

Why We Need To Talk Work/Life Balance



By [Joelle K. Jay@JoelleKJay](mailto:JoelleKJay)



Recently when I was giving a keynote talk to a Silicon Valley tech company, I asked the question, “How many of you want a better work/life balance?” *Every* hand in the room shot up.

I then asked, “How many of you believe you *have* work/life balance?” Every hand in the room dropped down.

Test it. What if I ask *you*?

Do you want better work/life balance?

Do you believe you have it?

If you are one of the lucky ones who are living their lives with a sense of serenity and ease, be sure to pass on your secrets! And if you're not, know that you can get there. Either way, often the first step on the path to achieving that elusive work/life balance is to *talk about it*.

Talk to Your Friends and Co-Workers

When I encourage you to pass on your work/life balance secrets, I actually do mean it – and if you're seeking those secrets, ask around for ideas.

It may sound too simple, but I can tell you from experience that it works. The breakthroughs you so desperately want may be only a conversation away. All you have to do is take the initiative.

In that Silicon Valley room, seeing how the participants felt about work/life balance, I gave them some time to *talk about it*. In small groups they simply shared their best ideas – the ways they, individually, had saved themselves time and found better balance. In the span of just a few minutes, ideas were shared, collected, and adapted around the room. You could practically see the light bulbs going off as participants racked up ideas to save themselves hours and hours of time.

One participant learned how to better *set expectations*. Her co-worker at the table told her how she starts every meeting by telling everyone exactly how much time she had, and she sticks to it – saving herself at least an hour of meeting overflow time per day in the process. What would you do with an extra hour a day? Could setting expectations in some area of your life help you, too?

Another participant discovered she could save two hours a day by *shifting her work hours* to avoid traffic. Bay Area commutes are notoriously long, and for a driver whose commute could last 90 minutes each way, a simple change in those work hours could save her, her company and her family (day care!) time and money. Would your company prefer to have you wasting time in traffic, or contributing meaningfully to work on a slightly different schedule? Would your family be happier to have you home more? Would you? If your company is open to flexible work hours, this is something worth bringing up to management.

Perhaps neither of these suggestions fit for you. If you've read this far and aren't getting any new ideas about setting expectations or shifting your work hours, you've proven my point: you need to get

out there and find *your own* new ideas. Find the ideas that *do* help you break through. Want work/life balance? *Talk about it. Ask for ideas. Go get your light bulb moment.*

Talk to your Partner

Maybe what you need at this stage isn't to get more ideas, or maybe you already have ideas but just need to put them to work.

One of the key people to involve in this discussion is your partner – your significant other or even your business partner. These are people whose lives are intimately entwined with your own. Are there agreements you need to make? Changes? Requests? Many people go through their days stressed and strapped for time, assuming there's no way to change the situation, but it could be that if you have the courage to talk to your partner, the two of you can come up with new solutions.

Talk to Your Boss

Just as we make assumptions about what *is* or *isn't possible* with our partners, we can also make assumptions about what is and isn't possible at work.

Again, when I think about all the leaders I have coached to save them time and help them balance their lives for a more fulfilling and impactful approach, the ideas start rolling.

There was Tom, who brought his baby to work at times when his wife was traveling.

There was Renee, who cut back on travel by mastering the virtual meeting.

There was Kurt, who gave up endless hours of stress, worry and busyness by focusing his role and reconfiguring his team.

As another reminder, the point isn't that these strategies are the ones that would work for you – although they might – but that all of these strategies came out of new agreements these leaders developed with their boss.

Having a discussion around what you want your job and home life combination to look like is a great step in the right direction. In doing this, you will be able to design the best strategy for your time and find the balance you never thought possible.

Let's Start Talking!

If you're ready to create a better balance, [try these 7 shortcuts](#) for maximizing your time. You'll be amazed at what's possible when you do.

PUBLISHED ON: APRIL 20, 2018

Dr. Joelle Jay is a principal with the Leadership Research Institute, as well as an executive coach, keynote speaker, and the author of *The Inner Edge: The Ten Practices of Personal Leadership*. Joelle specializes in the advancement of executive women, and she is proud to have supported the development of top talent into positions of leadership for many successful companies, including MetLife, Adobe, and Microsoft.