Maintaining Healthy Work-Life Balance: A Lofty Goal, but How?

TIME is a limited commodity… everyone has multiple demands on their time. However, prioritization is the main key to managing time as well as maintaining a personal balance that suits the individual. Remember - we have the ability to emphasize one endeavor over another. Time spent on activities, both career and personal, can and should reflect the importance we place on our various demands.

As the holiday season and the end of the year approach, many faculty members may find themselves overextended. Personal and family obligations may feel at odds with academic and professional duties. Below, some tips to strike a better balance amongst the commitments faculty face.

Make a list Place family events as well as work obligations on your ongoing calendar. Maintain to-do lists of the most pressing items, and refer to it as needed. Make your lists and your calendars work for you; some people find old-fashioned notepads work best, and others use technology to their advantage via apps and tools such as Outlook.

Know when to say no Completing an Individual Opportunity Plan helps measure opportunities against your goals. If a request or new project does not serve your needs, critically evaluate its necessity. Whenever possible, politely decline responsibilities that bear no relationship to your personal goals and priorities.

Leverage your effective time Assess your own habits. Do you prefer working early mornings, when your office or lab is quiet? Are you a night owl who can work effectively from your home late into the evenings? When possible, shift your most demanding work into times that maximize your personal effectiveness. Communicate your plans with your leadership and reassess your schedule over time.

Minimize interruptions Email is a constant intrusion if you allow it to be. Set boundaries on your work related emails; avoid checking emails constantly, but rather at set times of your choice. Similarly, enjoy your personal and leisure time without allowing interruptions; maintaining a presence and a focus will help loved ones feel you are truly dedicating your personal time to them when possible.

Care for yourself Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is key to helping manage stress levels. Eat a balanced diet, finding ways to fit in healthy dietary choices into your busy day. Exercise consistently, and get enough sleep. Making these simple healthy choices can mean the difference between mental wellbeing and healthy coping, or their undesirable opposites.