



Mental
health &
wellbeing



Support for life

Managing work-life balance

Working long hours, being constantly available by email and phone or having an unmanageable workload can affect your mental wellbeing and mood.

The effects can range from feeling irritable to having trouble sleeping or drinking too much alcohol, as well as more serious health issues such as anxiety and depression. More than 3m people in the UK work over 49 hours each week¹ and increasing numbers of commuters travel for two hours or longer to and from work².

¹TUC congress 2015 <https://www.rt.com/uk/314839-tuc-working-hours-health/>

²TUC November 2015 <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/number-commuters-spending-more-two-hours-travelling-and-work-72>

Getting a good work-life balance is crucial for health and wellbeing. If you feel the hours you are working, the environment you work in or the amount of work you have is affecting you, there are several things you can do to take control.

At work

- **Take a break** - this will allow your mind to recharge. Even a few minutes away can re-energise you and help you feel more focused and productive. Take your lunch-break away from your workstation and make full use of your holiday allowance. Ensure you book your holiday at intervals throughout the year, meaning you get regular time away from work to recharge.
- **Get moving** - physical health and mental health are closely linked. Get moving by taking the stairs instead of the lift and try to use your lunch-break to do some exercise. If you don't have the time, perhaps you can turn your journey

Mindfulness

A powerful tool to help with mental wellbeing.

Check out the NHS website for more information:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mindfulness.aspx>

to work into exercise by walking or cycling to work a few times a week.

- **Get organised** - work 'smarter' by planning your next working day before you leave the night before and prioritising tasks. If there is a task you're not looking forward to prioritise this as your first job, you can then fill the rest of the day with more enjoyable tasks.

Try to make a change

Some things may be less simple to change, as they may depend on the working culture and how comfortable you feel approaching your employer and colleagues.

- **Change your work routine** - by law you have the right to request flexible working. This does however depend on your personal circumstances, the role and tasks you fulfil and company/business needs. However it is worth having a think and a chat with your boss or HR department about options.

- **Saying 'no' and giving yourself reasonable deadlines** - if your workload is already up to capacity and you are asked to take on more, think about saying "no". This seems a challenge, and 'no' doesn't have to mean 'no' full-stop. It may mean yes, but not immediately.
- **Switching off** - You want to think about not looking at work emails outside of working hours. Again this can be challenging, however you may decide after 7pm you are 'off-line'. Again this will all depend on your role/tasks and expectations about being contactable.
- **Perfect doesn't exist** - ask yourself what is realistic and be kind to yourself. Perfect doesn't exist and trying to be perfect, at everything, always is a recipe for disappointment.

Life outside work

It's easier to maintain a good work-life balance if you put some effort into maintaining a fulfilling life outside work.

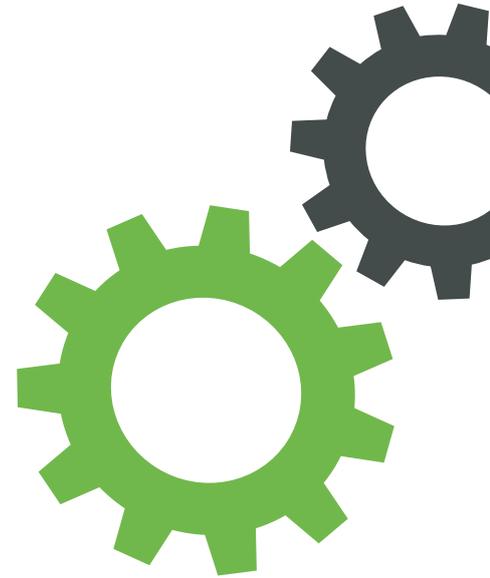
- **Book something in** - if you find it difficult to leave work, then a hobby or exercise class that you have booked may incentivise you to get out on time.
- **Get some help** - a rota dividing up household tasks or family responsibilities might help share the load. You may also want to review child-care arrangements to make sure it meets your family's needs.



- **Keep in contact** - it's easy to lose sight of friends when you are busy working hard, but friendships support you through good and difficult times, so try to ensure that you spend spare time on maintaining your real world social network.
- **Relaxation** - does not always have to be expensive, just allowing yourself time to watch a film, read a book, anything that may relax you that you can do in your home.
- **Get fresh air** - if you can walk to local amenities or if you have time walk your local area, you'll find places and spaces you didn't know existed.
- **Connect** - when you are with your family, friends and loved-ones make sure you really connect with them.

Practice mindful listening, put your phone away and really 'be' with them. Connecting with the people you care most about can give great perspective and remind you what's important in life.

- **You time** - when you are busy and have family and other commitments just making half an hour for yourself can seem like a mammoth task. However self-care and doing something just for you will help you feel more balanced and in control.
- **Reach Out** - If you do feel life is getting too tough - speak to someone, don't let pressure turn to stress and become something unmanageable. Reach out before the issues become too much.



Further sources of help

There is a lot of information out there to help you cope with managing your work-life balance and help with stress, depression and anxiety. Please have a look at these organisations and charities for further tips.

- ACAS – the right to flexible working
www.acas.org.uk
- Mental Health Foundation – work-life balance
www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/w/work-life-balance
- Google “work-life balance” or “traits of highly successful people” to find more tips.

www.ben.org.uk

f /BenSupport4Auto

t @BenSupport4Auto

Free, confidential helpline:
08081 311 333

Ben - Motor and Allied Trades Benevolent Fund. Lynwood Court, Lynwood Village, Rise Road, Ascot SL5 0FG. A charity registered in England and Wales (no.297877) and Scotland (no.SC039842). Registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (no. LH3766).

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