol, smoking or food cravings, which will not help in the long term.

Changing your thinking

You may need to change your thinking in order to bring control and relaxation back into your life. Think more positively and focus on what you have achieved each day, valuing what you do and your achievements, rather than thinking negatively of what you have not been able to do.

Creating Moments to Relax

Creating precious moments to relax, involves developing a resource bank; you can call upon this in busy times

to regain control and balance to work at your best and to feel good. It involves taking time every day to look after yourself, including healthy eating, time for leisure, for friends and exercise. Consider some of the following ideas:

- Create time for breakfast, stopping for lunch away from your desk most days (even if it is only for a few minutes) and eat healthily – follow the 80/20 rule by eating healthily at least 80% of the time allowing for 20% indulgences e.g. when you go out.
- Aim to leave work on time most days or commit to leaving on time at least on 2-3 days each week. This will enable you to slowly get into a new and more positive habit.
- Between busy projects or tasks allow yourself some down time for your mind and body to recharge and restore energy levels. This can be as simple as taking a 10-minute walk or doing something different, before starting the next major task ahead of you.
- Frequent breaks during the day and breaks away from the computer are important. This will help you maintain a healthy and alert brain. Regular exercise is also essential to regain the balance in your life. Often exercise is the first thing to suffer when we feel under pressure, yet it is one of the most important aspects to maintain your balance. Include walking, swimming, dancing, time with friends, walking in the countryside, or taking a few moments outside in the fresh air.
- Create a pause in your busy day (as if you were pressing the pause button on your remote control), to allow your mind to wander to a favourite place, holiday, person or memory. This will give you time out. Daydreaming or visualising have the effect of creating a healthy pause or brain-break, allowing your mind time to assimilate information. It also has the effect of allowing the endorphins or happy hormones to flow through your body stopping the stress hormones building up.

- Create a healthy space at home where you can relax, listen to some music or be on your own e.g. your own room, special chair, or relaxing in the bath.
- Keep your work area as clear as possible, filing information away and creating clear space. Your peripheral vision takes in everything around you, a cluttered space and environment makes it much harder to create a relaxed mind and body. Block time out in your diary to catch up on tasks and for creative time. Use technology appropriately, ensuring you know how to use equipment and who to call upon if something goes wrong. This ensures you are prepared and in control of yourself.

Survival Tips

You can create more time to relax and recharge by being more organised and effective in how you manage time, learning to delegate and asking friends and colleagues for help. It is OK to ask for help and you do not have to do everything yourself. Sharing ideas and concerns with others creates a sounding block to resolve issues faster. This allows you more time to focus on what really matters to you. Organise home life to simplify activities, so you always know where to find things and ensure everyone in the household helps and shares jobs that need to be done.

Prioritise what matters most to you in relation to your work and family. Create time for the important things e.g. friends, leisure, hobbies and for key projects.

Allow yourself occasional indulgences or treats e.g. lunch out, a massage, beauty treatment, or a relaxing bath. So sit down now with a cup of tea (or a drink!) and allow yourself time to read some more articles in Teaching Expertise! **TEX**

Gillian Burn provides training and consultancy services focusing on improving health and quality of life for individuals and companies nationwide. She is a master practitioner in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Time Line Therapy®, Gillian is the author of the Energy & Well-Being and NLP Pocketbooks. www.healthcircles.co.uk