

GUIDE TO:  
**WORK-LIFE &  
MENTAL HEALTH  
BALANCE**



Creating a realistic balance that works for you.



*For you to get the best of this book and visualize the concepts, we will be writing this book in the first person.*



Work-Life and Mental  
Health Balance

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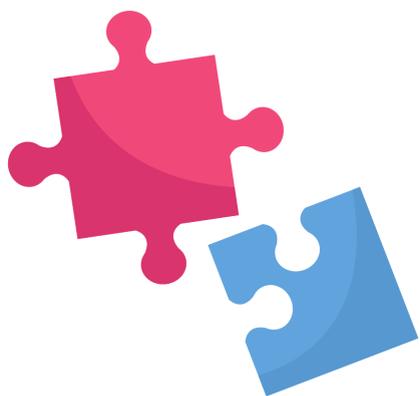
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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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# WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

Depression, anxiety, burnouts, severe health issues, imposter syndrome – these words, or rather these situations, have become the norm in the world we live in today. Either you have experienced it yourself or you can point to one or two persons around you that have. We live in a fast-paced world where everyone has a consciousness to work, get a sustainable income to live by, and become successful.

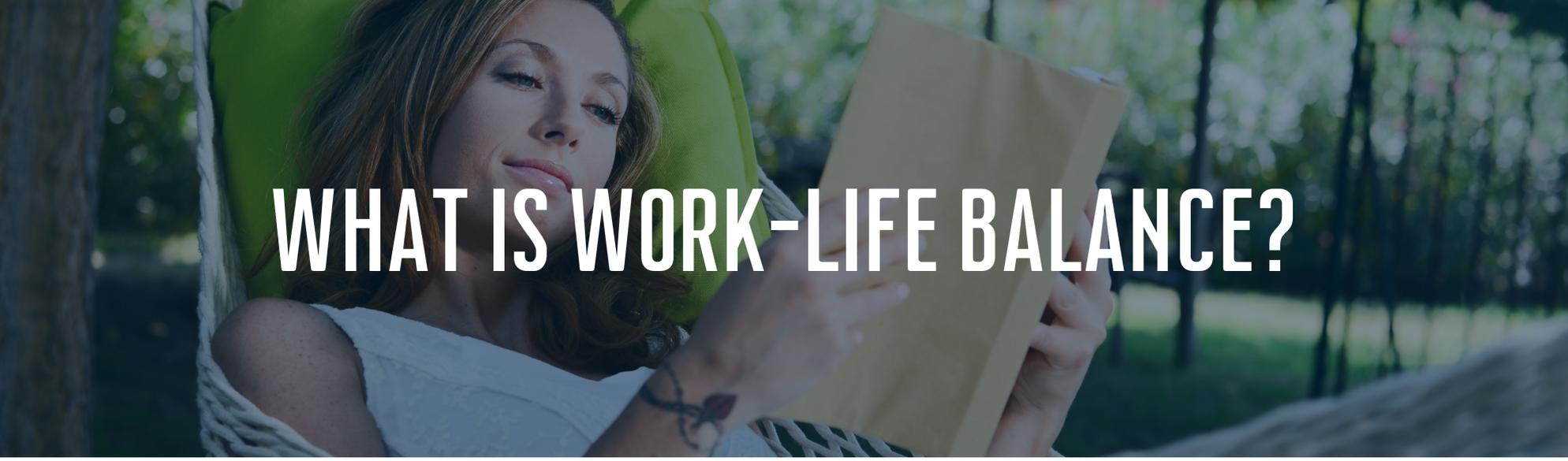
There's just so much pressure in society today to get you money-driven, just so you can survive, and meet your needs, and also implement your goals. We are in a time where almost 70% of our conversations in a day, are either towards work or money. There's an increasing mindset to get and to keep getting finance. Work has become an inevitable demand for survival. This also applies to business owners who get overwhelmed at times, because they do it all by themselves, and cannot afford to take a break. Why? They have to keep the business running, to ensure cash flow.

In our world today, everyone is literally on their feet, working to ensure that there is a steady cash flow, necessary to satisfy endless needs/wants. This has become a long vicious cycle, because money can never be enough. There is always a need to get more wealth, and even more wealth.



Your work is designed to fill a large part of your life, but not to take that life completely away from you. The question now lies in how to draw that balance, how to run your life and not let your life run you. This is why it's important to read this book. Finding the right work-life balance for you, keeps you in the right state physically and mentally. It's not great to pour our lives out on our work when we are young, and spend the entire wealth on our health as we age. It is not great, working tirelessly to build an empire in our youthful days, only to retire early because of ill health.

A palliative nurse who had counseled the dying in their last days, revealed the most common regrets we have at the end of our lives; and among the top, from men in particular, is "***I wish I hadn't worked so hard***". There were also many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time and effort they deserved. You should not have such regrets. This book will practically guide you into striking the right work-life balance fit for you; so you can align your priorities, and create a good time both for yourself, your family, and for the things that make you happy.

A woman with long brown hair is sitting in a white rope hammock, reading a large, thick book. She is wearing a white top and has a tattoo on her left wrist. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and trees.

# WHAT IS WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

When thinking about what work-life balance means, many envision an equally perfect line between work and life, but it isn't so. It's more about being in control of the activities, revolving around your life and your work. It's about enhanced productivity at work without sacrificing your mental or physical well-being. It's about being present, and living each moment without having to think or worry about work, even when you are off work. It is about having strong boundaries, that you feel good enforcing. It's about spending quality time with those who matter, and doing what you enjoy the most.

So we can say that the word which captures work-life balance is Contentment. It's about feeling content in the decisions you are making, and the life you are living. It's about taking control of your time, your career path, and simplifying your life. Balance is not found, it is created by you, making the tough choices.

Work-life Balance is about bringing order into your life.

Popular Country Singer, Dolly Parton once said, "***Never get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life***".



All of these require courage, mental strength, and resilience (as they're not easy things to do). To make these tough choices, you'll have to gain clarity around WHY. It's what will inspire you to act with determination. Your "WHY" is the reason you chose to read this book; and it will be the reason you followed through till the end.

## **ARE YOU BUSY OR ARE YOU SIMPLY OCCUPIED?**

If you experience burnouts week in and week out, then this chapter is for you. There is an uncommon mindset that having so much to do in little time, projects you as a hard-working or productive person.

**"I am busy"** - This is the reason many individuals give for not having time for family, friends, or even themselves.

These days it feels like no one has "free time" to do anything. We run late for meetings, grab lunch on the go (if at all), and get home later (with even more work to do). We wear the "I'm busy" phrase like a badge of honor.

Juggling through so many things at the same time, does not necessarily translate to being productive or efficient. It rather takes a huge toll on your mental health and even on your physical well-being. It is always saddening to see someone who is just in their 20's, aging like they are in their 40's, because of stress.



Having so much to handle, sleeping late and waking up early, having no time to eat good foods or to rest, is not “so cool” as social media makes it seem. It’s not the right way to hustle. The world system has made it look normal to always be on the go, with little or no time for breaks. This ought not to be.

Family is sacrificed on the altar of work or finance. Family time is not a thing anymore. Relationships are not cherished and given quality time, because the world is busy.

There is a huge difference between being busy and being productive. You can be busy all day, and still feel like you're behind in accomplishing your goals. Have you ever spent hours clearing your inbox, only to emerge without having completed your goals for the day? How about clearing most of your daily tasks but being too tired to do the most important few? You were busy, but was it productive?

Let's say for instance, you want to start a pastry business as a side-hustle, and you want to launch it in a week. A productive person will break the process into smaller tasks to be done daily, within the specified timeline. A busy person will want to do everything at once – from the research, to the marketing, to the promotion/advertising, to creating content, in a bid to make everything perfect before the launch. They can spend days, with no tangible success to show for their time and effort.



Busy people tend to be over-thinkers and perfectionists. They tend to expand their tasks, and end up not getting most done because, they chase after perfection. Busy people tend to be great at "looking busy", while productive people are much more inclined to getting things done. A busy person takes a lot of pride in juggling through a lot of things at the same time, but a productive person takes one thing at a time.

Busy people don't have good work ethics, which is why they are always busy. The problem is not that they don't work hard, but they don't work smart. They work linearly without considering if there are better ways to do things.

Productive people work hard, and they also work smart. Having a lot to handle on your plate can hamper your efficiency and productivity. Working smart, involves building systems that help to relieve your workload as much as possible. This will be extensively discussed in the later chapters.

To switch from being busy to being productive, you must learn the art of essentialism. To focus on less, in order to do more. The one thing busy people fail at doing is to focus.



This makes **focus**, the game-changer. Learning to focus on one thing at a time is actually of great importance, and it goes a long way in improving our efficiency.

Busy people are quick to delve into things without clearly analyzing the pros and cons. As a business owner for instance, you must give your business time to blossom, and embrace the baby steps. Wanting to get an app because others are getting one, and run Facebook/Google ads because it seems to be the latest marketing trend, will successfully get your hands busy but not productive. This is because, you will not have the needed time to analyze the results and track the growth of your business.

Again, this boils to self-awareness. Reader, know yourself. Understand how you work best. Instead of creating a to-do list (which sometimes, frankly speaking, comes out as a "must-do" list, because we are always being too hard on ourselves); why not create a calendar on what you can realistically handle per week?

We often overestimate how much we can accomplish in one day. Setting attainable daily goals helps you stay on track, getting the most important things done even when you get sidetracked with "busy work." It's also more encouraging and builds confidence, to have a list of three things you can accomplish towards your successful day versus a long list of ten that you won't finish.



When you feel you are so busy; what you are doing is that you aren't permitting yourself to have time for anything else –what you truly want to do. "I'd rather be seeing a movie on Netflix but I have to finish these tasks first. I'm so busy". Have you ever said something similar to this? We all have, and most times, we feel we are making the best productive decision at the time. This could be true, but more often than not, it is simply us holding back on the choice to create time for ourselves.

Permit yourself to need a break, to take a nap, to see that movie with friends and family; you must permit yourself to live. The earth won't quake if you pause on your tasks for some hours.

Do what you choose to do per time, which is how you can lead your life. Do more by doing less. In the following chapters, you will find practical tips to help you move to the productive side!



# YOUR TIME IS IN YOUR HANDS

"I don't have time" –this statement gives the impression that we are not in control of time rather time is in control. We are quick to blame time for our lack of adequate planning and management instead of owning up to the responsibility.

**"You are responsible for the way you use time."**

If you're not managing your time well, there's no way you're going to reach your goals at work and the life outside of it. Sure, you might make some progress. But your time management will be an uphill battle if you don't take your time seriously. For people who squander and waste the precious little time they do have, they know all too well how difficult achieving even mildly difficult goals can be.

Everyone has an equal share of 24 hours a day but you choose how you manage or maximize your time. This makes it requisite for you to have time management techniques that work for you to create a balance between the time spent on work and the time enjoyed with friends/family. The goal is to be productive at work and also happy in life.

So how do you manage time in your work-life balance?



## 1. **Put First things first!**

As simple as this seems, many struggle with it. This is a question of priority. To you, your work might be much more important than your personal life. To another, it might be the other way round. Defining your priorities is important in time management. This way, you would do what works for you, and not what someone says on social media.

## 2. **Know Thy Self**

The reason you get frustrated when you read about personal development on the internet, is because you try to apply all the tips you come across. Those tips were written based on the writer's research and experience, but that writer does not know you or how your life is shaped. So, the tips can only be close but not the exact fit you need. This is why you must own those tips you read, and fit them to suit your life, not trying to emulate them, hook line and sinker. I hope you do that with this book.

You know yourself more than anyone does. You know what works for you and what doesn't. So for instance, if someone says sleeping for 5 hours helps productivity, this might not work for you! You might only end up being frustrated after doing so severally, and still being less productive.

The game-changer in personal development is self-awareness. If you keep plastering everything you read on your life without knowing yourself, you will never get the results you seek.



### 3. **Prioritize**

Priority setting is also vital, in identifying what tasks to take on daily, especially as an entrepreneur or a remote worker. Make a list of all the important things you need to do, categorizing them by urgency and importance. Anything that's due soon or overdue, treat as urgent. Once you've laid out your tasks, focus much more on those that rank higher in urgency and importance, than those that do not.

**The Pareto principle states:** You tend to get 80% of your results from 20% of your work. What's tricky, is working out what that 20% is, that brings in the results. But once you do, you can apply the ultimate prioritization to your workday: Make that 20% work your priority—and your benchmark for a productive day.

To figure out the 20% work, you must honestly decide which task will bring you the most value when it's finished. That's the task you place as a priority.

### 4. **Do not Multi-Task!**

This looks contradictory, right? But it isn't. Trying to do many things at the same time in a bid to manage time, can be a waste of time. For one, no matter how great you are at multi-tasking, the level of efficiency given to the tasks will differ. Multi-tasking also can be a ball of confusion, simple (sometimes complicated) mistakes, and burnouts. So it is safer to focus on one thing at a time.



It's also important to understand which kinds of breaks are truly regenerative, and which are not. Taking a break from work to check email or social media will potentially have low to no returns on productivity.

When I take a short break from work, I find a silent place to sit or lay my head, empty my mind from thoughts, and just rest. This energizes me to continue my work. This differs from person to person, so you have to identify what works for you.

To get the most out of breaks, don't think of them as optional downtime. Breaks rejuvenate us mentally, much like sleeping or eating rejuvenates us physically. Skipping lunch or staying up all night may give you more time to work, but does it make you better at your work? That's unlikely. So, just go with breaks. In the end, the productivity gains of effective breaks far outweigh the time investment. Consistency will help make your time management and productivity, even more efficient. Schedule breaks throughout your day, and adhere to that schedule as though the breaks are important work meetings.

Taking breaks can also help you tackle distractions so you can fully focus on your tasks, and get them done effectively. Highly productive people don't work full speed all the time. Know when to work and when to take a break.



## 6. Reduce Your Expectations

In simple terms, cut yourself some slack. Reduce the expectations you have of yourself. Most times, the reason we get swamped in work we can't seem to finish, is because we expect too much from ourselves. We think we can handle it all, only to get overwhelmed in the process.

Understand how many tasks you can efficiently get done, and stick to that number. Do not try to over-stretch yourself beyond your limits; it might just lead to burnout and anxiety. In scheduling your tasks, take into consideration the times of the day your creativity is at its peak, and the times you are at your low; as this will help your productivity.

I am more of a night owl than an early bird. I work most efficiently when the world is asleep. Hence in scheduling my tasks, I devote more tasks to be done at night and less during the day. If I try to raise the bar and place a lot of tasks to be done during the day, it never ends well.

I have found it more efficient to schedule fewer tasks than you can handle per day and when that's done and over with, you can do more tasks if there's free time. This is more effective than having so much to be done, and leaving some undone at the end of the day.



## 7. Big Picture Thinking

Learn to focus on the big picture, so you don't get drowned in unnecessary details. Big picture thinking gives a holistic view of things that helps in prioritizing what's important and what to ditch. To manage your time productively, you have to learn to stop seeking perfectionism. Many times, we spend too much time trying to get that one task done perfectly that we fail to see the big picture. We revisit a task over and over again because we feel it could be better, and hence not making the best use of our time. If you're constantly fiddling with things to make them better, delving into more and more details in the process, you need to press pause, stand back and look for the wider opportunities.

Learn not to sweat on the small stuff. Don't worry about things that won't matter much in the big picture. Constantly dwelling on the little tasks can be a waste of time. Put a higher focus on the end goal, and dwell on those tasks that play a huge role in it. Note that these tips aren't magic. You play a major role in making it work.



# EVERYTHING DOES NOT REVOLVE AROUND YOU

Most people struggling to balance their personal and career activities have one thing in common – they always have a lot to do. They try to handle every single thing themselves. In a chase for perfectionism, they cannot trust that others will do the task as excellently as they want it to be done.

You do not always have to be in control. Always remind yourself of this truth. Your mental health is affected when you place so many responsibilities, mentally and physically on yourself. It does not always have to revolve around you. You must give room for delegation –letting others in.

You can delegate tasks, which do not necessarily require your direct input or specialty. Choose to play just a supervisory role instead. This will aid in avoiding mental stress, and give you time to do something else that you love.

No man is an island. The richest people today have companies with large numbers of employees. They delegated – it makes the work faster, more efficient, and helps to cover more grounds in a short time.

Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do. John Maxwell, an American author once said ***“If you want to do a few small things right, do them yourself. If you want to do great things and make a big impact, learn to delegate.”***



I have found this to be true.

No matter how much you love your job or business, delegating is necessary to keep your life in balance; else, you will eventually burn out. Passion for your work does not mean you have to work 24/7. You could, but it will be precious time that could have been spent on other things you love. If you are unable to hire people for your business because of financial constraints or the nature of your work, here is a list of 10 apps that can make your life easier

## **Apps to Help You Control your Phone Usage**

I'm sure you get so busy reading e-mails, attending or organizing zoom meetings, creating content for social media, phone calls with clients, that it seems you can never drop your phone even for just a second. Even when you are with friends or family, there is just always something to attend to on your phone. If this describes your life perfectly, these are the options of apps you need to get.

- **Space**: This app gives you the tools to control your digital life by understanding how tied you are to your phone. It monitors which apps you use and for how long, then it notifies you if you spend too much time with any of them. So, if you've promised your spouse not to read work emails during the weekend, you can look at your Space history to see if you've kept your word;



or you can even set a schedule, so that it blocks your access to incoming messages (or any other app) at certain times, to keep you reined in.

- **Flipd**: If you find out that you need a more aggressive approach to unplugging, Flipd is the app for you. Flipd allows you to lock your phone for a set time, and once you do, there's no going back. Even restarting your phone won't disable the app, so you can't cheat!
- **StayFree**: is a self-control, productivity, and phone addiction controller app, that allows you to see how much time you spend on your smartphone, and helps you focus, by restricting the usage of apps. You can set usage limits for your apps, and receive alerts when exceeding those usage limits. You can also view the details of your usage and statistics, on your usage history.
- **QualityTime**: This app offers real-time reports, which show the time spent glaring at your phone. It gives a detailed analysis of total usage, screen unlocks, and much more, with hourly, daily, and weekly reports. It helps create device usage alerts that remind you if you are going a little overboard with your phone usage. With the 'Take A Break' and 'Scheduled Breaks' features, you can opt to block notifications and reject incoming calls.



You can also exclude some of the callers by putting them into the whitelist contacts. It has a missed notification center for all the calls and alerts that you missed during these breaks.

## **Apps to Help You Manage Stress and Anxiety**

If you are always completely stressed out after a day of work, such that you have to cancel outings with friends and family, then you will need one of these mental health apps.

- **Pacifica**: Pacifica has a range of features: users can track how they are feeling, build meditation and gratitude skills, set goals and daily challenges, and also learn and practice relaxation techniques.
- **SuperBetter**: SuperBetter is a video-game-style app in which users create a Secret Identity, and progress through the game by completing quests. Quests consist of self-care activities; for example, drinking water, or reaching out to an old friend.
- **My Mood Tracker**: Knowledge is power. Once you become more aware of what you're feeling at the moment in view, you can begin figuring out links between life events, cycles and your moods, which in turn will help you manage (and workaround) your moods.



## Apps to Help You Control Forgetfulness

One major defect of having so much work to handle every day is that you begin to forget basic things. Things like reaching out to that old cousin in a distant city, calling your old schoolmates just to check up on them, forgetting birthdays or anniversaries, and the likes. If you have ever been corrected on neglect or forgetfulness, get one of these.

- **Connect**: It puts you in touch with the contacts on your phone, email addresses, or social media accounts; shows you when someone is visiting nearby, and lets you quickly make plans for the evening. No more sorry-I-haven't-called-I've-been-working guilt. Lots more let's-grab-dinner fun.
- **Birthday Lab**: helps you remember birthdays and other important events by sending you email notifications when it's time to reach out to someone. You can link the app up with Facebook, to pull in all your friends' birthdays, share notifications with other people, and manage everything in a handy calendar view.



## Apps to Help You Plan your Time

It happens to all of us. You make plans on how to spend your week and before you know it, it's the weekend and not much of the plans have been carried out. If you find it difficult to keep to your schedules; thanks to technology, you can automate your schedules.

- **Weekly Planner/ Week Plan:** This helps you to plan out your week so that you can make time for what matters. You can schedule important routine tasks, and it notifies you in time so you can keep your word.
- **RescueTime:** helps you avoid being overwhelmed by too many tasks. This app also has team software that's dedicated to time management among team members. With this app, you may be shocked to discover how much time you're wasting.



- **Remember The Milk:** If you're struggling to manage everything you have to do, and you work with many different devices; this is the app for you. It's a great free tool that is compatible with your computer devices, Emails, etc., and it allows you to sync all your devices for easier time management. This app will help you to manage your tasks easily, and reminds you of them – wherever you are. You can share tasks and lists with others, making it a great tool for teams as well.

Having a successful career is a great feat. But taking care of you, mentally and physically is equally important. Having a balance on both will make you a better person.



# LEAVE WORK AT WORK

The greatest commercial cities in the world have a common picture in my head. A gentleman/lady in an official outfit, with a cup of coffee in one hand, and a laptop bag on the other hand; walking hastily to get into the office, while throwing casual greetings to colleagues, before settling down in the corner of the office that's theirs, to get to work immediately. It is either this scenario or a man/lady who works from home, waking up at 11 am because they have worked all night with their laptops; only to get up and brush their teeth, skip breakfast, and get straight back to work. I am sure you can scarcely or fully relate with one of these.

Living in an increasingly digital world has blurred the lines that separate work and life. It has become so intertwined that drawing a balance begins to seem like a herculean task. This is why many fail to have a balance, because frankly, it demands determination and crazy efforts to achieve.

In this world where digitization is king, work can be done anywhere, any time. So leaving a physical place of work does not necessarily mean work ends. There are still e-mails to read and respond to, conference meetings to attend, clients to follow up on; and all these can be done with a phone or a laptop in hand. So, as long as a phone is in your pocket, you can always work. What an intriguing world.



Gone are the days where you looked forward to weekends, because you get to forget about work and focus on things you enjoy doing. You know that long wait to Friday from Monday morning, coupled with the joy and excitement we feel, when it's finally Friday. However, that joy doesn't always last, because in the blink of an eye, it's Monday again.

Now, weekends have become an extension of the workweek. To some, weekends are even busier than weekdays. We spend almost every day of the week, working. This has sadly become almost everyone's norm, but you need to change that, for your sanity and health.

You may have passion for what you do, but working 24/7 will put you on a fast track to burnout. Except you are a 9-5er where your time is already fixed for you, you have to imbibe the habit of mentally creating a start and stop time for your work. Also, as a 9-5er, you can deliberately use the time you are off work for other things that matter apart from work. As you keep reading, you will find actionable steps to help you leave work at work.

## 1. **Have an Off-Work to-do List**

Yes, you read that correctly. As you can create a list for work to be done, you should also create one for things to be done when work is over. This will help you maintain your focus on things other than work.



It could be basic things like cleaning up your room, have a burger with friends, taking your dog for a walk, hitting the gym, or seeing a movie. You are creating value around the basic things by giving it dedicated time. You are training your mind to treat your life outside work, as important as your work life.

You make yourself accountable; by ensuring you tick everything off that list before picking up your phone to respond to that work e-mail, liaise with that client, or keep up with work conversations. You could use apps to automate this, as you read in the last chapter. This is great for your mental wellness and can also increase your productivity. It draws a visible balance between your work and the life outside of it.

This might seem difficult if you work from home, but I have found that creating a workspace helps. Treat your remote work as an office job; get up, leave the bed, get dressed, and move to your workspace to work. Set a dedicated time according to the number of hours you work, and pat yourself on the shoulders. Do well to get off work when it is the closing hour. Working straight from your bed will make it seem like there is no difference between your life and work and this can tamper with the balance you are trying to carve out.

Having a workspace also increases your focus and productivity, because there won't be so many distractions.



You will also be able to physically leave work, when you shut down your laptop, and stand from the chair to go do the things on your off-work list.

## 2. **Communicate with Others**

You have to communicate and let people know the times you are unavailable for work. As an online entrepreneur or a remote worker, you have to ensure your clients or colleagues know when you are off work. It's like creating a mental signpost for your business. If you will not be available to respond to work emails, let it be known by all. This will reduce the backlog of work you'll have during those times, and it will also help you avoid distractions. Do not be afraid to draw the line, and let a colleague know when he texts you about work, that you are unavailable for now.

Also as a 9-5er, it is important to communicate with the company you work for through your boss, on the dedicated hours you are obliged to work and if there will be room for sudden changes or new arrangements. Understanding the nature of your work schedules is necessary to carve out time for life outside work. Avoid being in a work environment with no defined work schedules, you will constantly be under pressure, frustrated, and stressed out.



This is why you must have a clear conversation with your hiring manager to know what is expected of you, and then decide if you can handle that or seek a negotiation. After the work hours are defined, kindly stick to it, resist the temptation to go beyond.

Yes, I know you love your job, but creating that compromise to work after hours will never stop at just one time; you will end up doing it over and over again, till it becomes the norm.

### 3. **Gain Clarity**

To be firm in your resolutions, you have to consciously gain clarity on the work expected of you, and how to get it done. You must emphasize the **how** more than the **what**. Knowing what to do is way easier than processing how to get it done, within the best possible time. Gaining clarity and not leaving things in shadows goes a long way in determining when to stop work and enjoy life; without thinking about work till you are working.

As I mentioned in the early chapters, this book will only help you if you decide to follow the guide and own it as yours. The guide is not a magic wand that just fixes things. It still boils down to you —your commitment to transform your life.



# YOU ARE NOT A ROBOT

Money has become a thread that binds society together. It is the one thing, everyone aims to get. So, we are ready to take four jobs at a time even if it threatens our health, we are eager to run side businesses, take courses online all in a bid to gain financial sufficiency.

Success is rated as a result of hard work. The more you work, the more you feel you have to work even harder, to achieve that dream. So being stressed out and burned out, has become a norm – one of the prices to pay to become successful.

No human is wired to work non-stop. Everybody needs to take breaks, no matter how short. It helps manage our stress levels and recuperate our energy. Work can be demanding, and working hour after hour, can cost you more than your productivity. You will do your brain and body a lot of good, when you don't skip breaks.

When you take a break, you're not shirking responsibility. You're taking care of yourself, so that you'll have the stamina to be your best. Do not wait till you need a break – this is usually when your brain has reached its limit; you should rather schedule a time to take breaks.

Breaks don't have to be long vacations; it could just be an afternoon or an evening off.



Vacations are great, if you have the resources to plan that; but taking a day off to do basic things is just as effective.

When you find yourself becoming low on motivation levels, you have to schedule a break, to rejuvenate and get your creative juices back up. Sometimes, the reason you keep on making simple mistakes, is not that you do not have passion for what you are doing, but rather because you are tired. What you simply need is a break.

Taking breaks is essential. You feel less stressed when you're not in a stressful environment; but taking breaks brings more than that. They interrupt the cycle of stress that can lead to being overwhelmed. By breaking out of the cycle of chronic stress, you can restore yourself physically and mentally to a healthier place. This is because, while stress can lead to decreased creativity, memory problems, and other issues; taking breaks can lead to sharper thinking and increased creativity in all areas of your life. All of these can make you better at your job, more available in your relationships, more energetic with your families, and much more able to enjoy life after you return.

You are not a machine. I know you are simply trying to make ends meet for you and your family, but you have to place utmost priority on your health too. Try taking periodic breaks to focus on yourself too. This also is important in carving out the balance you seek.



# DON'T BE A "YES" MAN

One reason why many people have so much to do is simply a lack of ability to say no to requests or offers. Saying no helps you establish healthy boundaries, and enable others to have clarity about what they can expect from you.

I remember a conversation I had with a friend about this; he shared his ordeal with me. He got an offer to work at his dream company, and he was elated about it. He wanted to give his best, and stand out as an excellent worker. So he became that colleague that all others could meet to help with tasks. He said yes to everything that his attention was brought to, even when they were not his responsibility. He was always available to help, so he became the go-to man when others needed assistance.

He loved it at first; you know, being the one person everyone could count on. But it eventually became an issue, when he started falling short in his tasks because he was always overwhelmed with helping others, such that he could not be effective at his responsibilities. He became the opposite of what he was striving for. His work-life was a wreck, because he was always closing late, due to the plethora of tasks he had –both his and others.



He read an article online, and found out that the problem was that he always said Yes! So he went back to work with a new mindset, his colleagues were shocked when he would not offer any assistance, and focused on just his responsibilities. He felt clear-headed, less stressed, and became efficient in his role at work. He only accepted to offer help, when it would not affect his efficiency in carrying out his responsibilities, and ironically, people respected him even much more for it. He no longer had to close late, and was able to create a better balance between his work and his life outside of it.

Can you relate to this? Are you always overwhelmed with tasks that are not even yours in the first place? Do people always regard you as a go-to person for their issues?

If you find yourself overly committing, professionally or to friends and family; then you need to re-evaluate if you are saying yes for the right reasons, within your time, resources, and energy.

Many times, you say yes because you do not want to hurt others; but in the process, you end up hurting yourself and them, when you cannot meet up because you are overwhelmed.

Only make promises, keeping your time and energy in mind; if not, you would have to compromise on your other promises.



Stretching yourself thin, committing to things half-heartedly, and being pressured into making decisions, causes most of the stress you experience in life; and this can be traced back to your inability to say “no”. When you learn how to say no mindfully, without guilt or avoidance; it opens you to a life of less pressure, contentment and stability.

Just like my friend, the reason your work-life balance might be unstable is that you have said yes too many times, such that you cannot keep up. To uncomplicate your life, you need to realize that it's okay to say no.

### **Key questions to ask yourself before taking up a responsibility:**

- Do I have time for this?
- Will I be able to handle this without becoming too stressed?
- Does this align with my priorities at this time?

Asking yourself questions like this helps you to develop self-awareness, and will invariably decide what you say “yes” or “no” to.

Having clearly defined priorities, on a priority scale, also helps in controlling what we let into our lives. You have to know your priorities, and only accept things that will be in line with these priorities.



This is a life skill that puts you in a position of respect. It shows a great level of discipline, when you only accept things you can handle per time. Saying no does not mean you are selfish or rude, but it rather shows that you prioritize your commitments, and you don't want to make promises you cannot keep. That already commands a great deal of respect.

Learning to say "no" will help you in making time for what truly matters. It is a step in achieving your life goals. When you know when to say "yes" or when "no" is the right word; you de-clutter your life to make room for an efficient work-life balance that works for you.



# THERE IS NO PERFECT BALANCE

Firstly, you must accept that there is no perfect work-life balance. It is going to differ from person to person. There can only be a realistic balance that works for you.

There is no 50/50 split between work and life. On some days, work will weigh more than life, and on other days, it will be the other way round. You have to come to terms with that.

Balance is not a daily goal; it's something that is achieved over time. Assessing your daily needs and understanding your priorities helps in striking the needed balance. Sometimes you may have to spend a whole day at work, other times, you spend a whole day with friends and family. That doesn't toggle the balance. It's the overall summation of your life, not what is done or assessed daily.

So as you have read this book, I need you to understand that this is not a magic wand that automatically corrects things in your life. It still boils down to you to pick the value gained, and work daily on striking a balance that works well for you. It is not going to be easy but simply take it one at a time.



# LIFE ACCOUNT

You are not alone. Read a life account of someone that struggled through work and life balance and how they overcame it. I hope this builds your determination to see this through.

*Mr. A, Copywriter & Digital Marketer:*

“In the first few years of my career, I was a complete mess. I had zoned out from friends and family. I hardly even had time to worry about my health. I was so focused on growing my brand. I would wake up as early as 3 am, and immediately get into work; either creating content or recording a podcast, answering clients, taking courses. I would stay so busy, such that I skipped breakfast most times, had a lazy lunch on snacks or bread; then I’d get back to work like a machine till when I sleep off at night, most times around 11 pm/12 am and the vicious cycle continues the next day. My work was blooming, I was becoming a well-known brand in my field, gaining both national and international clients, but deep down, I was unhappy. I always had these crazy migraines, and I also developed a stomach ulcer. Ignorant me thought I was living life, believing this was the price I had to pay for success. I managed through each day irrespective of the pain I felt.



The day that it struck me that I had to do something about my life was the day I got a celebrity client. I was so hyped, I had prepared my slides for the presentation (it was a zoom meeting), I had rehearsed my pitch so well; but few minutes before the appointment, I felt unwell, the migraines were worse than ever before, I had to CANCEL.

Hence, I lost that client. That was when it dawned on me that my health was essential. I went to see a doctor and was told to take days off my work. For the first time in months, I slept soundly, I woke up at peace and was able to go and hang with some friends. The joy, laughter, and camaraderie of friendships lifted my spirit; I decided to do better in making time for them. Then I started working on striking a balance between my work and my life; and that was the best decision I ever made. If I am to give someone like me a piece of advice, I'd say take things calmly; enjoy the most out of life while building your empire. Never sacrifice your health because of the passion for your work, it is a regrettable decision. Your body needs rest, always remember that."



# LAST WORDS

**Brian Dyson, former vice chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola:**

"Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air.... You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls—family, health, friends, and spirit—are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered. They will never be the same."

**Ev Williams, co-founder of Twitter:**

"Take care of yourself: When you don't sleep, eat crap, don't exercise, and are living off adrenaline for too long, your performance suffers. Your decisions suffer. Your company suffers. Love those close to you: Failure of your company is not a failure in life. Failure in your relationship is."