

# Lighthouse Wellness Guide:

## An informational and self help guide provided by Lighthouse EAP.

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If there is one thing we have learned from this past year, it is the need to be flexible. The Covid-19 pandemic created a magnitude of change for the majority, resulting in many having to make significant changes in their personal life and at work. If you found yourself overwhelmed with these disruptions and struggling to make time for yourself, you were not alone. Due to elements of work and home that began to run together, you may find that you are struggling to now create a healthy work-life balance. For instance, when you are at home and “off the clock” do you find yourself checking work emails or spending too much time talking about work? When you are “on the clock” and at work are you distracted with your at-home “to-do list” or taking too many distracting personal calls? Take a moment and reflect on what an ideal work-life balance would look like for you personally. In this edition of the Lighthouse EAP newsletter we are going to focus on tips for creating healthier boundaries around work and home.



### Creating a Better Work-Life Balance

What does creating a better work-life balance mean? It means making the needed adjustments to be more fully present both at work and home so that work doesn't creep into your home life and your home life doesn't interfere with your work. The constant splitting of attention can cause a decline in emotional health, problems with attention and concentration, and poor physical health, including cardiovascular and immunity issues. Having a work-life balance also helps prevent career burnout. When we are fully engaged in our work, it becomes more rewarding, we are motivated to do better, and we derive more of a sense of purpose. So, let's take a moment to assess if you might be struggling with a poor work-life balance.



## Signs of a poor work-life balance include:

- You don't have fun, are too serious, and/or no longer have hobbies.
- You feel resentful about the time you devote to work.
- You no longer find joy in the work you once did.
- You spend too much time at home complaining about work, and/or are experiencing increased cynicism and negativity.
- You are neglecting too many other important aspects of your life due to work.
- You find yourself more anxious, depressed, and/or irritable due to stress from work and or from not doing the things you used to make time for.
- You feel tired and drained most of the time.
- You find yourself more frequently declining requests from friends and/or family to spend time together.

*If you are experiencing one or more of these signs, you might want to consider one or more of the following tips:*

**Set healthy boundaries:** These boundaries may look like: making sure you end your work day at a certain time; forcing yourself take set scheduled breaks; not checking your personal phone until your scheduled break; turning down the alerts on your email while you are working on other things; and learning to say no to extras or commitments you do not want to do or do not have the energy or personal resources to do.

**Learn to be less reactive:** We live in a time where we feel the need to respond immediately to everything from social media posts and emails to responding to texts from friends and family. Learn to create space before responding. For instance, create a specific, set amount of time to check personal emails, to look at social media, and to return messages to friends/family. Being less reactive often leads to better outcomes and increases overall impulsivity and self-control. This will also save you valuable time. According to a University of California Irvine study, once you shift tasks, "it takes an average of 23 minutes and 15 seconds to get back to the task". Think of all the extra time you could create in your day just by staying single-focused.

**Create specific workspace:** If you work from home, keep your workspace in a specific room

and area that you can walk away from after you are off the clock, so that your mind minimizes the association of the entire home being work. Wherever you work, do your best to invest in your workspace by making it comfortable and decorating it to your tastes, making it a space you want to spend time in.

**Create a routine/ritual to signify that your workday is over:** Ideas might look like changing your clothing at the end of the workday, listening to a fun audiobook on the drive home, stopping at the gym or park right after work, or spending 30 minutes doing something fun when you get home. Having a routine will allow for you to more easily transition from your roles at work and home.

**Add downtime into your busy weekly schedule:** Add structure to your week and include specific times for hobbies/playtime/adventure, exercise or other wellness activities, and/or fully engaged time with your loved ones. Prioritize and be very protective about these times. Placing more value on you does not harm others, it only makes you a better version of you, which in turn benefits those around you. Having something to look forward to is also motivating and having set times makes it more likely you will follow through and not cancel plans.

**Ditch the drain:** Assess whether you are spending too much time and energy on activities and/or people that are not valuing your most important asset, YOU. Have you ever mindlessly surfed the internet for an hour and then thought, “where did the time go?” Or, have you ever spent too much time gossiping or venting with a coworker and then found yourself frustrated because you didn’t get all of your work done? Become aware of the valueless time drainers in your life and learn to create boundaries around them. For instance, set a 15-minute timer if you are going to internet surf or play games on your phone. Daily journaling of time spent on these time drainers as well as your overall mood, can be a helpful way to assess and monitor if ditching the drain is benefiting you.

**Outsource tasks:** Consider whether any of your household chores can be simplified or outsourced. For instance, on-line grocery ordering or paying the teenager down the road to mow your lawn, could buy you an extra hour

or two of hobby or wellness time. The financial cost spent on outsourcing will likely more than pay for itself if you are creating more physical and/or emotional health for yourself and/or creating healthier relationships with your loved ones.

**Think small – A little goes a long way:** Don’t assume that you need to make big changes to bring more balance to your life. Set small realistic goals to get to the overall big goal you want to achieve. Pick just one of the tips mentioned above and try that out for awhile, until it is a part of your routine, before taking that next step. Slowly build more activities into your life that are important to you and your health.

**Know when to seek professional help:** Everyone needs help from time to time. If your life feels too chaotic to manage and you’re spinning your wheels worrying about it, talk with a professional – an EAP program is a great resource to help you customize a plan that works for you!

“As I began to love myself I found that anguish and emotional suffering are only warning signs that I was living against my own truth. Today, I know, this is authenticity.

– CHARLIE CHAPLIN

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“Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.”

– BRENE BROWN



## Homework Activities:

### Separate the Have Tos from the Want Tos:

All of us have a limited amount of energy to give each day. It is important we learn to rank how we want to spend our energy each day, according to our priorities and values. We often do this well when at work but not always in our personal lives. For instance, you might prioritize at work that you have to get an end of the year report done today but your "Have To" list might also need to include something like, be home by 6:00 pm to eat dinner with the family or spend 30 minutes of uninterrupted time reading to your son or helping him with homework. The "Want To" list would include things you would like to get done but that are secondary to the "Have Tos", such as watching your favorite television show or cleaning out the garage. Remember to include your loved ones in on conversations about priorities. It is not uncommon, for instance, for marriages and families to break down because of a lack of understanding on what the "Have Tos" are in those relationships. It is important to share your "Have Tos" with your loved ones and make sure you understand their "Have Tos" as well.

- Write down the things you **Have To** get done today. Make sure your list includes just as many personal items as work items and is reflective of your values.
- Make a list of the additional items you **Want To** get done today. You might want to rank these from highest to lowest priority.



### Deciding to say Yes or No:

Now that you have sorted out your Have Tos from your Want Tos, you might struggle staying accountable to your established Have Tos. One thing that often gets in the way is saying "Yes" to other things before we take the time to reflect if those things will interfere with our Have Tos. Learning to take the time to evaluate if you want to say "yes" or "no" will help you succeed. Here are some things to consider before answering with a yes or no.



#### Ask yourself:

- Am I saying "yes" only to avoid a conflict?
- If I say "yes", will I still be able to get all of my Have Tos done today.
- Do I really want to say "no"?
- Am I saying "no" to maintain power and control?
- Will I be annoyed with myself later for giving in?
- Will I feel resentful later that my time has been infringed upon?

#### Consider using phrases to help you buy time before responding:

- "I'd like to think more about that."
- "I can't make a decision right now but let me get back to you on that."
- "I'll let you know what I decide next week."
- "Do you mind if I get back with you tomorrow on that?"

### Suggested Ted Talks:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/william\\_clark\\_dare\\_to\\_say\\_no](https://www.ted.com/talks/william_clark_dare_to_say_no)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtPRrn5nwAo>

If your organization would like more information  
about Lighthouse EAP, contact  
**Marcia Kane: 419.214.1169 or [mkane@harbor.org](mailto:mkane@harbor.org)**

