

# Work-Life Balance

## PURPOSE

This activity is designed to be a self-reflection and personal evaluation exercise with the goal of exploring work-life balance issues and identifying steps to improve enjoyment and appreciation of accomplishments.

## CAUTION

Emphasize no Color Bashing. That means do not allow or promote making fun of any temperament, including negative comments or characterizations. Do not tolerate stereotyping. This is not the time to talk about weaknesses or to criticize the temperament.

## MATERIALS

- *Wheel of Life Worksheet*
- Colored pencils or markers
- *Work-Life Balance Reference Guide*

## APPROXIMATE TIME

50-60 minutes

## SUGGESTED GROUP SIZE

6-15 participants

## PROCESS

**Introduction/Purpose** (2 minutes):

Work-life balance is a term used to describe how satisfied someone is with accomplishments and the level of enjoyment they get from their life activities. Some individuals may recognize problems associated with work-life balance and believe they are unable to take steps toward achieving this balance. Other individuals may not recognize any problems associated with work-life balance in their lives. One thing is for sure, work and life are rarely equally balanced, and because our responsibilities and interests are always changing, so must our attempts at finding the balance that works for us. Unless a member of the team strongly desires to share their insight or perception, discussion will likely be minimal.

**Say:** *“What is work-life balance? Does that mean everything you do gets an equal amount of time and effort? Why or why not?”* Allow for a few comments to set the tone for the topic. *“Work-life balance likely means something different to every one of us. In our rush to ‘get it all done’ at the office and at home, with so many of us torn between juggling heavy workloads, managing relationships, family responsibilities, and squeezing in outside interests, it’s no surprise that work-life balance can seem like an impossible feat.*

*Work-life imbalance is a major contributor to the stress we experience in our lives. Stress can hurt our productivity, concentration, relationships, health, and overall sense of happiness.*

*While we all need a certain amount of stress to spur us on and help us perform at our best, the key to managing stress lies in that one magic word: balance. The term ‘balance’ doesn’t mean that everything is equal, however. Each of us has to learn the level of attention and effort needed in different areas of our lives so that we FEEL balanced. This is very personal and is different for everyone.*

*Not only is achieving a healthy work-life balance an attainable goal, but the rewards are immense. When we are balanced and happy, we are more productive, we take fewer sick days, and we are more likely to be engaged personally and professionally.”*

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# Work-Life Balance

## PROCESS

### Introduction/Purpose *(continued)*

**Say:** *“In this activity, we will examine some ‘life’ categories that take up your time, and evaluate your satisfaction with the amount of time you currently spend in each area—with the hope that you can generate ideas to bring them into better balance.”*

**Do:** Begin by sharing some personal insights on your own struggles with achieving work-life balance. You might conduct your own reference literature review of work-life balance and share with your team what you learned. After introducing the topic and establishing the importance of working toward work-life balance, ask the group to add any additional, immediate thoughts they may have on work-life balance.

### Activity Instructions (10–15 minutes):

#### Before the activity:

- Make copies of the *Wheel of Life Worksheet* and *Work-Life Balance Reference Guide*, enough for all participants
- Write discussion questions on flip-chart paper or white board
- Complete your own Wheel of Life to share (optional)

**Say:** *“The **Wheel of Life Worksheet** in front of you is a framework we are going to use to look at how we balance our life’s activities. Each wedge on this wheel represents a different area of your life. The eight sample areas are: money, career, physical environment (your home and/or office), personal growth, friends and family, significant other, health, and fun and creativity.*

*Take the next five minutes to rank your level of satisfaction in each of these areas. With the center of the circle being “0” and the outer edge as “10,” rank your level of satisfaction with each life area by drawing a line to create a new outer edge. “0” is complete dissatisfaction and “10” is complete satisfaction. If you want, you can color in the areas to illustrate your level of satisfaction with each life area. Remember, the ranking or outer edge you create can (and often will) be different for each life area. This colorful, interesting shape represents your current level of satisfaction in your life for each of these life areas.”*

**Do:** Have participants look at the Sample Wheel of Life illustration to give them a visual example of what they will be creating.

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# Work-Life Balance

## PROCESS

### Activity Instructions *(continued)*

**Say:** *“What do you think of your wheel? What does it look like? Here is mine, it looks like \_\_\_\_\_ (share your wheel if you’d like and share your observation about your own resulting wheel). It’s normal if it feels unbalanced, or misshapen. The purpose of the exercise isn’t to create a perfect circle or symmetrical shape—the purpose is simply to note which areas of your life need some attention. When we’re out of balance, it’s easy to over-generalize and say that that everything is out of whack. The Wheel of Life is a simple tool that quickly points you to the areas that may need attention so you FEEL more balanced.”*

### Discussion (10–20 minutes):

**Say:** *“With a partner sitting next to you, share your Wheel of Life and tell them what your initial gut reaction was as you finished it. Ask each other some of these questions:*

- *What area(s) do you want to work on?*
- *What is the best possible outcome?*
- *What is important about this to you?*
- *What qualities do you need to bring out of yourself in order to accomplish this?*
- *What is the first step?”*

**Do:** Give the pairs 10 minutes to share. After five minutes, ask them to switch so that the other person can share their wheel.

### Wrapping It Up (5–10 minutes):

**Say:** *“Would anyone like to share any “ah-ha” moments from this exercise?”*

**Do:** Allow volunteers to share their insights and possible action-items for better work-life balance. Ask them how those things will make a difference. Use the following questions to encourage reflection on how their Primary and Secondary Colors influence their Wheel of Life and the areas they have identified to improve. You can use these questions or some of your own:

- *How do you think your Primary Color affects your satisfaction rating in different areas? Pick an area and explain.*
- *Where do you see your Secondary Color affecting your satisfaction rating?*
- *How do your Primary/Secondary Colors influence your plan to bring your life into better balance?*

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# Work-Life Balance

## PROCESS

### Wrapping it Up *(continued)*

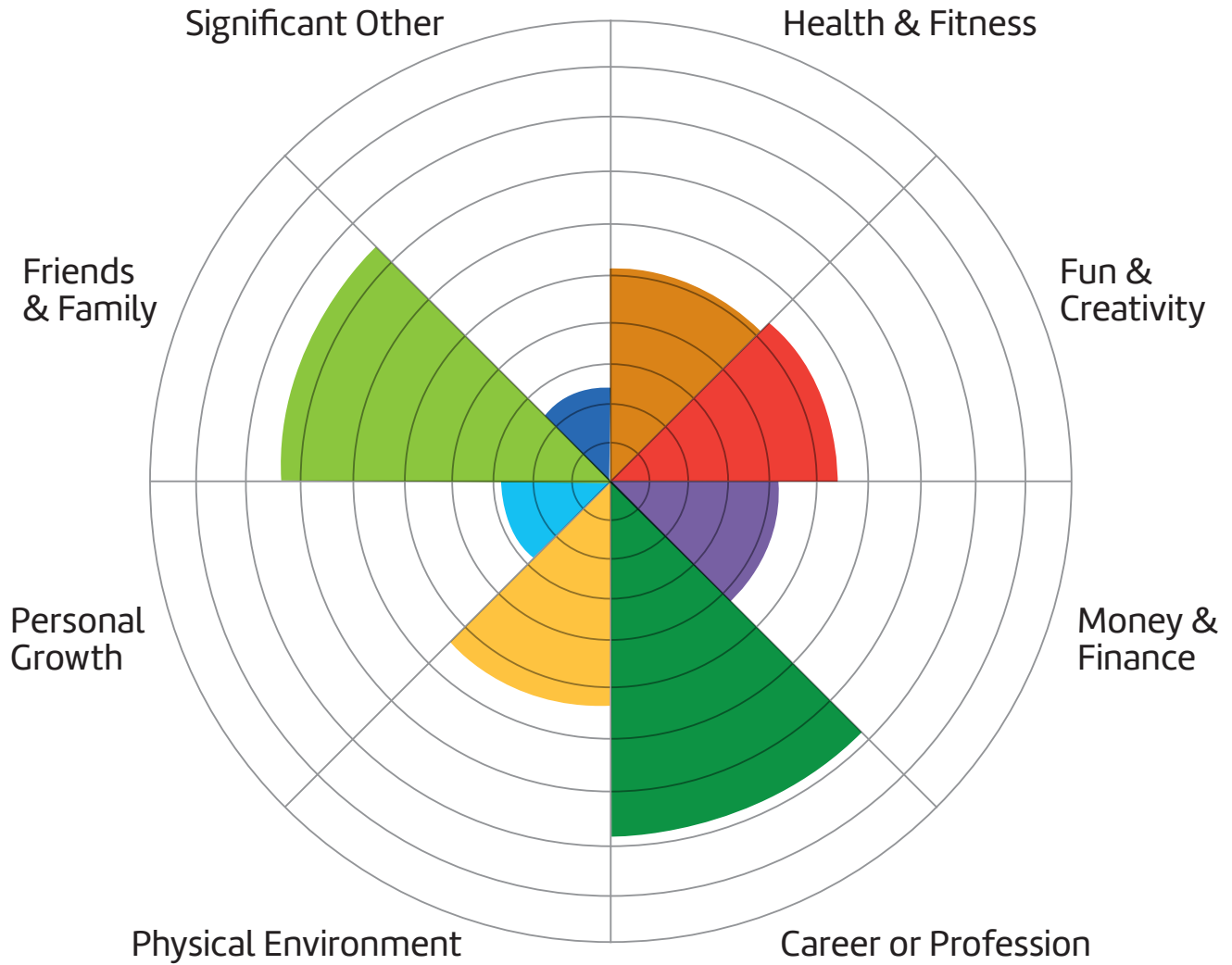
**Say:** *“These are great insights and activities to bring balance to your life. I encourage you to embrace even the little things that you can do to make a difference. Think about this quote from Annie Dillard, author of *The Writing Life*, “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” So, focus on your accomplishments and your enjoyment of those accomplishments every day.*

*Thank you for your participation in this short activity. Our goal is to keep Real Colors® alive and well in our organization and to use Real Colors® for more effective communication, improved morale, and increased productivity.”*



# Work-Life Balance

## Wheel-of-Life Sample



# Work-Life Balance

## Wheel-of-Life



GOLD	BLUE	ORANGE	GREEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Track your time for a week</b> – identify when you are most productive at work and when you are in need of rejuvenation. During your times of greatest productivity limit interruptions and plan in advance when you need a pick-me-up, which will allow you to get focused more quickly on the next task.</li> <li>• <b>Limit time-wasting activities</b> – once you've identified what is important in your life, create boundaries so you can devote quality time to these high-priority people and activities. Trim less important activities from your routine. If email sends you into a time-wasting spiral, establish rules to help keep you on track.</li> <li>• <b>Define success for yourself</b> – so if quality time with your family is an important part of that definition, adjust your schedule so you accomplish that goal instead of spending more time at work or simply clocking unfulfilling hours at home.</li> <li>• <b>Manage technology</b> – set aside specific times to respond to e-mail and catch-up on social media. Turn off your phone during personal time. Don't text or respond to email when you're at home spending quality time with your family. Make quality time TRUE quality time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Establish clear boundaries and communicate them to others</b> – In learning to say no, begin with baby steps and stay consistent with those boundaries. If you can't find the courage to turn down a meeting, set a boundary about how long you can stay. If you feel rude not stopping work every time someone comes by your desk, establish a "do not disturb hour."</li> <li>• <b>Managing your life is more important than managing your career</b> – take control of your personal and professional relationships to make your life, not just your job, the best it can be.</li> <li>• <b>Define success for yourself</b> – so if quality time with your family is an important part of that definition, adjust your schedule so you accomplish that goal. For example, you might choose to carve out equal and specific time frames to devote to each family member individually.</li> <li>• <b>Pay more attention to you</b> – As you are serving others, be certain it is not at the expense of your personal/professional life. You can put yourself first and not feel guilty. Attending to the needs of others is important, but serving your needs is important, too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Doless</b> – all work and no play or all play and no work are the epitome of not having work-life balance. Everything you do is done at a 110%, when you work – work hard; when you play – play hard. Everything must also come to an end – begin with the end in mind and stick to it. Moderation in everything is one key to achieving balance.</li> <li>• <b>If you are stuck, change it up</b> – invest your time and energy to decide what you can do differently for yourself. You may not like the options available to you, but you must be willing to take action. You are the master of your own destiny; if you choose to do nothing, nothing will change.</li> <li>• <b>Define success for yourself</b> – so if quality time with your family is an important part of that definition, adjust your schedule so you accomplish that goal, perhaps by including your family in your fun.</li> <li>• <b>Be wary of the "me" trap</b> – allowing others into your life (professionally or personally) means others must be your priority – there are times when you do not have to be first.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>It just makes sense</b> – being balanced means you are less stressed and healthier, overall. 77% of people in a 2015 study reported they regularly experience physical symptoms caused by stress, and 73% of people reported experiencing psychological symptoms caused by stress.*</li> <li>• <b>Shut it down</b> – continued processing related to the lack of congruence between the life you want and the life you actually have only inhibits professional/personal life balance. Make a choice (any choice) to break the cycle of being stuck in your head.</li> <li>• <b>Define success for yourself</b> – if quality time with your family is an important part of that definition, adjust your schedule so you accomplish that goal—perhaps by carving out specific times to spend with your family and not allowing yourself to be distracted by everything else going on in your mind.</li> <li>• <b>Be present</b> – wherever you are, be attentive and focused on what is around you—the only time that exists is NOW. Allowing yourself to be distracted by the past and the future dilutes your ability to be present. Fulfillment and peace only come with attention to the here and now. Accept circumstances without vestiges of emotion or over-analyzing. You may be surprised that through acceptance of what "is," you can more quickly move to resolution. The things that truly matter (beauty, love, creativity, joy, inner peace) arise from calming your thoughts and being present.</li> </ul>

\* (Sources: Statistic Brain Research Institute, American Institute of Stress, NY <http://www.statisticbrain.com/stress-statistics/>)

