



Work Life-Balance and Burnout in College Students

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BACKGROUND

"We need to do a better job of putting ourselves higher on our own 'to do' list."

Michelle Obama

What is Work-Life Balance?

Work-life balance is the state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritizes the demands of one's career, education, and the demands of one's personal life. It is very common for people to experience a poor work-life balance due to increased responsibilities at work or school, working longer hours, increased responsibilities at home, and having children. There are several potential adverse effects of having a poor work-life balance. One potential consequence is fatigue. Being fatigued can lower productivity and decision making. Another potential consequence is poor health. Stress can worsen the symptoms of a preexisting health condition. Increased stress can also lead to substance misuse. By finding balance, you can significantly limit health concerns. Some people also experience the loss of time with family and friends when they do not have work-life balance. Overworking ourselves can negatively affect our personal relationships. Disconnecting from work and focusing on the present moment allows individuals to maintain healthy relationships with family and friends.

Work-Life Balance and Burnout

The workplace can become very toxic due to strict deadlines and long hours. These external factors can lead to burnout. Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. Burnout also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment as well as a loss of personal identity. Potential causes of burnout include lack of control, unclear job expectations, dysfunctional workplace dynamics, lack of social support, and work-life imbalance. Burnout is becoming increasingly common among professionals and students. Unaddressed burnout can have significant health implications such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.



Students are equally at risk for burnout. Developing a healthy work-life balance has been found to reduce burnout among undergraduates. Students with symptoms of burnout may exhibit a lack of motivation, exhaustion, and poor academic performance. Many college students attribute their feelings of burnout to their overbearing course load. Other students reported a lack of motivation, family issues, financial burdens, work, or problems with a professor. To support students, it can be helpful for professors to periodically “check-in” with students to assess their burnout levels and colleges can work to create learner-centered environments that allow students to vocalize their concerns regarding burnout. Although these suggestions are comprehensible, changes made on an institutional level are often prolonged. In the meantime, college students can create balance in their lives by increasing sleep, taking on a reasonable course load, and creating a support system.

TIPS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Tips for Creating Work-Life Balance in College

According to the Balance Career Writer, [Penny Lorretto](#), in her article [Balancing Between College, Work, and Personal Life](#), college students need to find ways to escape the daily grind. Creating a work-life balance will help you function more productively throughout the semester. Here are a few simple and inexpensive ways college students can renew their energy:

- Reading a good book
- Watching a funny movie or TV show
- Taking a walk or a run, going to the gym
- Having a heart-to-heart talk with a friend
- Taking a nice hot bubble bath

Setting boundaries is another effective way to improve work-life balance. By setting limits and looking after yourself, you can achieve the work-life balance that's best for you. Here are a few strategies that have been provided by the [Mayo Clinic](#)*:

- **Manage your time.** Give yourself enough time to get things done. Don't overschedule yourself.
- **Learn to say "no."** Evaluate your priorities at school and at home and try to shorten your to-do list. College students tend to be very involved in campus activities. If the demands of social organizations become overwhelming, consider requesting an extension or declining requests.



- **Find time to detach.** Taking online classes or frequently using technology to connect to school when you're at home can cause you to feel like you're always at school. This can lead to chronic stress. When done working each day, detach and transition to home life by changing your outfit, taking a drive or walk, or engaging in self-care activities.
- **Consider your options.** Ask your professors for an extension, if necessary, attend office hours, collaborate with other students, or find other methods to lighten your load. The more control you have over your hours, the less stressed you're likely to be.

** Please note that these strategies have been adapted to be more applicable to college students*

RESOURCES

Balance Between College, Work, and Personal Life: The Balance Careers created a blog that aims to assist students in creating balance between their personal and academic lives. The blog details the importance of reducing stress, creating balance, managing stress and general tips. The goal was to assist students in balancing coursework, roommates, co-curricular activities, finances, and personal relationships. [Balancing Between College, Work, and Personal Life](#)

School-Life Balance: The Student Assistance Program at Johns Hopkins University encourages their students to optimize their college experience and find balance between their many roles and responsibilities. The blog describes how having school-life balance positively impacts academics, relationships, work, and your success in getting accepted into a professional program. The document continues with tips for stress reduction, the risks of perfectionism, and managing conflict. [School-Life Balance](#)



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