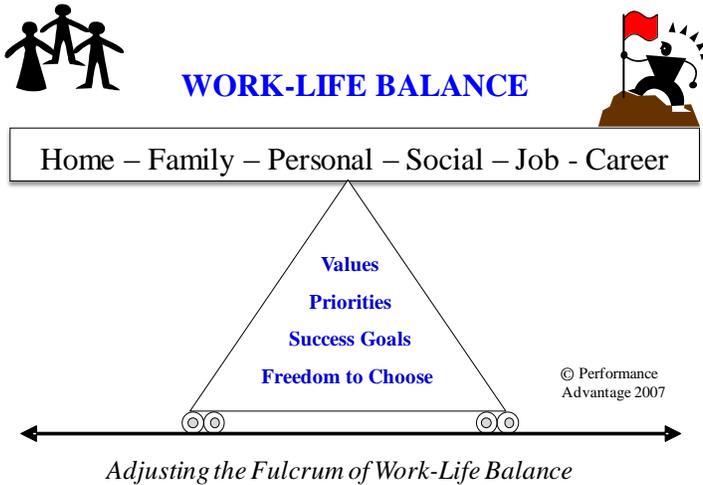


AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, TEXAS PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOC.

**How to Achieve-Maintain Work-Life Balance**

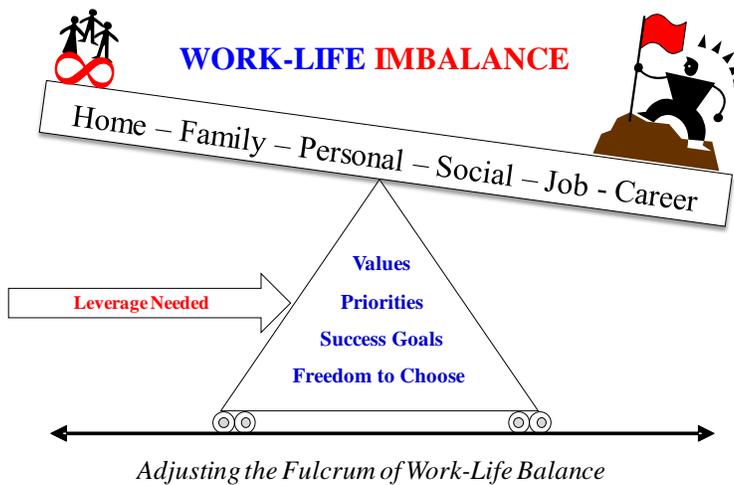


The problem that most people have with work-life balance is not the competing demands for time-attention but rather the lack of ‘guiding rules’ to manage these conflicts as a ‘dynamic process’. Achieving balance is like two people moving up and down on a teeter totter. Maintaining constant or perfect equilibrium is not realistic or practical, but applying equal-and-opposite force to an imbalance keeps the process of working smoothly. We can manage our own work-life ‘balancing process’ by:

- 1) Treating temporary peaks in work or home demands as ‘time debts’ that must be repaid
- 2) Socially contracting with people at work and home to accept variation in priorities/schedules
- 3) Recognizing that there is nothing wrong with doing a little work at home or bringing a little bit of home life to the work place
- 4) Leveraging time to conform to our important life values instead of ‘urgent pressures’
- 5) Knowing that we stay in control by choosing actions that produce balanced consequences

When the weight of extra work throws home life out of balance just consider if your choice of responses and the consequences of your decision are consistent with your important values. Temporary imbalances are perfectly normal, like the ups and downs of a teeter totter, as long as you stay in control of the leverage

**Adjusting for Work-Life Imbalance**



**Work Demands Facts (American Psychological Assoc.)**

Research by Galinsky (2005) suggested that one third of U.S. employees are chronically overworked. Furthermore, twenty percent of employees reporting high overwork levels say they make a lot of mistakes at work. A study by Randstad in 2007 showed 24% of employees work six or more hours per week without pay, and 47% of management does the same. Other statistics reveal serious, growing balance problems:

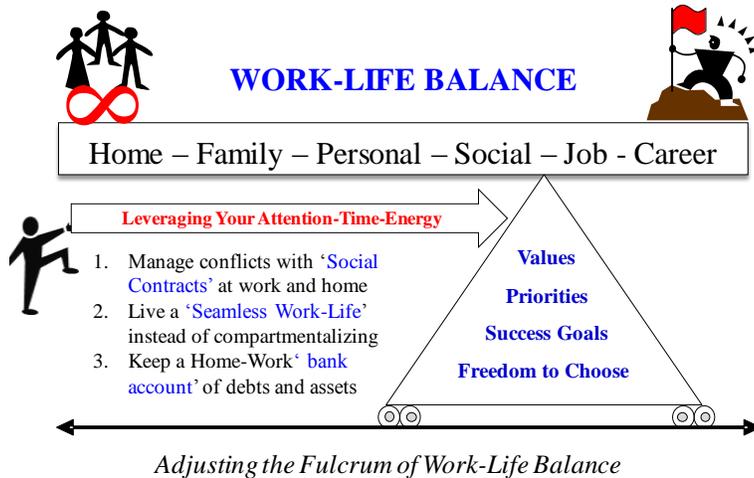
- a) Eighteen percent of U.S. workers put in more than 48 hours a week (International Labor Organization, 2007).
- b) Between 1977 and 2002, the combined weekly work hours of dual-earner couples with children increased by an average of 10 hours per week, from 81 to 91 hours
- c) Forty percent of employees said their workload increased in the past 12 months (Metlife, 2010).
- d) 39% of employees experiencing high work levels say they feel very angry toward their employers versus only 1% who experience low overwork levels (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 2).
- e) Eighty-three percent of e-mail users admit to checking their mail once a day while actually on vacation.

How to Gain and Maintain Balance

The principle of achieving-maintaining balance is leveraging your Attention time Energy where it will best enable, enhance, and perpetuate your work-life success. This point of optimum leverage is your *Fulcrum of Work-Life Balance*, which is composed of 4 personal insights: 1) **Values** – what is important to you in life, 2) **Priorities** – what results are most important and urgent to achieve at this time, 3) **Success Goals** – your targets for Performance, Growth, Satisfaction, and Well Being, and 4) **Freedom to Choose** – the realistic amount of control you have to take action, decide what will happen to you, and make choices. This ‘balancing process’ must be dynamic in nature because the demands on your Attention-Time-Energy are constantly changing.

In effect people who achieve and maintain balance do not use any 'secret formula' rather they continuously adjust/compensate for the IMBALANCE that inevitably occurs when you try to meet Home expectations, Personal Needs, and Work demands. As you make these compensating adjustments remember that you cannot do this alone. You need to share information about your plans and conflicts with work-life stakeholders who are affected by your choices. Typically when they know what Attention-Time-Energy conflicts you are facing they are more supportive and understanding of the choices you make – especially if you invite their inputs into your decision. While it is impossible to satisfy all your work-life stakeholders all the time it is possible to get consensus on your choices so that stakeholders can better appreciate/accept the fact that your choices may not be perfect for them.

## Gain Balance By Leveraging Your Attention-Time-Energy

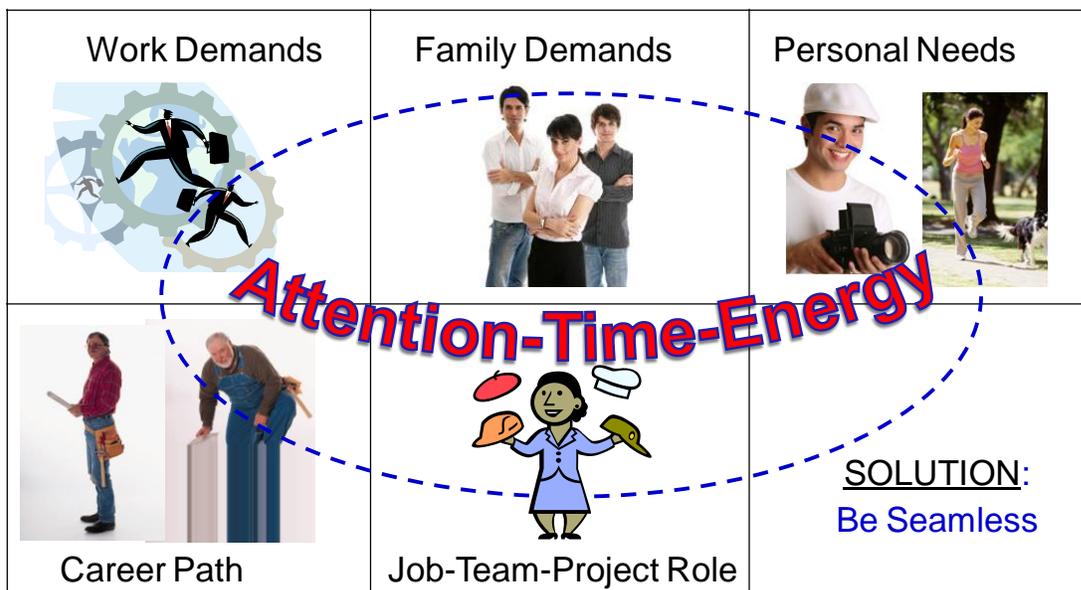


## Some Interesting Facts about Work-Life Balance

- a) 52% of employees say that job demands interfere with family-home responsibilities; 43% say that home responsibilities interfere with job performance (APA).
- b) Employees who are responsible for child-elder care are at a greater risk for depression
- c) 30% of employees said family and relationship issues were the most likely cause for taking a "mental health day," (taking a day off to recover and recharge)
- d) Employees with eldercare responsibilities cost employers an additional 8% in health care costs
- e) Over 30% of working mothers would take a pay cut to spend more time with their children, and 25% have missed two or more significant events in their child's life in the last year (CareerBuilder 2009).
- f) 31% of working fathers say they would leave their jobs if their spouse/partner could financially support the family and another 30% would take a cut in pay to spend more time with their children.

## Satisfaction from a 'Seamless' Work-Life

You will not achieve Balance by compartmentalizing your work-life demands/priorities into neat and rigid **blocks of time**. A more effective strategy is to be "Seamless".



*SEAMLESS* balance means that your home and work life flow and ebb in a continuous stream of flexible choices. Any attempt to compartmentalize home and work into discrete blocks of fixed hours will lead to imbalance and frustration. Why? Because there is no such thing as a 9-5 job for a successful person and there are no 'rules of life' that say family time must always wait for an available opportunity. The right time to do the right thing and be in the right place depends on changing priorities. The situation, guided by your values determines the correct work-life choices. Some days you stay late and take work home to finish after dinner; other days you may leave a bit earlier to be at your child's game or play. This is being seamless.