



FACT SHEET

Creating a healthy work-life balance

According to the Business in the Community Mental Health at Work 2017 Report, three out of every five employees (60%) have experienced mental health issues in the past year because of work.

Work-life balance is about adjusting working patterns to allow employees to combine work with their other responsibilities, such as caring for children or elderly relatives. Parents and carers will profit from better work-life balance, while companies will benefit from a wider talent pool and a more motivated and productive labour force.

What are the symptoms of an unhealthy work-life balance?

Some studies have shown that individuals who work 55 hours or more per week have a **1.3 times higher risk of stroke** than those working standard hours. Long working hours have also been associated with a higher risk of anxiety and depression. Many employees neglect other aspects of their life because of work and this may increase their vulnerability to mental health problems. The more time you spend at work, the more time you are likely to spend thinking or worrying about it outside work.

Helping yourself:

- > Take personal responsibility for your work-life balance. This includes speaking up when work expectations and demands are too much. Employers need to be made aware of where the pressures lie in order to address them.
- > Allow a certain amount of time per task - and try not to get caught up in less productive activities, such as unstructured meetings that tend to take up lots of time.
- > Because our brains are sequential processors, we lose time and make more mistakes when we multi-task.
- > Take proper breaks at work, for example, by taking at least half an hour for lunch and getting out of the workplace if you can.
- > Keep track of your working hours over a period of weeks or month and ensure that you schedule annual leave regularly to allow recovery from work effort and to give you something to look forward to.
- > Take account of the time you spend worrying or thinking about work when assessing your work-life balance. These are a legitimate part of work and a potential indicator of work-related stress.
- > If possible, assess your work- life balance in collaboration with your colleagues and with the support and involvement of managerial staff.
- > Try to keep work and leisure separate and recognize the mental health benefits of exercise, hobbies, relaxation and friendships. Ensure that these are not sacrificed by working longer hours.
- > Stay present – this means enjoying what is happening right now, instead of lamenting the past or worrying about the future. By being more mindful, you can reduce stress, capitalize on opportunities that might otherwise elude you and increase your satisfaction with work and life.
- > Make time and space for yourself. Even just 20 minutes of exercise a day can make a huge difference to your energy levels, your emotional state and your ability to cope.



Damaging effects include a higher risk of stroke, coronary heart disease, and mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression

