



Work-Life Integration

While there is no magic recipe for success, the key to more effective work-life “balance” is to understand the “spheres” in your life and the dynamic that drives each one. Every woman has a different set of spheres that she would like to juggle more effectively (e.g. marriage, children, career, community). The exact idea of work-life “balance” evolves over time with each of us. As we get older, our priorities change and lead to various permutations of combining work and family— from working part-time or full-time, to telecommuting and adopting flextime options. The first and most important step in developing a successful work-life plan is your mindset. A healthy positive attitude, visualization of success and inner empowerment lays a sturdy foundation.

Step 1: Figure Out What You Want:

Begin by developing a game plan that takes into account the following:

- Your mission, purpose, and passion.
- Your personal values.
- Your signature strengths.
- The dreams and goals you have for your life.

Step 2: Define Your Goals

1. Define your parenting goals:

- What approach to baby or child care feels best for you? (Are you someone who likes to get the kids on a regular schedule? Are you comfortable having your children supervised or watched by others or would you rather be directly involved?)
 - What kind of home atmosphere do you want to cultivate? (Nuclear and focused? Open to extended family and friends? Lively or serene?)
 - What kinds of activities with the children are important to you? (Do you require quiet activities with the children – reading books, playing board games, and family discussions? Are you more focused on outdoor activities – walking, hiking, playing in the park, working in the yard?)

2. Determine your work and career goals:

- What are your employer’s work-life balance policies? Is the environment supportive? Are policies in place that are supportive of working parents?
 - How do you see your current job or career? Are you happy with your current employer? Are your skills being appreciated and esteemed?
 - What do you value by working? (e.g. financial security, higher standard of living, development of skills and abilities, intellectual challenges, contribution to community and society, to be a role model for your children, or self-exploration?)

- Are you thinking about switching to an alternative work structure? If so, make sure you consider the following:
 - Outline your suggested schedule (e.g. working 4 days a week) and review it with your employer.
 - How will you handle unexpected house needs and high demand peak working periods?
 - How will you handle the need to attend meetings and meet with colleagues or staff?
 - Outline specific areas of responsibility— what functions are you taking on and what are you letting go?

3. Determine the goals for your personal relationships:

- How active a social life do you want? (Will it conflict with family activities? Will you have to scale down your activities?)
- How do you see your marriage, partnership, or relationship adjusting to family life? (Will you need scheduled time with your partner or are you happy including the children in all your activities?)
- What activities with your spouse or partner are important?

4. Define how your home life will be managed?

- What chores do you prefer? What would you prefer to offload to your partner or to household help?
- What are the household expenses and who is responsible for budgeting?
- How do you combine your incomes at home?

5. What values are important to you?

- Religion and spirituality?
- Fun and humor?
- Discipline and organization?
- Flexible or active?

6. Find your intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is a drive that originates from within oneself. What drives you to achieve your goals in your life? Intrinsic motivation sustains an activity for its own sake. You engage in that task because you enjoy it, you are interested in it, and it arouses your curiosity.

Step 3: Carpe Diem!

Now that you have your values and goals clearly in mind, the next step is to prioritize these areas of your life.

Focus on what you want, plan how to get there, and then follow the path you've outlined. Instead of waiting around for luck to deliver opportunities to your doorstep, you can continue to move your life in the direction you want by creating your own opportunities. Your life is in your hands.

Adapted with permission from a [blog post](#) by AMWA Past President, Dr. Farzanna Haffizulla.