

Tips for Better Work-Life Balance

Simple ways to disconnect from work

Communication Tips

1. Move your email app icon to the second screen of your phone and turn off notifications permanently or at least when you are out of office.
2. Turn off all sound/banner/screen notifications on apps and leave only the app notification (or none) so you control when to check them.
3. Make work-life balance a priority in your conversations with key contacts to reduce the stress of “missing something urgent”. Inform coworkers, volunteers, donors, veterinary clinics, key media contacts, law enforcement, and others of your communication guidelines (how best to reach you during the work day and plans for after hours communication).
4. Set boundaries for social media. The first time someone emails you on a social media platform or posts on social media regarding a work related issue, respond to the issue and follow-up with “If you wouldn’t mind using my work email for non-emergency related issues, I would so appreciate it. I try to keep social media separate from work whenever possible to avoid working 24/7!” If you have already created a habit with others to communicate on social media and find it is interfering in your personal time, you can simply let them know you’re trying to create more balance and to start sending communication to your work email.
5. Have a conversation with your supervisor about what is prohibiting you from taking time off. (ex. Fear of missing something urgent, repercussions if you miss a critical issue, how to mitigate those fears utilizing other staff members, lack of time to prep colleagues on the intricacies of your job, etc.
6. Set your work voicemail to state your “office hours” to avoid the perception that you are available 24/7.

After Hours Tips (this may be evenings or weekends dependent on your specific work schedule):

1. Schedule emails to go out on Monday morning so that others do not perceive you as available 24/7.
2. If you must check email, choose one day per weekend and a specific time to check.
3. Set an out of office message every weekend to alert people to your communication guidelines.

Categorize your vacation time:

1. During **Level 1 vacations**, you are completely unavailable. No email or phone calls. All issues are referred to others. Set a goal of one Level 1 vacation per year scheduled during your slowest work flow times. Leave your work phone at home or in a room in your home you don’t often visit.
2. During **Level 2 vacations**, you are available by phone only for urgent situations. Out of office messages refer people to your “vacation buddy” and/or supervisor. Goal of one Level 2 vacation per year scheduled during slow or moderate work flow times.
3. During **Level 3 vacations**, you are available by phone and are monitoring email for priority issues. Out of office messages prepare people that you may not answer their email until you return. Goal of as many Level 3 vacations as you need to remain balanced. These are common during three or four day weekends or during moderately busy work flow times.
4. When possible, block off the day before and day returning from vacation from all meetings or travel. If not possible, block off the afternoon of the day before and the morning of the day returning.



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