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LIVE, WORK AND RELATE WELL!

How to Tell if Work has Taken Over Your Life

You may be thinking that your life needs more balance, more time spent at home and with friends and less time spent at work. Perhaps you've even mentioned this to your spouse, girlfriend, best friend, doctor or co-workers.

If you have, it is likely that at least one of these people raised an eyebrow and explained the facts of life to you. That is, that nearly everyone is overworked these days and you should get used to it. Besides, your friend Joe said unsympathetically "I work a lot more hours than you do, so you have no reason to complain".

Yet, there is that nagging doubt. That feeling that you shouldn't always be so stressed, so tired, so short on time, coupled with the knowledge that you can't seem to think clearly anymore, that you always forget family birthdays and that you rarely eat dinner before 10:00 p.m.

You should probably listen to your own intuition and take control over your life before you have no OTHER life than what exists in the workplace. If you still need convincing, or perhaps some more objective feedback, try this little quiz:

#	Question	True	False
1	I am spending more time than ever at work and on work-related projects and activities.		
2	I usually feel that I've run out of time at the end of the day, and I worry about all the things that did not get done.		
3	I have very little, if any, time for myself, my family or my friends.		
4	I don't get to visit with, or talk to, my family and friends very often.		
5	Social meetings always seem rushed and I find myself thinking about what I have to get done, and how I should be elsewhere, instead of enjoying the time with my family or friends.		
6	On most days, every minute of every waking hour is scheduled with an activity, or I have something urgent to accomplish.		
7	I'm not sure who I am anymore, and I often wonder why I chose this job or this career.		
8	It is hard to recall my last vacation day or day off, or the last time I just sat and read a book or relaxed.		
9	I don't have much fun anymore and I rarely do something just because I want to do it or because I think it will be pleasurable or fun.		
10	I feel stressed out much of the time and I find myself losing patience easily.		
11	It is sometimes hard to sleep at night and to unwind at the end of the day.		
12	My life is a blur. I feel like I have to keep moving from one thing to the next with no time to catch my breath.		
13	When I do sit down to read a book for pleasure, or to watch a movie, or TV, I find my mind wandering back to work-related subjects, or I fall asleep from exhaustion.		
14	I want more time for entertainment, hobbies and activities, but I never seem to get it.		
15	I often have to postpone social engagements, doctor's appointments or other personal things, or I am often late to these appointments		
16	I am usually very tired in the morning when I arrive for work and, even after the weekend, I feel exhausted.		
17	It is hard to find the time to help my children with homework, talk to my spouse or friend about their day or just sit and write out checks.		
18	People depend on my income, but they also expect me to be there for important dates like birthdays and soccer games, and I feel torn and misunderstood, much of the time.		
19	My spouse and/or others who are close to me often complain that I work too much.		
20	I almost always bring some work home at the end of the day, and/or I nearly always work for part of the weekend, or on my days off.		
	TOTAL		

If you answered **'True'** to *less than five* of these questions, you are not overworked and your life is in good balance.

If you answered **'True'** to *more than eight* of these questions, your life is seriously out of balance.

If you answered **'True'** to *more than twelve* of these questions, you should immediately start a program to regain control over your life, before stress and overwork damage your health and your relationships.

3 Tips for Balancing Your Life

When your life seems out of control and you've got endless demands tugging at you from all directions, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, fatigued - and just plain stressed!

Believe it or not, balancing your life does not require massive changes. You don't have to quit your job, abandon your family and escape to a remote retreat in order to feel peaceful and happy. In fact, true balance is something that starts WITHIN YOU first and foremost - no matter what else is happening in your outer life circumstances.

Below you'll find three simple ways to begin building a greater sense of inner peace and harmony.

1) Quiet time

One of the first things we tend to sacrifice when we're busy is our personal time. Instead, we devote all of our energy and attention to caring for others, multi-tasking, meeting responsibilities and "being productive." Over time this depletes our energy and we begin to feel more and more burdened by our responsibilities.

To live a more balanced life, quiet time for yourself is CRUCIAL. You may believe that you don't have any time available for yourself, but something amazing happens when you consistently MAKE time; you find yourself feeling happier and more energetic, your focus improves - and you still get plenty done! Just a few minutes spent sitting quietly in meditation or reading a book can do wonders in transforming stress into peace and happiness.

2) Self-care

Beyond making time for things you enjoy, there are other ways to nurture and love yourself on a daily basis. Getting a full 8 hours of sleep (or as much as you personally need) is a great start, as well as eating nutritious food, exercising daily and speaking kindly to yourself.

Have you ever noticed that when you're really tired or stressed, even the smallest problem can seem like a nightmare? On the other hand, when you're feeling well-rested and centered, you're much better able to handle upsets. Caring for yourself is one sure way to consistently replenish your energy, inner peace and joy - which means you'll have the strength to handle whatever comes your way.

3) Flexibility

Did you know that one of the biggest causes of stress is rigid expectations? We all do it from time to time; get a mental picture of how our lives "should be" and then get really annoyed when our outer circumstances don't cooperate! One of the biggest gifts you can give yourself is a flexible state of mind. In other words, learn how to detach from unrealistic expectations and go with the flow.

When you have a flexible mindset, you're able to deal with crises and problems much more easily because you're not working against a preconceived notion of how things "should" be. You're able to tap into your creative problem-solving skills and move through challenges without all the drama and frustration. Be like the tree that bends with the breeze - and you're much less likely to break!

These inner changes can make a dramatic difference in your state of well-being, but you may also want to examine your outer life circumstances and see if there are other small changes you can make to help support your internal work.

For example, you might choose to let go of certain obligations that are no longer meaningful or enjoyable to you. Just because you agreed to host weekly meetings for a support group three years ago doesn't mean you have to keep doing it forever - especially if it's become a drain on your time and energy!

Be willing to let go of activities that no longer complement the lifestyle you desire, and you'll create a space for greater fulfillment, joy and peace.