

Signature News Autumn 2010

This month Signature psychologist Teresa Ash (pictured) responds to a number of client requests and discusses a very 21st century issue - work-life balance.



"Work-life balance" has become something of a buzz phrase in recent years. However the subject cannot be dismissed lightly. Balance is important in our lives – a fundamental human need without which we begin to display symptoms of distress.

Q: What exactly is work-life balance?

Work-life balance is about effectively managing the demands of "work" and "life" (leisure, family, friends, intimate relationship, spiritual development, day to day difficulties, major life stressors).

The balance goes out of kilter when the effort being expended either in work or outside work is greater or lesser than we would wish. In general, work-life balance becomes a problem when too much time is spent on work activities to the detriment of other areas of life.

Q: What are the signs that my balance is out of kilter?

Physical - feeling tired and drained most of the time; feeling sick a lot; frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches; change in appetite or sleep habits.

Emotional - sense of failure and self-doubt; a sense of futility - feeling helpless, trapped and defeated; loss of motivation; increasingly negative outlook; decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment.

Behavioural - withdrawing from responsibilities; isolating yourself from others; procrastinating; using food, drugs or alcohol to cope; taking your frustrations out on others; skipping work or coming in late and leaving early.

Q: I recognise some of these symptoms in myself. I have been feeling drained and exhausted for some time now. Is there anything I can do?

Following are 6 positive and simple actions to improve management of the demands at home and work.

- Adopt healthy eating, exercising, and sleeping habits. When you eat right, engage in regular physical activity, and get plenty of rest, you have the energy and resilience to deal with life's hassles and demands.
- Set boundaries. Don't overextend yourself. Learn how to say "no" to requests on your time. If you find this difficult, remind yourself that saying "no" allows you to say "yes" to the things that you truly want to do.
- Nourish your creative side. Creativity is a powerful antidote to burnout. Try something new, start a fun project, or resume a favourite hobby. Choose activities that have nothing to do with work.
- Review your work and life values regularly. What role does work play in your life? What role do you want it to play? How do you best integrate work and life?
- Scan your life for hidden energy drains. Friendships can often be a drain. A good friendship should leave you feeling energised. Seek friendships which provide positive energies.
- Take time to shift your energy back to yourself. Deep breathing can be carried out anywhere and has a positive effect in terms of



relaxation and energy shifting. Block quiet time into your diary and commit to it.

Work-life balance is a key area of wellbeing. If you or someone you care about is struggling with work-life balance contact us for support.

Work-life balance is discussed further on the [Signature website](#).

Enjoy the many pleasures of autumn. Your enquiries and questions are welcome.

Teresa Ash
Registered Psychologist
Cognitive Behaviour Therapist

Phone 09 480 8833 (office) or 021 166 3244 (mobile)

Email teresa@signaturepsychologies.co.nz

www.signaturepsychologies.co.nz



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Signature Psychologies - PO Box 34 573, Birkenhead, Auckland, 0626, New Zealand