

BalancedLiving

December 2020



LIVING A LIFE IN BALANCE

Do you feel like your life is too complicated? Are you often torn between your work and home responsibilities?

"If so, you're not alone, and you don't have to despair," says Odette Pollar, president of Smart Ways to Work, a personal productivity firm in Oakland, Calif., and author of *Take Back Your Life*. "You can gain peace and relief by making a conscious effort to reduce the complexities in your life and achieve balance."

Given all you have to do, it's easy to lose sight of what's probably your ultimate goal: to enjoy your life as you follow through on your personal and professional responsibilities in satisfying ways.

Here are Ms. Pollar's suggestions for successfully balancing your time and life.

Learn to streamline

Speeding up and trying to force more and more into the same blocks of time isn't the best way to have more time in your life. According to Ms. Pollar, the best way to "get it all done" is to have fewer things to do by consciously streamlining your ongoing responsibilities.

Being selective about your choices and how you spend your time is important. And it's vital to keep your perspective and establish realistic expectations for yourself.

"Regaining balance starts with the awareness that something is out of kilter, that you have too much going on," she says. "From there you can identify what you want less of in your life."

Ask yourself questions

You can achieve balance by setting your priorities and creating a life around them. This is a long-term process and requires thought and insight.

As a way to get started, take some time to list three to five answers to these questions:

- What physical needs are important to you and why?
- What emotional needs are important to you and why?
- What mental needs must be filled to make you content?
- What causes the sense of frustration or depression you may feel?
- What does success -- both personal and professional -- mean to you?

Your answers will provide information you can use to make changes in your life.

The StayWell Company © 2020



Determine what you want

Before making any big changes, consider the results you want to achieve. This will give you a starting point from which to choose a direction and set goals.

For example, you might want to:

- Enjoy work and have enough energy left at the end of the day to enjoy your home life.
- Cultivate a better relationship with your children, partner, friends and extended family.
- Do more things you'd like to do and feel more content.

By reacquainting yourself with your needs, desires and feelings, you can make a plan with a systematic approach for achieving your goals.

Respect the process

Achieving balance is an ongoing process that requires your regular attention. As you move forward, talk with others about how they have achieved balance in their lives and share your successes.

As you continue on your road to a more satisfying life, remember the following.

- Keep your job and your life in perspective. Success at the expense of relaxation and enjoyment is not success.
- Take yourself less seriously. Learn to see and appreciate the lighter side of life.
- Learn to say "no." Be firm without apology or guilt.

"It's easier to balance a simpler life," says Ms. Pollar. "For a life worth living, eliminate the unimportant, whether it be relationships, tasks, responsibilities, possessions or beliefs."

PERSONAL BUDGETING: WHAT YOU WANT VERSUS WHAT YOU NEED



It's easy to find ways to spend your money every day. From online ads that push products that match your interests into view to all of the restaurants, stores, and services that line the streets where you live and work, you're never without attractive options to help you lighten your wallet. Unfortunately, in a world of targeted ads, impulse buys, and upselling, you may be blowing your budget on the things you want, leaving you without the funds for the things that you actually need.

What is the difference between your wants and needs in your budget? The answer may not be as obvious as you think it is,

and this is due to the fact that not everyone takes full stock of all the needs that have to be met to manage one's finances. For instance, many students may not consider setting money aside for emergencies, retirement plans, taxes, or other non-routine events that can sneak up and cause a serious reduction in your bank account as a need. They limit their needs to the routine purchases and expenditures that happen every day, week, or month.

Wants can also be difficult to identify, because they can frequently hide within purchases that have to be made, but may ultimately increase the price. For instance, if you need to grab lunch on the go, a \$10 sandwich may support your budget, while a \$35 sushi order may not. The more expensive meal becomes a want, even though you need to purchase your lunch. Also, purchasing add-ons or upsell items can easily pair a need with an attractive, yet unnecessary want, which can easily unbalance your budget. For instance, if you need to buy a vehicle, choosing interior upgrades or high-end electronics can push your monthly bill outside of your budget.

To keep your budget in order and protect your financial health for years to come, try this strategy:

1. Make a list of all of your needs and how much they cost. Include everything you absolutely need to pay every day, week, month, and year. Make sure to add an emergency fund and any other future needs or payments that require money to be set aside in advance. What is the total amount you will spend on needs?
2. Subtract your needs from your available income. The money that is left over represents the income you have to spend on your wants and to set aside for those important future purchases, like a vacation, a new car, a change in residence, etc.
3. Create a 50/30/20 comparison. Take your income and divide it into three groups: 50% of your income for needs, 30% of your income for wants, and 20% of your income for savings or paying off debts. Using the totals in the previous steps and this 50/30/20 comparison, answer these questions:
 - Are you spending 50% of your budget on your needs?
 - Do you have more than 30% of your income to spend on wants?
 - Are you able to put aside 20% of your income each month into savings?
 - If you're spending more than 50% of your budget on needs, what can you change in your lifestyle to reduce that number? Are there things you can live without?
 - Are you willing to put more money in savings if it reduces the amount you have to spend on wants?

Life Advantages, LLC ©2020



... Visit Your EAP Website Today

awpnow.com

Optimized for all devices including: desktops, laptops, tablets, smart phones and more.

It is now easier than ever to access the online resources provided by your EAP, Alliance Work Partners.

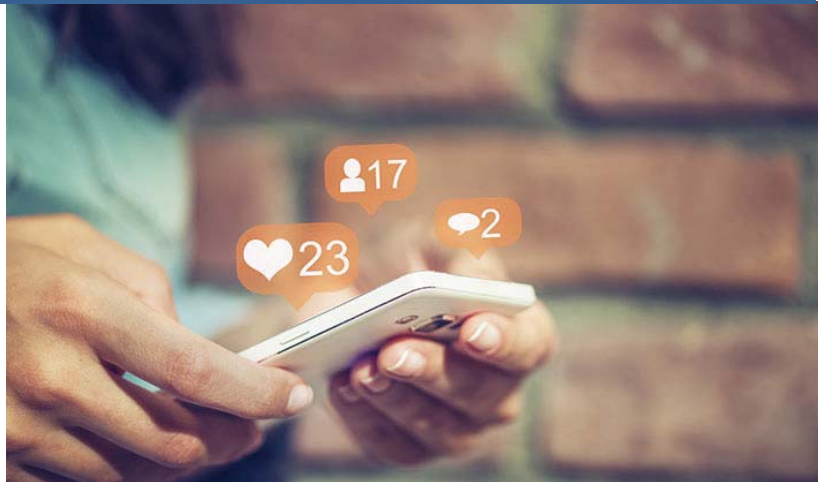
Contact your Account Manager for log-in instructions

AM@alliancewp.com | 888-327-4636



SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEGATIVE SELF-IMPRESSIONS

In a world that has become increasingly connected through social media platforms, it's easy to feel as if your life is smaller, less-energetic, and less-engaging than the lives of others. As those you follow seem to receive more attention for their lifestyles, activities, or media-savvy posts, you may begin to feel that your own posts are less-interesting or unworthy of attention. You may begin to feel as if you have nothing to offer to the wider public narrative that others seem to effortlessly navigate. These feelings about your social media presence may begin to manifest in your offline life in potentially toxic ways.



To address these feelings, start by understanding that social media is a business, and it's a business that uses market research, user data, and evolving algorithms to determine what you and others see. The posts in your feeds are designed to engage you in a way that will keep you glued to the platform, interacting with selected posts and providing advertising revenue to the host company. In essence, your experience on each site is being manipulated to the site's advantage.

Next, you need to recognize that the social media posts you're seeing from stylish, world-traveling internet "influencers," are carefully staged and painstakingly edited to optimize their impact. While someone may project a simple, easy-going life of "I'm just like you," there may actually be a well-funded media machine working behind the scenes that's crafting and supporting the illusions presented to you. You need to treat every post with a critical eye and consider what the post is really trying to encourage you to buy or believe.

Finally, you need to be willing to unplug. If social media makes you feel angry, dissatisfied, belittled, or unappreciated, log off of the network for a bit and gauge how your mood, activities, and overall sense of wellbeing change without the constant beeps and dings of alert notifications vying for your attention every day. Try a weekend away from the posts of others. If you notice a positive change, try staying away for a full week. Once you feel like you have some distance from your social networks and control over how they impact your life, return to them with a fresh perspective and some rules for how you'll use each platform, such as checking posts only during your lunch break or leaving notifications off, so you can keep up with updates when you feel like checking in.

If social media is a part of a hobby or professional activity, limit your use of the various networks to just supporting those needs and avoid engaging posts or sharing information that deviates from your social media goals. Learning to separate your personal life and professional life is a valuable experience you will be able to apply to your future career.

At the end of the day, you have the ability to control and manage your online experience. If you ever find yourself feeling as if being online is not worthwhile or influencing you in negative ways, put the time you spend scrolling through your social media feeds into pursuits that you can enjoy on your own terms.

Life Advantages, LLC ©2020



The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

December 2020

Managing Holiday Stress

The holiday season often brings unwelcomed stress and depression as well as presents an array of demands — cooking meals, shopping, baking, cleaning, and entertaining. Holiday plans may look different during the COVID-19 pandemic, also causing anxiety and stress.

But, with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays:



1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** It is important to realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. Take time to express your feelings.
2. **Reach out.** If you're feeling stressed during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, call, or video chat.
3. **Stick to a budget.** Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend, then stick to your budget. You can also try giving homemade gifts or starting a family gift exchange.
4. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities to help manage stress around time management. Consider shopping online or pre-planning your menus.
5. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.

Try these tactics below to help:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.
 - Practice deep-breathing exercises, meditation, or yoga.
6. **Take a breather.** Try finding an activity that reduces stress by clearing the mind, slowing breathing, and restoring inner calm. Just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, can be a great reset.

Some options may include:

- Taking a walk
- Listening to soothing music
- Reading a book

Take steps to prevent stress and depression this holiday season. Learn to manage triggers such as financial pressures or personal demands. A little planning and some positive thinking can lead to finding peace and joy during the holidays.

Exercise for Stress Management



According to the Mayo Clinic, exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active can boost your feel-good endorphins and distract you from daily worries. If you're not an athlete or even if you're out of shape, you can still make a little exercise go a long way toward stress management. Discover the connection between exercise and stress relief — and why exercise should be part of your stress management plan.

Here is how exercise can help with stress relief:

- **It pumps up your endorphins.** Physical activity can increase the production of your happy hormones, called endorphins. Although this function is often referred to as a runner's high, any aerobic activity, such as a rousing game of tennis or a nature hike, can contribute to this same feeling.
- **It reduces negative effects of stress.** Exercise can provide stress relief for your body while imitating effects of stress, such as the flight or fight response, and helping your body and its systems practice working together.
- **It's meditation in motion.** After a fast-paced game of racquetball, a long walk or run, or several laps in the pool, you may often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements.
- **It improves your mood.** Regular exercise can increase self-confidence, improve your mood, help you relax, and lower symptoms of mild depression and anxiety. Exercise can also improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress, depression, and anxiety.

Tips for managing stress through exercise:

- Undertake physical activity when you are stressed
- Maintain a regular exercise program on a weekly basis
- Try a variety of outdoor activities as being in fresh air can help too
- Be sure not to overdo the amount of physical activity that you take on

Before you start or increase any exercise program, be sure to consult your doctor. Start to slowly and gradually increase your exercise time and intensity. Consult an exercise professional or your health coach for guidance on how to get started.

Cranberry – Citrus Meatballs

Ingredients

- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 pounds of ground pork
- 1 cup of cooked long-grain brown rice
- 1/2 cup of dried cranberries, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of black pepper
- 1 drizzle of olive oil
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can of whole berry cranberry sauce
- 1/3 cup of reduced-sugar ketchup
- 1/4 cup of orange juice
- 2 tablespoons of lime juice



Directions

- In a large bowl, combine eggs, pork, rice, dried cranberries, salt and pepper. Shape mixture into 64 meatballs (each about 1 1/2 inches in diameter). If mixture is sticky, use wet hands to shape the meatballs.
- In an extra-large skillet, heat 2 teaspoons oil over medium heat. Cook meatballs, half at a time, in hot oil for about 5 minutes or just until browned and slightly firm (meatballs will not be cooked through), turning once halfway through cooking. If necessary, add the remaining 1 teaspoon oil to skillet during cooking. Immediately transfer meatballs to a 3- 1/2- to 4-quart slow cooker.
- In a medium bowl, whisk together cranberry sauce, ketchup, orange juice and lime juice until combined. Pour cranberry sauce mixture over meatballs in slow cooker (do not stir). Cover; cook on Low for 3 to 4 hours or on High for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

Health Tip:

Handwashing for Flu Prevention

According to CDC, keeping hands clean is one of the most important things we can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy.

- Wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Sneeze/cough into your arm/elbow instead of your hands
- Wash your hands before eating
- Wet, lather, scrub, rinse, and dry

Action: *Hum the happy birthday song twice to time how long you should scrub before rinsing and drying (goal should be approximately 20 seconds).*



National Influenza Vaccination Week 2020



As we quickly approach the busy holiday season, vaccinating ourselves against influenza may be the last thing on our minds! The Centers for Disease Control chose December to establish National Influenza Vaccination Week to remind us that even during a busy time of the year, there is still time to get your flu vaccine.

Receiving your flu vaccine has many benefits. Here are a few:

- The flu vaccine prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related doctor's visits each year. This year is especially important because many clinics and hospitals have been overcrowded and overrun with individuals in contact with COVID-19.
- The flu vaccine is an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions. Individuals with pre-existing conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and COPD often have weakened immune systems and should take preventative vaccines to prevent further illness.
- Flu vaccination has been shown in several studies to reduce severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick. Even if you contract the flu, studies show vaccinated patients on average spent 4 fewer days in the hospital than those who were not vaccinated.
- Getting vaccinated not only helps protect you, but also may protect people around you, including those who are more vulnerable to serious illness like babies and young children, older people, and people with chronic health conditions.

While vaccination is recommended in September or October, getting vaccinated later can still be beneficial during most seasons for people who have put it off. So, while you plan your holiday season, don't forget to put your health at the top of your list by getting your flu vaccine!

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

1-800-343-3822 | TDD 1-800-448-1823 | www.AWPnow.com

Here for you as life happens ...

Tips for Post-Election Holiday Gatherings



It might be a challenge to safely host a holiday gathering this season—but if you do, look to CDC recommendations and follow

local official guidance. Are you determined to curtail political talk in order to reduce conflict, especially among family members? If you believe the tension of political bickering will undermine the enjoyment of your event that you've worked so hard to arrange, consider these tips: 1) Speak with each of your guests separately beforehand and request a commitment to avoid political discussions. 2) Ask these same guests if they can play a monitoring role to help change the subject if conversations steer into a political realm. This turns each guest into both an ally and a gatekeeper. 3) Consider inviting a guest having difficulty following your rules to help with a task at your event that will occupy them in a different way.

Yes, That's Emotional Abuse



Emotionally abusive relationships are full of confusion and denial for victims. Delays in seeking help are influenced by cycles of abuse followed by remorse, stigma and fear about leaving, damaged self-esteem, blaming yourself, questioning your sanity, and telling yourself, "Deep down he/she really is a good person (or doesn't mean it)." To get traction on change, examine an awareness checklist from an authority website like WomensHealth.gov. It will help you move along the decision path to reaching out for help, like the EAP. Source: WomensHealth.gov [search "emotional abuse"]

COVID-19 Prevention Tip: Mouthwash



Washing your hands when you come home from work, school, or the store is strongly recommended to reduce risk of coronavirus infection. But what about adding gargling with a mouthwash? Researchers demonstrated that an extra layer of protection might be afforded by this practice.

They found a routine 30-second oral rinse using an over-the-counter antiseptic mouthwash to be 99.99% effective in killing the coronavirus. Source: onlinelibrary.wiley.com [search "lowering transmission mouthwash"]

Pandemic Pain and Young People



Teens need peer interaction and emotional validation to grow mentally healthy. So, isolation for teens during the pandemic is difficult. It's not just a drag, it's a risk

issue because over one-third of teens periodically have suicidal thoughts. Not knowing when "normal" will return adds to their anxiety. As a parent, trust your gut. If your teenager demonstrates agitated behavior, moodiness, problems with self-motivation, disinterest in school, or is apathetic with unusual sleeping and eating patterns, talk to a professional counselor. A simple assessment may help identify a mental disorder and prevent self-harming behavior or even suicide. Source: Rutgers.edu [search "teens, pandemic"]

National Impaired Driving Awareness Month



Will you soon find yourself on the road trying to get home safely this holiday season? You'll of course want to avoid impaired drivers. Do you know the warning signs of a drunk driver? Spotting these signs—

the same ones taught to law enforcement—could save your life. They include making turns too widely, veering to the side of the road, hugging the center line, almost hitting objects or other vehicles, driving on the wrong side of the road, driving too slowly, sudden stops without cause, braking erratically, not moving when the light turns green, illegal turns, and driving after dark with no headlights. So, what about your ability to resist drinking at a social event? Are you frequently prodded and elbowed by family or friends to cut back and avoid alcohol when you walk into a party? Social pressure can be a challenge for anyone. But is the inability to say no to a drink a symptom of an alcohol use disorder? Fifteen million Americans have this health condition, according to National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Alcohol use disorders are easily diagnosed, but overcoming denial and getting a five-minute assessment is not so easy. Still, don't wait for a crisis to motivate you to take this step. Talk to your EAP or a health provider. Within minutes you'll know what to do next, and you'll be given a plan to end the confusion and bewildering tussle you experience with alcohol. Learn more: foundationsrecoverynetwork.com [search: "peer pressure drinking"]

The EAP Can Do That



Mental health might come to mind when you think about your employee assistance program, but this is only scratching the surface.

There are numerous ways EAPs can help, so never dismiss the program

as an avenue to resolve a problem you face. Ways EAPs help that are often overlooked: 1) Acting as a sounding board when you face a tough decision. 2) Help for deciding whether you need a professional counselor or a completely different type of resource. 3) Problem solving about how to help a friend who won't get help or admit they have a problem. 4) Guidance on handling a personality clash with a coworker or boss. 5) Help to rule out whether you are depressed, burnt out, or experiencing signs of any other condition.

Helping a Loved One Cope with Chronic Pain



Over 40% of households have a family member who experiences chronic pain. However, when pain experts focus on helping victims, family members are often overlooked. Family members have a powerful role in helping, but they need support. Do you feel

helpless not being able to comfort a family member in chronic pain? You are not alone. Frustration, stress, anxiety, depression, anger—and guilt for being angry—are common family experiences. Your household may feel toxic, cycling between conflict, isolation, and the inability to be an effective and willing support for your loved one. Read the insightful handout "Ten Tips for Communicating with a Person Suffering from Chronic Pain" at www.practicalpainmanagement.com/Handout.pdf. It hits every key point from how their pain affects you to communication, taking care of yourself, what you can do, reading nonverbal cues, and more. Talk with your EAP about your unique situation. Learn more: www.practicalpainmanagement.com [search "family role impact"]

Health Effects of Loneliness



Loneliness is a national health crisis experienced by one-third of the population across all generations. You are "hard wired" for close emotional connections. Without them, you can suffer high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety,

depression, and cognitive decline. Research shows the same negative effects can extend to couples who have grown apart emotionally due to unresolved marital or couple conflicts but who still live under the same roof. You don't have to live alone to be lonely. Exploring professional counseling to resolve couple conflicts that have lingered for years can be difficult, but reversing the effects on your health is new motivation for doing so. Source: www.news.uga.edu/marital-conflict-causes-loneliness-health-problems and Cigna.com [search "loneliness epidemic"]

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

To access your EAP services
1-800-343-3822 | TDD 1-800-448-1823
www.AWPnow.com

Here for you as life happens ...

