

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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Work-life balance is a concept that includes proper prioritizing between our careers and life outside the work place. Although it sounds easy enough, when we break it down, work-life balance is so much more than that. We are attempting to juggle our career, ambitions, health, leisure, family, and spiritual development or meditation without ever dropping the ball. Oftentimes, we find ourselves caught up in the struggle of trying to “have it all” and expect not to get overwhelmed in the process. Focusing on career advancement, while accomplishing all the societal “norms” expected of us, becomes a nagging voice in our brains. Things like marriage, buying a house, driving a fancy car, starting a family.... all *that stuff* can really get in our own way of becoming the person we really want to be. To top it all off, we give ourselves deadlines to achieve such milestones. If not met, we believe our world will somehow self-destruct, ultimately leaving us feeling discouraged. I am not here to tell you I have all the answers or how you can master your life. I’m here to shed light on something we all go through whether we realize it or not. I will share what I have learned throughout my career, and offer some tips and tricks I’ve learned along the way.

When I was asked at the age of five, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I promptly answered, “A pharmacist!” (I know. That’s weird). Normally, at that age, you want to be a professional athlete or a princess or an astronaut. Not me though. As a fourth generation pharmacist, I aspired to become not just any pharmacist, but an amazing oncology pharmacist. I began my career at a world-renowned cancer center (My dream job! I still remember the day I received my offer letter...). I became inspired by the providers around me. I asked to take on projects, received a specialty board certification, and recently got accepted to a traineeship program through the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. This traineeship has been something that I have strived towards for years. It means the world to me knowing that I will leave my footprint at Dana Farber by assisting with the development of collaborative drug therapy management (CDTM). (For those not familiar with CDTM, this will initiate the

advancement of pharmacists to practitioner status for prescribing rights at my institution.) In my “down time”, I also got married, have been serving as the Southern Region Supervisor, worked as a certified spin instructor, and signed up for another advanced certification. The last 7 years of my adult life have shaped me in so many ways. My head is spinning just thinking about it. Recently, I hit a brick wall and had to acknowledge how overwhelmed I had been feeling. Although I wanted to do all of these things, did I really have to do them all in such a short period of time? Until recently, I believed I had to.

My life suddenly felt like a sprint instead of a marathon. My expectations in combination with my perceived expectations by others became too much. Although expectations can serve as great inspiration, they can become our worst enemy when we don’t take an honest look at our motives. Life seems more manageable when we create this picture of exactly how we believe things should be in order for us to feel accomplished, which we then directly associate with happiness. As a cave man (or woman) may put it, “I want. This is what I do. This is what I get. Happy now.” Life, however, may have other plans. What matters most is how we navigate ourselves when presented with a brick wall. Brick walls are a great way of letting us know how badly we do or do not want something.

I love my career and where it has taken me, but I look forward to the excitement that simple things outside the workplace will bring. Bottom line, there is no formula to calculate the perfect work life balance. It is ok if your scale is shifting as long as your motives are authentic. Until recently, my scale was about to snap on the work side. I decided to put my second advanced certification on hold and gave up teaching spin. I ordered an adult coloring book (you read that right) and some non-work related reading. It felt like the elephant on my chest finally lifted. Everyone is different. Just because your scale is heavier on one side than the other doesn’t mean you are doing anything wrong. It is your scale. Be true to yourself while treating yourself the way you deserve.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR MANAGING YOUR WORK-LIFE BALANCE:

1. SCHEDULE TIME FOR YOURSELF AS YOU WOULD ANY OTHER TASK ON YOUR “TO DO” LIST. THIS CAN BE AN ACTIVITY YOU ENJOY ALONE OR WITH FRIENDS.
2. SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES BY REMOVING ACTIVITIES OR PEOPLE FROM YOUR LIFE THAT WILL CONSUME YOUR TIME AND ENERGY. LEARN TO SAY NO.
3. GET YOUR BODY IN MOTION.
4. GIVE YOURSELF QUIET MOMENTS FOR REFLECTION TO RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES ON A DAILY BASIS.
5. TRY DETOXING FROM SOCIAL MEDIA AND TELEVISION. SERIOUSLY.
6. TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DIET.
7. GET AT LEAST 7 HOURS OF SLEEP EVERY NIGHT.
8. DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE THAT ARE UNABLE TO OFFER YOU ANYTHING IN RETURN.