



Work-life balance and mental health.



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As we all know it today, the world has transformed into an arena where people are constantly in a fierce competition to excel in every given opportunity. Right from birth, each of us is running a race at various stages of our life to achieve different goals and ambitions. Finding quality time for oneself and family has become extremely difficult nowadays due to busy work schedules and professional commitments. Even among our close friends or relatives, we may often encounter statements such as, 'I am busy right now, 'please call me later, I am in the office', 'sorry I couldn't join you today at the party due to work' etc. Most of us are caught up in a cycle of mechanical and monotonous work schedules due to different socio-occupational factors. It is not just the need to be successful, but the perseverance for a better survival keeps us working hard. But have we ever introspected the impact of this busy schedule on the inner psyche and its ramifications on interpersonal life? The bitter truth is seldom we do.

Disequilibrium in work and family life can lead to stress and burnout. Unable to balance personal, family and workspace could result in emotional disturbances. In the absence of good coping strategies, behaviour changes such as irritability, anger outbursts, impulsiveness, and impaired decision making can start setting in. Mood fluctuations, depression, anxiety and sleep disturbances are the common mental health problems frequently encountered in poor work-life balance. These psychological changes can significantly dent the person's self-esteem and confidence levels. Guilt feelings around the inability to fulfil the expectations can lead to negative thoughts, ideas of self-harm and suicide in some instances. Personality changes and frequent interpersonal conflicts can derail an individual's career irreversibly. An unhealthy lifestyle and substance abuse can perpetuate the ongoing distress, and subsequent physical and mental health complications become inevitable in such cases. All the above concerns have serious implications on an individual's performance and quality of life. Ultimately the aim to work for a better life can miserably fail without a fair work-life balance.

An interesting quote says, "The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule but to schedule your priorities" and this is high time our priority should be a healthy and balanced life. Work is undoubtedly essential, but not at the cost of personal and family life. Consider giving time to your interests and engaging with friends and family. Adopt healthy lifestyle changes, relaxation strategies and spirituality to rejuvenate yourself whenever the opportunity permits. Many a time, the working conditions may not be supportive

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or favourable, but the intent to balance work and life should not fade away. Beyond the individual level, the employers of various organizations and institutions should also be sensitive in this regard and devise appropriate measures to promote healthy work culture. The employees' mental health needs to be regularly assessed

in parallel to their performance. Encouraging and motivating people through awareness programs and training sessions on work-life balance will help achieve a productive outcome. Remember, no matter how busy you are, the work will still stay for tomorrow, but yourself, friends, and family may not.