

# Work-Life Balance: Making a Living or Making a Life



## Relationships at Work and Home

The Center for Career & Life Transition  
*Building Bridges For Change*

A Resource From CCLT



[theCCLT.com](http://theCCLT.com)

How do you perceive your job and the work you do as compared to the life you lead every day? Do you think of your job as a set of financial handcuffs that provides you with a paycheck and little else? Or is work the means to create the life you want with people you want to spend your life with doing things you enjoy?

When you've been in a career or a job for many years, your work life can take over. Instead of first being a husband, wife, mother, father, sister or brother, your role as an architect, a teacher, an analyst, a truck driver, a dentist or a technician might be taking a front seat.

This identity shift can powerfully impact your decisions about a new career or job. In fact, your work identity can become the measure against which you value everything that gives your life meaning. As a result, the fear of change is amplified by the fear of losing your identity. When this happens, you become stuck in the paradigm of what is instead of opening yourself up to new possibilities of what could be.

One way to overcome this stuck-thinking is to rediscover those things that are essential for a happy, fulfilled you. As the saying goes, on your death bed you will not mourn the time you lost at work, but the time you lost with your loved ones.

Go through this simple questionnaire to discover whether you view work as a way to make a living or to make a life.

Answer each of the following questions by circling the score that is most like you, most of the time. After you answer the questions, add up the sum of your answers in the box at the end of the survey.

1. Most of my friends are people I work with, but I only see them while at work.

1	2	3	4	5
Totally	A little	Sometimes	Barely	Not at all

2. I feel more connected with people at work than at home.

1	2	3	4	5
Totally	A little	Sometimes	Barely	Not at all

3. I look to my work colleagues more than friends or family to help me feel valued and important.

1	2	3	4	5
Totally	A little	Sometimes	Barely	Not at all

4. My first thoughts each day are about work and the things I need to get done there.

1	2	3	4	5
Totally	A little	Sometime	Barely	Not at all

5. I feel happiest when I am working on a project at my job.

1	2	3	4	5
Totally	A little	Sometime	Barely	Not at all

6. I feel I can leave an unhappy job more easily than I can escape an unhappy home life.

1	2	3	4	5
Totally	A little	Sometime	Barely	Not at all

7. Disagreements at work are rational and civil; disagreements at home are emotional and painful.

1 Totally	2 A little	3 Sometimes	4 Barely	5 Not at all
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8. I am too busy with work to find time to exercise even though I know I should.

1 Totally	2 A little	3 Sometimes	4 Barely	5 Not at all
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9. I don't have time to eat a healthy meal during the work day even though I know I should.

1 Totally	2 A little	3 Sometimes	4 Barely	5 Not at all
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10. I feel in control of my life at work and out of control of my life at home.

1 Totally	2 A little	3 Sometimes	4 Barely	5 Not at all
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11. I can more easily accept faults from people at work than at home.

1 Totally	2 A little	3 Sometimes	4 Barely	5 Not at all
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12. I can tell people what I think and how I feel at work but I have to be on my guard at home.

1 Totally	2 A little	3 Sometimes	4 Barely	5 Not at all
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**TOTALS**

1 Totally	2 A little	3 Sometimes	4 Barely	5 Not at all	<b>SUM TOTAL</b>

- **If you scored 1-24**, you may be focusing more on making a living than on making a life. You may get more pleasure and satisfaction from your current work tasks and relationships than from your home life.
  - Consider how the value you place on your current job and relationships at work may contribute to or increase challenges you may be having at home or off the job.
  - Consider how this focus may also hold you back from exploring new career opportunities. By depending on work and work relationships for self-esteem and personal satisfaction, you may be creating unhealthy barriers to professional growth and development.
- **If you scored 25-36**, you may be in a conscious or unconscious decision-making place where what you value from work and what you value from home may be competing with each other.
  - Consider how you divide your time and energy between work and home. If you are too exhausted at the end of the work day to enjoy your life as much as you want, some tough decisions may be in order. Likewise, if your family responsibilities are preventing you from performing your job to its fullest potential, you may also face some tough decisions.
  - Consider how these decisions may sway your scores from one side of the continuum to the other—away from or closer to a healthy balance
- **If you scored 37-60**, you may be focusing more on making a life than on making a living. You may be using your work and career to build and strengthen your off-the-job life along with the joys and pleasures it brings you.
  - Consider what you are doing to consciously or unconsciously maintain a healthy balance between work and life.
  - Consider what you can do to maintain this balance, even if you are thinking about a career change, promotion, or other change in your current workplace.

Review the answers you gave for the specific questions relating to each of the four key categories below defining a healthy, happy life. Your scores in each category can give you insights into how to transition from working for a living to working for a life.

## Connectedness

One of the factors that indicates a healthy work-life balance is connectedness. Connectedness refers to the amount of connection you feel between yourself and others—the extent to which you believe others understand you and you understand others. This feeling of connectedness contributes to self-worth and a sense of feeling valued and important.

The following questions refer to connectedness.

1. Most of my friends are people I work with, but I only see them while at work.
2. I feel more connected with people at work than at home.
5. I feel happiest when I am working on a project at my job.

If your total score for the three questions relating to CONNECTEDNESS is less than 8, you may want to consider expanding your personal network. Finding and making friends takes time and energy, and when all or the majority of your friends are work friends, all your eggs are in one basket. If you have no time for hobbies or activities where you can meet new friends, you are out of balance. What did you like to do in your balanced life that you would like to return to? Where can you go or what can you join that won't require too much time but will give you an opportunity to grow friendships that will help you be happy? What do you need to see or hear from your family or the mirror that helps you know this is a truth and you need to take it seriously?

## Health

One of the factors that indicates a healthy work-life balance is your ability to keep your body in a safe physical condition. A safe physical condition refers to the amount of sleep you get each night, the type and amount of calories you consume every day, and the amount of physical activity you engage in to keep your body productive. Spending time keeping your body in a safe

physical condition contributes to your ability to keep balance between reason and emotion, as well as having the energy needed to achieve both work and life objectives.

The following questions refer to health.

4. My first thoughts each day are about work and the things I need to get done there.
8. I am too busy with work to do to exercise even though I know I should.
9. I don't have time to eat a healthy meal during the day at work even though I know I should.

If your total score for the three questions relating to HEALTH is less than 8, you may want to consider how your physical condition may be contributing to any emotional or relationship issues. You already know that smoking, drinking to excess, eating too much, too little or the wrong things, and not having restful sleep all cause physical harm that can lead to illness and death. There is nothing more important than your health. Once it has been compromised, it can take longer and more energy and determination than you ever expected to get it back. What do you need in order to eat properly, keep your muscles fit, and keep your mindset in a healthy place? Do you need a work-out buddy, a doctor's advice or ominous predictions, a spiritual connection or reconnection? What do you need to see or hear from your family or the mirror that helps you know this is a truth and you need to take it seriously?

## Self-Esteem

One of the factors that indicates a healthy work-life balance is the opinion you have of yourself and the value you place on your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Self-esteem is reinforced, challenged, or damaged by your perception of how others respond to you. Being open and honest about your opinions and capabilities while continually striving to be and do better is how you grow healthy self-esteem.

The following questions refer to self-esteem.

3. I look to my work colleagues more than friends or family to help me feel valued and important.
6. I feel I can leave an unhappy job more easily than I can escape an unhappy home life.
12. I can tell people what I think and how I feel at work but I have to be on my guard at home.

If your total score for the three questions that relate to SELF-ESTEEM is less than 8, you may want to reflect on what you believe is most important to you and why. If you believe you can do something through wishful or magical thinking, then a sense of arrogance may be interfering with real dreams and the hard work required to achieve them. If you believe that you can't do something that you have or could have the capability to do, your self-esteem needs bolstering. What are you hearing from others that is either discouraging or encouraging you to get into a healthy balance? Research continues to prove that our beliefs about what others think of us are often higher or lower than they actually score out to be. Which of these messages do you want to listen to and which do you need to take with a gracious "grain of salt?" What do you need to see or hear from your family or the mirror that helps you know this is a truth and you need to take it seriously?

## Stress

One of the factors that indicates a healthy work-life balance is the amount of stress you feel as a result of your own or others' thoughts or actions. One of the most common causes of stress is the feeling of being out of control of your life or the people or events that impact it. Discovering the root cause of these feelings and then finding healthy ways to add a feeling of self-control is one way to reduce stress.

The following questions refer to stress.

7. Disagreements at work are rational and civil; disagreements at home are emotional and painful.
10. I feel in control of my life at work and out of control of my life at home.
11. I can more easily accept faults from people at work than at home.

If your total score for the three questions that relate to STRESS is less than 8, you may want to consider how you can impact a key factor that contributes to stress—namely the difference between your work-self and home-self. Too many people feel "safer" in the company of workmates where they are allowed and even encouraged to show a superficial or contrived self. But at home, the real self can emerge. The real self may not have the patience that a paycheck requires or the ability to withhold judgment that a manager demands. When the home self is significantly opposite to the work self, high levels of stress can emerge. This stress can lead to actions and behaviors that unintentionally increase an unhealthy work-life balance. Fear can contribute to withdrawal, avoidance, or dishonesty, with yourself or with others. Anger can



contribute to argumentative responses to others' opinions or requests. Being patient and honest with yourself as well as with the people who love you is the start of a healthy balance. What do you need to see or hear from your family or the mirror that helps you know these are truths and you need to take them seriously?