



Learning at Your Fingertips

Managing Your Personal Time



In this module:

- Overview
- Managing Your Time
- Setting Boundaries
- Social Media



Overview

Keeping your private life private can help you present a professional image while still enabling you to develop and maintain good working relationships with your colleagues. Allowing your private life to have too big an impact on your job conduct can harm perceptions of you at work.



Overview

By establishing some sensible boundaries, exercising self-control, and separating your work and home worlds you can keep your private life private without being considered aloof at work.



Managing Your Time

1. Try to separate work and play. In the age of online learning and telecommuting, you can easily spend your whole day at home and get everything done. Attending school or working from afar may even add more flexibility to your home life.



Managing Your Time

However, a downside is that work or school can creep over into home and/or family activities. It can be hard to back away when work is always within reach. Plus, without a clear separation between your home and office, it may be hard to transition from your work life to your personal life. To counteract this issue, you need a distinctive work zone.



Managing Your Time

- If you work in a traditional office, make sure that you find a relaxing way to transition from work to personal life when you finish up for the day. For example, you might use your commute home to listen to music or a book on tape, or stop by the gym for a quick workout, or call up a friend and chat for a bit.



Managing Your Time

2. Set priorities. To successfully walk the tightrope between professional and personal you need to understand where your priorities lie. Therefore, in a pinch or when faced with an urgent circumstance, you aren't conflicted about what's most important to you.



Managing Your Time

- Create a list of the most significant aspects of your life. Of course, you might include items like family, romantic relationships, work, and spirituality. You might also include volunteering, staying active, maintaining a social circle or other passions.



Managing Your Time

- Review your list and rank these items starting with #1 as the most important, #2 as the second most important and so on. Your rankings will show where your priorities lie. That way you can be sure to make an effort to incorporate these top priorities into your daily and weekly schedules.



Managing Your Time

3. Create a schedule and try to stick to it. If your week goes by in a blur and you are unable to recount which tasks you do on which days, it can be helpful to spend a week logging everything you do. After this week has passed, you will have a better idea of how to factor in different work/school assignments and personal activities or errands into your schedule.



Managing Your Time

- It can be most helpful to develop a weekly schedule involving all the constants like work, classes, church, and social activities with other one-time events. Then, each night before map out a daily to-do list of the individual tasks you need to get done based on your priorities.



Managing Your Time

- For your daily schedule, highlight the three most important tasks you need to get done each day (aside from actually going to work or going to school). These might be professional items like working on a presentation or personal items like going to the dentist or your daughter's ballet recital.



Managing Your Time

- You may even create two separate lists if this one is too constricting - one with three major tasks for work/school and one with three major tasks for home. As long as you have accomplished these 3 to 6 tasks each day, you will have been productive.



Managing Your Time

4. Manage procrastination. Procrastination is a major obstacle that could be standing in your way of striking a good balance. You may see your professional and personal lives seeping into one another because you often wait until the very last minute to get things done. This causes you to end up working late, or being distracted at work by personal tasks.



Managing Your Time

- One method to overcome procrastination is to write out your reasons for enrolling in school or being in a particular career path and so on. For example, if you want to help people, you can complete your assignments with the intrinsic purpose that they are helping you reach that goal. Keep this list in your work space for when you are feeling unmotivated.



Managing Your Time

- Another way to beat procrastination for getting things done is to break larger projects down. Doing so makes the overall project seem less daunting and increases motivation as you complete the smaller parts.



Managing Your Time

5. Eliminate distractions. You'd be surprised how much distractions are impeding on your time and productivity. Research estimates claim most people spend about 20 minutes of every hour handling unplanned distractions. As a result, about two whole hours of each day is spent trying to refocus after being distracted.



Managing Your Time

If you can minimize the distractions in your professional life, you can prevent it from constantly interfering with your personal life. Try these tips to eliminate distractions:

- Focus on important rather than urgent tasks
- urgent tasks are reactive-based, important tasks are proactive-based
- Turn off the notifications on your phone or computer



Managing Your Time

- Create a clean and clutter-free work space
- Put your phone away
- Close any programs you're not actively using
- Get water, snacks or visit the bathroom during routine breaks to minimize physical interruptions



Managing Your Time

6. Be inventive. Regardless of how hard you try, there will be some times when one or the other becomes more demanding in your life. Learn to be creative and think up possible ways you can meet the urgent priority while still attending to the other.



Managing Your Time

- For example, maybe you are working overtime every week and never get to go out with your significant other. You can make the special effort of lighting candles during dinner or choosing a film to watch on the couch one evening. This won't take up too much of your time and it may prevent your partner from feeling neglected.



Managing Your Time

- You may be able to pass off large projects or split the time with another coworker to ease your workload and make more time for relationships and family. If you can't afford to work less, plan to spend your lunch hour in the park with your family or bring your family to the work picnic.



Setting Boundaries

1. Assess your situation. As hard as you try to strike a balance, there may be some situations where crossover is necessary, especially if you have kids. Consider your personal and professional lives to identify situations where some crossover may be necessary. Think about your family members and your personal responsibilities.



Setting Boundaries

How often do these people and responsibilities require your attention while you are working?

- For example, if you have young children, then arranging your work schedule around your kids' schedules may be necessary. Or, if you are the primary caretaker of your children and you work from home, then you may need to put work aside and take a break whenever one of your kids needs something.



Setting Boundaries

- It is also possible that work may have to take precedent over your personal life sometimes. For example, if you work as an on-call healthcare provider, then you may sometimes need to cancel something in your personal life to do your job.



Setting Boundaries

2. Be protective of your health. The needs of others at work, school, or home can quickly overwhelm our own physical needs. Unfortunately, neglecting your health can have costly consequences, such as missing work or classes and being unable to participate in social or family events.



Setting Boundaries

Being anxious about getting everything done creates stress, and if it is not tended to stress can have debilitating effects on your physical and mental health.



Setting Boundaries

- To counteract stress and nurture your body be sure to get involved in some type of physical activity several times per week. It can be joining a company sports team, jogging around the block with your partner, or visiting a local gym.



Setting Boundaries

- In addition to exercise, you can combat stress by consuming several balanced meals each day, getting adequate sleep, and pursuing your outside interests.



Setting Boundaries

3. Shield your passions. When work, school, or relationships become too demanding, we might give up our hobbies or interests to meet those demands. The problem is, giving up these things take away our ability to debrief from professional and personal stress. Make an effort to protect your leisure time and continue any social outlets or hobbies you participate in.



Setting Boundaries

- Try treating yourself with a short break to engage in a hobby after completing a significant amount of work.
- Another way to shield your passions is to schedule them in. Work your pottery class or book club into your calendar just as you would with professional projects or family obligations.



Setting Boundaries

4. Learn to say "no". It may seem rude or selfish at first, but, with practice, you may find that selectively turning down different projects or opportunities is quite freeing. Say "yes" to those requests that meet your top priorities and that do not constrain your already packed schedule.



Setting Boundaries

Here's how to say "no":

- Show that you understand the significance of the request by saying something like "It sounds like a great opportunity, but..."
- Give a brief explanation, such as "Honestly, this is a bit outside my area of expertise" or "I have too many deadlines approaching."



Setting Boundaries

- Recommend an alternative. For example, you might say "I can't, but I think I know someone who would be a great fit".



Setting Boundaries

5. Cut back. If work and home are constantly competing for your time, then you need to make the choice to cut back on one or the other. Otherwise, you will keep yourself stressed and unhappy. Take a look at your life to determine which side needs greater boundaries.



Setting Boundaries

- Do you regularly get called away from home for work? Does your boss drop assignments on your desk at the last minute? Are you financially able to work a bit less? If the answers to most of these are "yes", work may have been intruding on your life, but it looks like you can afford to talk to your boss about cutting down your hours or workload.



Setting Boundaries

- If you are a working mother, cutting down on your work hours may be the key to feeling more content. Research shows that women are generally happier when they cut back on work for the sake of meeting family needs.



Setting Boundaries

- Does your partner or spouse frequently interrupt your work day for non-emergency family or home issues? Is your work performance suffering because you stay up all night partying with friends or your partner? Do you have to leave work to handle errands or do excessive amounts of housework?



Setting Boundaries

- If you said "yes" to any of these, your home life may be stifling your capabilities at work. You need to decide if you need to set boundaries with individuals in your home that often intrude on your career.



Social Media

1. Have separate professional and personal profiles. With social media becoming an ingrained part of most people's work and home lives, it can be hard to separate the two. If you are active online in both your professional and personal lives, it's important to create a distinction between them to monitor what is being put out in the online world regarding that side of you.



Social Media

- Many people choose to use LinkedIn for their career or academic connections and Facebook or Instagram for friends and family.



Social Media

2. Be clear about how to handle professional and personal data. If you telecommute, you need to be aware of your company's policy for dividing professional and personal data. Some companies may provide their employees with completely separate devices (e.g. phones and computers) strictly for work purposes. Others may allow the use of personal devices.



Social Media

- Find out what the guidelines are about such matters. Also, be sure that any personal data, such as contacts, photos, and music are appropriately backed up.



Social Media

3. Create specific windows for being active online. If social media is a part of your professional life, you may find yourself spending excess time online beyond what's necessary for your job. Logging on several times a day or whenever a notification pops up is disruptive to both your professional and personal life.



Social Media

- Make the choice to unplug for a few hours each day. Or, choose a short window to engage with your friends or followers online, then log off for the remainder of the day.



Summary

Maintaining your career and personal life can get pretty hectic sometimes. Most adults can probably admit to having their work life intrude on their relationships or families and vice versa.



Summary

Being able to strike a balance between your professional and personal lives can help you become more productive and less likely to burnout. This balancing act takes careful planning and preparation, but it is possible.

