

Work/Life Blending is the New Normal



Work/Life Balance is a myth! It always has been!

As the world is adjusting to its '**Stay at Home**' orders and '*New Normal*' way of living and working, the last thing we should be worried about is trying to find the elusive Work/Life Balance!

It does not exist!

In the past, we juggled our professional life with our family life trying to find some balance between the two. Many of us also have extended families we take care of and when you add up all the time spent on everyone else - there was never time left for ourselves.

So, in addition to striving for the impossible, our health, well-being, and life satisfaction continued to decline. The common denominator among all the balls we are juggling is ourselves.

So, instead of focusing on what we cannot have, we should be striving to create what we can! Today, more than ever, we need to create a **'Work/Life Blend'**.

Here are Steps you can Take:

Step One: Acceptance

Accept 'what is' right now. We are working under (*in some cases*) extremely stressful conditions and it can feel overwhelming. Accept that you may not get as much work done as you would like. Accept that you may not be the best 'teacher' as you would like.

Accept that you will have to adjust your expectations. Acceptance is the first step to making changes.

Step Two: Redefine your Day

Since we are no longer leaving our homes to get to the office or school, we actually have a lot more time in our day. This has provided many people the opportunity to 'redefine' what their day looks like.

Create new routines that are more self-supportive and nurturing. Take the time you now have in the morning and evening that used to be commuting time for meditation, or walks, or cuddle time!

Design schedules for everyone that respects their time, space, and goals. Kids have schoolwork to do, parents (or adults) have work to do, and we still have chores and cleaning to do. But we can blend that in any way that works best for everyone!

Step Three: Set '*translucent*' boundaries

As much as you would like to have set boundaries with your space, unless you have a dedicated office or schoolwork desk, your kitchen or dining room tables are playing double or triple duty!

You can set boundaries around what times you work and help with homework. You can also carve out individual space on common areas for everyone to work. But these boundaries are fluid and flexible. Allow them to blend as necessary!

We use a screen to block off space and provide some privacy and minimize distractions. It also works well when doing a Zoom call to give the illusion that you are not conducting business in your bedroom!

Step Four: Modify your House Rules

This step is really important and sets the tone for everyone living and working more closely together. Not unlike classroom rules, or workplace policies, we need rules in place for managing expectations and or disagreements.

Rules also help you maintain your boundaries, provide best practices for how to handle conflict, and maintain a peaceful and productive home/work environment. I recommend that the rule setting is done by everyone and there is a consensus before moving forward.

Then post them, gently remind people of them, and meet at least once a week to review, discuss and adjust them. With six people living under my roof we have needed to do this multiple times to adjust and finalize. We now have agreed upon fair and equitable rules and codes of behavior.

Step Five: Enjoy the Benefits

While these new living and working conditions may not be optimal, there are certainly benefits or 'silver linings' to them. (See my other article)

We need to embrace those benefits and savor them while we can. If you are new routine means you can sleep in an extra hour, then really savor that time in bed without regret, without telling yourself you should be up mediating, or exercising or whatever. You get to decide how to structure your day.

One huge benefit for everyone staying at home is not having to deal with traffic during rush hour. That is one to really savor! Enjoy those extra hours doing something more productive, or self-supportive, or family time. We are spending more time cooking and being creative in the kitchen! Watching Master Chef on Hulu has certainly inspired us 'home cooks' to step it up!

Work/Life Blend is here to Stay

Since we do not really have an end-date in sight, we need to embrace our 'New Normal'. The bottom-line is to focus on the benefits and not the challenges. What we focus on expands and the more we stress about how 'hard' it is to get work done or deal with the kids, or technology (*fill in the blank*), the more unhappy we are.

Our happiness and well-being are vastly determined by how we choose to live with our conditions; how we think about them and what actions we take. Let us all have a positive outlook on improving our situations, embracing 'what is', and taking creative and constructive action steps that blend all the pieces of our lives!