



TIP SHEET FOR WORK, LIFE AND BALANCE

'Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving'
Albert Einstein

To do the best you can at uni, you need to strike a balance in your life among all of your commitments, ensuring that you have adequate time out.

Take this short quiz to see if you're in balance:

Agree

Disagree

1. I find it hard to relax
2. I don't have many interests outside of uni
3. I often feel anxious about uni work
4. I rarely have enough time to spend with friends/family
5. I don't have time to have some fun each week
6. On most days I feel overwhelmed / over committed
7. I often feel exhausted or don't sleep well
8. I often skip meals or eat junk food
9. I drink alcohol often or a lot
10. I often think about uni when I'm not there
11. My friends/family get upset about how much time I spend on uni

If you agree with 4 or more of these, you may be losing your balance!

You may think that the more you study, the better you will do! Actually, your productivity will deteriorate if you only study and work! Everyone is more productive when they undertake a variety of activities in their life.

What supports balance?

1. **Organisation.** Have a timetable of lectures, work commitments and free time so you can plan recreational activities. Ideally, you need a few days off during each semester and mid-semester break, one full day off per week, a few hours off each day and a few minutes off each hour. Plan your study times and other activity times! Putting together a weekly schedule can sometimes be surprising when you realise where your time is going!
2. **Exercise.** Movement provides your mind with rest and your body with health! There is overwhelming research that exercise is the most valuable contributor to good physical and mental health. Find something you enjoy that is physical and do it regularly. Join a team, walk, swim, dance, organise some of your social activities around exercise!
3. **Socialise.** We all have friends and family who love us, listen to us, help us solve problems and feel understood. We need to maintain these networks and enjoy social time out without feeling that we should be studying! Social life helps us focus when we do study.
4. **Interests and hobbies.** Many people love to read a good novel, see a movie, commit to a TV series, cook a new recipe, knit a sweater, attend a church/mosque/spiritual group. These are things we love to do, that renew our energy and distract us from work and study. They make us more interesting to and interested in, those around us.

5. **Sleep and nutrition.** Sleep is critical to optimal functioning. Everyone needs time to allow the body and mind to refresh themselves. Chronic sleep deprivation affects performance in the same way as being drunk! If you have difficulty sleeping, seek help! Also, what we eat and drink affects our overall level of stress and energy.

When we study and work all the time, we sometimes skip meals or eat convenience foods, which may lack the nutrition we need to feed our brains and bodies! Drink plenty of water, eat healthy, regular meals and use alcohol and other drugs responsibly. Large doses of alcohol, caffeine and drugs will adversely affect the brain and put stress on the body, particularly the liver and kidneys.

6. **Visualisation, relaxation, meditation.** When we feel overloaded with work, we can get caught in a cycle of thinking about life negatively – focusing on what’s wrong. There is evidence that performance can be improved by visualising the result we want. Visualise yourself relaxing, succeeding, finishing an assignment etc. and notice how this helps you reach your goals. Everyone finds different activities relaxing – reading a magazine, cooking, lying on the beach, walking in nature, gardening. Determine what it is that you find relaxing and include it in your day. Meditation has been found to be one of the most relaxing activities for many people. There are many types of relaxation – muscle relaxation, guided imagery, mindfulness, energy clearing, spiritual – experiment with meditation to see if it can work for you.

See our website for meditations online.

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/counselling/meditation.html>

7. **Values.** We are all motivated by our values, so it is helpful to review them occasionally to remind us why we are here doing our study, working towards our goals. Self reflection takes time and privacy and setting time aside for this helps maintain the balance.

Summary:

- Don't work too many paid hours if you have a full time study load.
- Stress builds up if you only focus on study.
- Having a break will help you to focus more on study.
- Staying fit and healthy through eating well and exercise will help your concentration and keep you happy.
- Have fun whilst you are at uni. Uni life isn't just about studying. Keep in mind though, you will get into difficulties with studies if you only focus on partying.
- Seek help if you can't seem to get it right. Come and speak with a counsellor to help you get the right balance for you. A counsellor may help you to develop a schedule, and work out what things are preventing you from being in balance.
- Visit our website for details of our service and links to resources. Try our meditations online by following this link and click on the meditation page.

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/counselling/index.html>

What other resources are available?

Websites:

http://www.cio.com/article/114051/Five_Sensible_Tips_for_Achieving_Work_Life_Balance?page=1&taxonomyId=3123

<http://www.asiaone.com/Business/Office/Rest%2BAnd%2BRelax/Story/A1Story20090910-166962.html>

http://www.cmha.ca/BINS/content_page.asp?cid=2-1841

<http://www.flexibility.co.uk/issues/WLB/pitfalls-always-on.htm>

http://www.adelaide.edu.au/counselling_centre/resources/brochures/lifestyle.html

http://counselling.omnium.net.au/modules/selfhelp/article.php?id_articles=69

http://www.assureprograms.com.au/includes/filelister/fileservice.php?path=%2FEmployees%2Fhealth_and_well_being%2F&filename=+Work_Life_Balance_Prevents_Burnout.pdf

http://www.cmha.ca/data/1/rec_docs/403_CMHA_coping_with_stress_EN.pdf