

# Find Work-Life Balance With More Life, Not Less Work

Do you feel like your work and your life are out of balance?

Prepare to receive a whole load of advice about what you should **not** be doing.

The most popular ideas about work-life balance are about subtracting: “**work less.**” “**Spend less time away from home.**” “**Think less about work.**” “**Make work less important.**”

I think this advice misses something important about the nature of work-life balance.

**The real stress we feel - the stress about what we call “work-life balance” - is the stress we feel when we worry that parts of ourselves are being neglected, are dying off, aren’t growing.**

Humans are made for more than just one purpose. We aren’t just marketers/janitors/teachers/factory workers. Most of us have artistic potential. Most of us can train our bodies to do amazing athletic feats. Most of us can form deep, lasting relationships. Most of us can use our thoughts to inspire others and create new possibilities.

For most people\*, those parts of ourselves aren’t dying because of work (work actually keeps alive some of the best parts of ourselves, and to stifle it would be a shame). **They’re dying because we fail to use our time outside of work well.** They’re dying because, while we have purposeful action in our work, we frequently aren’t cultivating purposeful action in the other areas of our lives and selves.

There are real tradeoffs of work time vs. home time, but odds are there are already large chunks of your “life” balance that you fail to use well. Your nights? Your mornings? Your weekends? How much of them go into activities you later forget? How many of them go into television watching, social media scrolling, and other consumption that does nothing for your development as a human? These things actually make us feel crappier when we’re done with them.

I’m not going to get on your case and tell you to start using your Netflix time to do more work for your company, or even for your own “professional development goals”. **I am going to tell you to use that time to do more “work” to develop the other parts of yourself that matter.**

There are plenty of ways to use the free time you DEFINITELY HAVE in a way that develops the “life” side of your work-life balance. **And you can do them all without subtracting**

**from your “work.”** Because what we really need is not less work, but different kinds of work. **And we can use the same drive that motivates us at work to build better lives at home.**

Here are a few ideas of directed, purposeful, creative work you can do that will immediately improve your sense of work-life balance:

1. **Write letters to best friends you haven’t seen in a few months/a few years.**
2. **Volunteer to bring someone a meal, repair someone’s home, or host a charity event.**
3. **Explore a part of your city you haven’t seen before.**
4. **Cook food for friends.**
5. **Plan a party and throw a party.**
6. **Take care of your vehicle’s maintenance/**
7. **Take up a new skill or practice, like yoga or basketball.**
8. **Go for a hike.**
9. **Make homemade ice cream.**
10. **Reorganize your closets.**
11. **Host a movie night.**
12. **Journal or write regularly.**
13. **Create art - drawing, painting, photography, sculpting, what-have-you**
14. **Read a good book.**
15. **Get together with likeminded people to discuss ideas and challenge one another.**
16. **Help out a stranger on the side of the road.**

None of these ideas are related to “work,” but they are real workouts for all the potential “you’s” you want to develop. **Always be creating.** If you do, work-life balance stress can hardly cross your mind.

More often than you’d think, there is no tradeoff between passionate work and a passionate life. In my experience, even my busiest weeks at work can feel healthy when I’m developing my life proactively. Even my least intense weeks at work can feel dry and sap my energy when I’m not. You don’t have to make work-life balance a matter of settling for less. You don’t have to settle for idle time. You don’t have to settle for just consumption.

*\* Yes, there are people who really do need to back off from work in order to live life. The tradeoff between work and life exists, but this article is just suggesting that it isn’t as much of a tradeoff as most people assume.*