



CONCERN:EAP

# Healthy & Resilient You



## Bring More Balance to Your Life

Practices for Staying Focused, Keeping Active, and Avoiding Burnout

### Mastering the Balancing Act

We live in a technological age. Our devices allow us to stay connected like never before, and their use—and overuse—can sometimes have an unintended impact on our work and personal lives.

One Harvard Business School survey found that 94% of respondents worked more than 50 hours a week, and almost half put in over 65 hours. Such a schedule can lead to mental and physical burnout, which can impact quality of life and health.

Experts agree that balance is key to avoiding burnout and to maintaining relationships, and physical and mental wellbeing. Below we've outlined some tips to help you strike a healthier balance.

### Keep Calm and Your Technology...On?

At first thought, one way to avoid technology-related burnout is to simply spend more time away from screens. Sometimes that's called for, but in our era of ever-present tech, it isn't always feasible. An alternative, more sustainable solution may be to reframe our approach to tech when we are using it.

Soren Gordhamer, founder of the popular annual Wisdom 2.0 conference, advocates for the mindful use

of technology to help effect change, build communities, spark creativity, and strengthen relationships.

He suggests that balance is less about when we put down or pick up our tech, and more about acting with purpose. When used with intent, tech can benefit wellbeing and effectiveness; without that purpose, it can become a distraction and upset balance.



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**PRO TIP:** Use tech as a trigger to strengthen connections. If your friend posts about something great that happened, follow-up your like or re-tweet with a congratulatory phone call.

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**PRO TIP:** Setting intentions for any activity is a good way to guide behavior, especially as applied to tech use. Before going online, first set an intention, such as "I'm going to check my bank balance" or "I'm going to find inspiration for my weekly book club" and stick to it. If you find yourself being distracted by online tangents, use an app like Evernote or your browser's bookmark functionality to save them for later.

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## Habits: Revisit and Restructure

We are creatures of habit. Some of those habits bring our lives fulfillment, happiness, and meaning. Others... not so much. When we fall into habit, we sometimes forget that we can choose to do more of what brings us joy, and less of what doesn't. Adjusting habits from a mindful perspective can be a powerful way to establish better balance.

To focus on things you're passionate about, you may need to free up time in other areas. For example, eliminate an activity altogether (like trading after-work socializing for an evening jog), or delegate tasks to someone else.

**PRO TIP:** *If you need to get to the office earlier, but have to drop your kids at school and can't delegate or share the responsibility with a spouse or partner, consider setting up a kiddie-carpool schedule with trusted neighborhood parents. School administration or the PTA can help connect you to like-minded parents if you need help.*

## Balance in Increments

It's important to remember that the art of balance is an ongoing journey, best achieved by a lifetime of small steps. Fortunately, research and experience offer up a number of small actions that can make a lifelong quest for balance that much easier. Here are a few examples.

Put aside perfectionism: Striving for perfection is something we usually learn at a young age, when our lives are comparatively ordered. But, as behavioral experts have found, perfection is difficult to sustain in complex adulthood. Try aiming for excellence and adaptability instead of perfection.

Let go of the techno: Though it helps to use technology mindfully, there are times when the right thing to do is



just unplug. Try powering off at regular intervals like family dinners or every Saturday or Sunday, and always unplug at special events like children's recitals or family holidays. Using your smartphone to capture that special moment? Try putting it in airplane mode first to shut off inbound calls and tempting message notifications.

Move and meditate: Exercise and meditation can be powerful tools for decompression and restoring a sense of balance. Try blocking out time for movement and meditation. Even 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per day, like a brisk walk, is a proven stress-reducer and health-boosters. With just five minutes of meditative breathing you can re-energize yourself and help approach unexpected challenges with greater resilience.

**PRO TIP:** *If a project at work becomes unmanageable, ask a coworker for help. Sharing your projects can be a win-win, helping you while giving your delegate an opportunity to learn new skills.*

If you would like an extra hand, CONCERN's Work/Life Services can connect you to trusted, qualified professionals in your area. Call 800-344-4222 to learn more about our helpful referral service.

Looking for more information about bringing more balance to your life? Check out the Resilience Hub™.

If you are a first-time user, type in your company name to access the site. [www.ConcernResilienceHub.com](http://www.ConcernResilienceHub.com)

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If you find your level of stress is impacting your well-being, you can contact us for additional help and support.

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## Balance Tech with Intention

In a constantly “on” society, our tech use can sometimes have unintended impact on our time and attention. Since it’s not always feasible to unplug from our devices altogether, it’s important to use our tech with intention. Mindful use can help prevent burnout and promote balance.

### *Examples in Action:*

- › Before going online for casual browsing or social-media use, give yourself a time limit. Use the alarm clock function on your smartphone to alert you when time’s up.
- › To help focus on the job at hand, try closing unnecessary browsing tabs and disable notifications from any messaging or chat apps on your computer.

## Schedule Enrichment

Incorporating activities that we enjoy into our day is another way to work toward better balance. It can enrich our lives, help us find our centers, and stay connected with what’s important to us.

### *Examples in Action:*

- › Write down 2 or 3 activities that bring you joy (like gardening or crossword puzzles). Ensure time for these self-enriching activities by formally scheduling them in your calendar.

- › If finding time for separate activities is difficult, consider combining them. For instance, if you want to see a friend, but also want to exercise, suggest tennis or hiking together instead of dinner or drinks.



## Balancing in Tiny Steps

Finding balance is a lifelong journey made up of tiny steps of progress. Consider these tips for a way to start sustainable new habits.

### *Examples in Action:*

- › Be precise when starting a new habit. For example, simply resolving to exercise is less effective than specifying what exercise you are going to do, when in your day you will do it, and for how long.
- › Since habit building is incremental, it can be helpful to focus on only one new habit at a time. Once the change becomes second nature it should be easier to move on to the next.



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Tips for a healthier YOU!

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