

# Work life balance the diagnosis english language essay

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The world today has changed a lot from the world that we knew some 5-6 decades ago. At that time, when a couple decided to live in or marry, the man would most likely to be the provider of the family and the woman would be the home maker. Both had more or less clear-cut roles and expectations. Jobs were as demanding, with many men doing overtime to ensure a better income for the family. However, since the women stayed at home, the children rarely lacked care or attention. Work - family life balance was a problem at that time as well; but it was managed with vacations, traditional get-togethers, and other family intensive activities where the whole family spent quality time together. In modern days, where consumerism has reached gargantuan proportions money has become one of the most important 'to-have' commodities. Recession, college drop outs, ready availability of cheap human resources has made jobs difficult to find. Whatever jobs are available - unless you are highly qualified and have adequate experience and expertise - come with low pay checks, which means you would need to work more than one job, or longer hours. Add to all this, commuting time and overtime and you will end up with absolutely no time to even rest; forget about time to spend with your family. This is not the worst part; there is more. Today both life partners work equally hard and the children are generally taken care by nannies and baby sitters. Both parents try to make up for the lack of quality time with gifts, higher allowance, and more permissiveness. However, the guilt and overall personal dissatisfaction that they are neglecting the family remains. Sooner or later, this dissatisfaction spills over into the professional life and affects it negatively. To regain your mental peace, you will need to pay more attention to your

relationships, to your spouse, children, bonding time with your family and so on. In other words, unless there you find a way to balance your work and home-life you will end up feeling miserable, dissatisfied and frustrated in every aspect of your life. This e-book attempts to show you how you can achieve this work-life balance. This e-book is designed to stop you from reaching that point of no return where you lose your peace of mind, your family, job satisfaction and even your job. This e-book is designed to save your life - literally.

## **WORK-LIFE BALANCE – THE DIAGNOSIS**

Before we go any further we need to check out where are you with this issue.

Is your work and personal life balanced well enough, or is it already a lopsided affair? Let us start with a questionnaire that will help diagnose the problem correctly. Answer with ' Yes' and ' No'. Does your work take more time of your day than you would want to give? Do you carry your work home and continue to encroach on to your family time (say, do you have to finish projects, follow up on business phone calls, emails, and so on)? If your answer yes, how many hours per week are used in this manner? 1-4 hours 5-9 hours 10+ hours If you are a home-entrepreneur how many hours over the acceptable 40 hours per week you put in? 1-4 hours 5-9 hours 10+ hours Do you often find yourself worrying about work when you are supposed to spend time with your spouse/ family (dinner time/ watching TV together/ vacations/ etc.? Have you sacrificed things you used to love to do because you do not have any more time due to work? If yes, how many of these pleasure activities you have forgone? 1-3 activities 4-6 activities 7+ activities Do you have the time to exercise, eat healthy and sleep well at night? Are you

satisfied with how much time you are giving your loved ones? Do you find the time to do personal things that are important to you (or do you postpone them indefinitely because you are too busy with work)? Would you say that you are happy - in general terms? Would you say that this is the life you would dreamt for yourself (are you content with how things are? If you could, would you want to live in this way forever? The score: Give yourself 1 point for every ' Yes' answered to questions 1-5; the lower score the better. Give yourself 1 point for every ' No' answered to questions 6-10; the lower score the better. If you score higher than 3, it means trouble; it means that your work is stealing your life away from you and unless you plan to do something about it right now, things will go worse.

## **How Does The Imbalance Affect Your Life**

In you are going through life focusing solely on your work and neglecting your family life, you will sooner or later feel restless, frustrated, anxious, unhappy and dysfunctional. While it is true, that some people find fulfillment in the success they achieve in the professional life, if they do not have enough happiness drawn from their relationships to balance the professional high, sooner than later they would feel acute frustration. This frustration would gradually but surely spill in their professional life and affect that too. In the end, the person who starts out as an workaholic would end lonely, frustrated and quite unfulfilled no matter how successful professionally. Too much work would cause stress to build up to dangerous levels; and stress is a definitely killer. Normally stress would and could be neutralized by

pleasurable activities such as time spent with spouse, children, hobbies, vacations, meditation, and so on.

## **Physical Effects Of Stress**

Stress is a very serious issue and if not countered in time, it could affect your health seriously, sometimes with fatal results. This is why today, the most important and golden keywords you keep hearing are de-stressing, meditation, balance of work and personal life. If and when you are stressed you will experience one or more of the following symptoms: Eating Disorders - you would either start eating too much or you would start hating the sight of food. The result is that you would either put on weight or lose weight drastically. Of course, along with this disorder would come many associated health problems. Fatigue - you would find that you feel fatigued no matter what you do. Even when you have not done much physically, you would still feel drained out and lacking the energy required to get through the day. No matter what you do, you would feel pooped. High Blood Pressure - today, more and more young people (in the age bracket of 30-45 years old) suffer from high blood pressure. While some would point out that this would be the result of unhealthy eating habits of today's population, doctors admit that stress is quoted as the no. 1 factor for this problem. Heart Problems - just 3-4 decades ago, heart problems, cardiac arrests, strokes, angina and so on were problems experienced by people who passed their 55th year. Today, the age has come down to as low as 35. Why? Because stress is causing artery clogging and cholesterol build up, which in turn leads to severe heart problems; sometime fatal. Infections, Allergies and Skin Problems - stress

lowers your immune system and makes you vulnerable to infections, allergies and skin problems. You will find that many people suffer from asthmatic attacks, flues, fungal and bacterial infection, various allergies, skin rashes (such as eczema, psoriasis, etc), and so on. With the immune system dysfunctional the body is vulnerable to all types of germs and viral attacks.

Diarrhea/ Constipation - stress heavily interferes with digestion and absorption of food matter. As a result you would end up either suffering from constipation or loose motions (diarrhea) intermittently without any apparent causes.

Sleep Disorders - stress keeps the body in the flight-or-fight survival mode and hence, you would feel high strung all the time. This mode of existence would not allow you to relax enough so you could sleep well. Most people who are affected by stress cannot sleep the required 4-6 hours per night. For others, sleep becomes the safety cocoon and find that they are sleepy all the time; however, even if they sleep more than 10 hours, they would still feel awful.

Fertility And Sexual Disorders - stress holds your body in the fight-or-flight mode, which requires that the blood supply be primarily directed to the most vital organs. Skin, reproduction system are among the non-vital organs/ systems that get second hand attention at such time. If stress levels are maintained at high levels, fertility levels, sexual health, libido start suffering.

Aging Signs - the skin, hair and nails are other aspects that would suffer greatly during this time. The hair would look dull, nails would be brittle, skin overall will show signs of aging. Add to this the fact that most people in today's age smoke, drink alcohol and eat unhealthy and you could draw your own inference of the impact these issues added to stress can do to the skin.

Inflammation - stress lowers the immune systems

owing to which inflammation takes over the body. It starts with simple headaches (inflammation of sinus membranes) and gradually spreads to back pain, joint pain and generally feeling pain all over the body.

## **Emotional Effects Of Stress**

Besides the physical effects caused by stress - which are most often faster and easier to observe - there are emotional effects, too. Here are a few that would develop gradually owing to overload of stress: Depression And Mood Swings - continuous stress would keep you mentally tense through the day. The stress would influence the hormone production in the body, which couples with sleep and eating disorders would result in sudden mood swings and depression. Anxiety Attacks And Nervousness - no matter how good you are at your work, continuous stress would result in unexplained feelings of ' butterflies in the stomach', which if left untreated will culminate into anxiety attacks. Memory And Concentration Problems - you will observe that stress would affect your memory seriously. You would suddenly forget things that you would have ordinarily remembered effortlessly. You would also not be able to focus or concentrate for too long on any matter. Increase Of Substance Abuse - stress and the uncomfortable feelings it causes would push you to search for ways to find cures. Unfortunately, most people do not look at meditation, hobbies, cutting down on work, and healthy food. They take the help of cigarettes, coffee, alcohol, and other substance abuse, which add to the trouble creating an unbreakable vicious circle.

## **Stress Effects On Relationships**

Look at the symptoms described above. You can imagine that any person who is going through such a lot would not be great company in any circumstances. As a result, relationships start suffering. The first relationships to be sacrificed would be with family, because they are whom we all take most for granted. Then, relationships with friends would suffer and in the end - if no measures are taken - professional relationships would suffer as well. Some of the symptoms you would notice with your relationships are: Repeated Arguments - say, you are already tense with your nerves stretched on end and something happens at home. You suddenly explode into an argument causing your children and/ or spouse draw away from you. With time, you will find that your family moves away so far that you can no longer bridge the gap. Road Rage - you find there is a lot of suppressed anger in you. You may suppress it successfully at workplace and home for a while. Finding no outlet, the frustration builds up and suddenly manifests itself on the road towards fellow drivers and/ or passengers. You take your anger out on them, which makes you feel good initially - but not for long. Social Activities Suffer - you do not have the time or mood to socialize and hence, you are having trouble keeping contact with relatives and friends. You become a recluse socially, rarely meeting people and gradually moving away from all social contacts. Conflict At Work Place - left unattended, the suppressed anger continues to build up until you would be like a dynamite stick with lighted fuse. Anything around you could trigger an explosion. You start having conflicts with your fellow worker, and sometime even with the boss. Violence Raises Its Ugly Head - stress takes



over the mind and keeps your nerves stretched to no end. Any argument now can and often will trigger violence. Whether at home or at work place you will be known as a person with a short fuse whose company needs to be avoided at all cost. Divorce/ Erosion Or End Of Close Relationships – your spouse wants a divorce; your live-in partner feels he/ she cannot continue with you. Friends shun you as you are so sour that you no longer make a good company. You find yourself at the end of it alone; no love, no friends, no children, no colleagues – nothing. Frequent Job Changes – stress would not make you a model worker even if you work night and day. Your inability to work with your co-workers without entering into an argument, the fact that you would always be stressed would get you into trouble all the time at your workplace. This would make it difficult for your to keep you job for long, even if you work the hardest.

### **Are You Dedicated Or Addicted To Your Work?**

Why are you allowing your work to take over your whole life and wreck it? Are you dedicated to your profession or the type of work you are doing? Or is this rather an addiction that you cannot get away from? It is important to know and understand the difference between being dedicated to your work – and hence, neglecting your family for it – and being addicted to your work and sacrificing your family for it.

### **Which Side Rules, Work Or Home - A Small Quiz?**

This is a wonderfully effective quiz that will give you an idea or spell it out for you the way it is. Surprisingly, in the majority of cases the affected person does not really know that there is a problem of such major magnitude until

the worst of the symptoms manifest such as a divorce, job loss, kids becoming wild and so on. Take the quiz and find out what is your story.

Answer with a number on a 1-5 scale where 5 means ' Always' and 1 means ' Never' - with the gradients in between accordingly.

## **Always Never**

**5** ..... **4** ..... **3** ..... **2**.  
..... **1**

Part One  
At Home, do you hear your family complaining often that they are not getting enough of you? do these complaints/ demands on your time by your family make you anxious/ irritated/ angry? do you resentment when you have to do household chores or spend time with the family? do you feels that your family should be more adapting, more tolerant, more adjusting to the needs of your work/ career?

### **Sub-total Part One: \_\_\_\_\_**

At Work, do you irked by the fast that your income is not sufficient for your needs? do you feel guilty that you are putting in so much time and effort in building your career? do you find it frustrating that you have to take your work home at the end of the day because there is always so much more to do? do you find yourself worrying that your work robs you from the happiness you would have otherwise with your family?

### **Sub-total Part Two: \_\_\_\_\_**

On Personal Front, do you feel that you never get any time free for yourself? do you feel guilty when you take a break or vacation? do you wish that you

had the time for more exercise? do you feel that you are not able to get enough time to ever do what you really want to do?

### **Sub-total Part Three: \_\_\_\_\_**

#### **What Does The Score Say:**

A total score of less than 20 indicates that you found just the right way to balance family, career and personal needs. A high score in only one area indicates you need to re-organize your life so that area takes less of your time and energy. 21-30 indicates a good balance with some need for improvement. 31-40 indicates a fair balance. 41-50 shows that you are barely managing the juggling act of home, career and personal needs. Make the effort to identify what area needs your attention and work hard to get there. Unless you get the balance in your life, nothing will save you in the end from being lonely, disillusioned and unfulfilled. It is very important that you understand what drives you towards putting in too much time at work. The difference between 'being addicted' and 'being dedicated' is just that the former will make you feel guiltier than the latter. However, both are bad and unless you find a way to balance work and your home life. Sometimes, even quality of time counts. Say, you are very busy and have a very demanding job or profession. If you manage to extricate yourself long enough to spend some super-quality time with your family, it would definitely compensate for the busy times. When you say, 'quality time' it is time that is 100% for your family. If you want to really counter the busy time with quality time, then you have to give your 100% to your family for that allotted time span. This means no work, to talk about work, no worrying about work, NOTHING that

connects you to work. This means that you do whatever you do with all your heart and enjoy it. You cannot fake enjoyment; you need to find that thing you can do with your family - and sometimes with yourself - that you totally enjoy.

## **What If You Are Addicted To Your Job?**

Okay. What if? Is it bad? Well, by definition, all "addictions" are indeed bad. Addictions are something that take over your mind and gradually make you lose control of yourself and your environment. Once the addiction takes over, you can no longer do what you want, see what is good for you, or change anything. You are just helpless in the clutches of the addiction and unless you recognize, accept that it controls you, and try to fight it out, you will lose everything you hold dear in your life.

## **What Caused The Addiction?**

It is important that you realize what caused the addiction. Any addiction starts with a feel-good factor. You will like something - in the beginning - so much that you would want to do it again and again to enjoy that feeling of happiness. It is very important that you find what caused the addiction in the first place. What made you feel so good that you needed to do it more and more, again and again. Once you identify what made you happy, you need to find other ways to get to that point of happiness.

### **(1) The Personal Satisfaction**

It could be the personal satisfaction that you feel when you get your job well done. It could be the satisfaction you enjoy when you are appreciated for your

proficiency at your work. It could be the satisfaction that you get from doing your job better than anyone else.

## **(2) The Money**

It could be the money that you are making at your job. Sometimes, money can be very addictive. If you are making a good amount, it sometimes acts like a motivator to make more. You start liking earning the money so much that you never want to stop.

## **(3) The Recognition**

Another factor that could be extremely addictive is the recognition you get from your work. Sometimes, this is more addictive than any other factor. With this the more you get, the more you crave for it and the high one gets from recognition is often insatiable. (4) The Identity Sometimes, at least in the initial stages the professions or job gives you your identity. This can become gradually everything you are and when it does, it takes over and total precedence over every aspect of your life. This one among most dangerous addictions, for even considering leaving this would mean that you go against your very identity and hence, most difficult to get rid of.

## **5) The Projected Family**

For some, the work place becomes the projected family that they would always want. In such a case, they would feel they'd betray their trust if they did not give them 100% of their time and hence, it'd be like they are cheating. This addiction too, requires a lot of effort and work to get rid of.

## **What If You Are Dedicated To Your Job?**

To be dedicated to your job is not that bad a problem. In fact, this is more a positive aspect than negative. If it is dedication that drives you to work more and more, then all you need to do is transfer a little of that dedication to your present family. This normally happens because job comes much earlier in life than your family and for most people it becomes the first family, the first priority. It becomes a matter of habit that you pay more attention to your job and just offer the other part of your life whatever time and energy remains. Sometimes, the job does require long hours of work. Professions such as doctors, lawyers, scientists, researchers, etc. are indeed demanding and exhausting. Here, most people feel trapped for they know they cannot reduce the intensity of their work or the hours they need to put in. Yet, they also know that they have to pay attention to their families as well. This clash of priorities normally builds up stress since it feeds on guilt and on both accounts. The person feels guilty when at home because they feel they are neglecting their job; when at job, they feel guilty about their home for they know they are not doing their job well. In this case, dedication becomes costly and a permanent fuel for stress. Hence, unless you find away to balance your work and home life, you will never be able to get rid of the stress. It is worthwhile to keep in mind that stress that does not reduce by itself, neither it will ever remain constant. It will grow and grow as it feeds upon itself and as with compound interests, it continues to build until it totally overwhelms you. This is why you need to fight stress with all your might. In many ways when you fight stress, you actually find the key to

balance your work life and home life for you gain new perspective on what is important and what is not and how to handle both aspects.

## **Reclaim Your Space And Time – Learn To Set Limits**

Sometimes it is hard to learn to pay enough attention to ourselves while we focus on the needs of others around us; this could be family, work, friends. If you make it a habit to view other people's needs as more important than your own, it can be extremely hard to regain control and set limits where necessary. The following work-out sheets will help you recognize some of these critical areas where you might be cheating yourself.

### **Work-Out No1:**

Make a list of all the things that - in your opinion - must be done in your life. This is not compartmentalized; include the needs / demands from all areas that affect your life, i. e. work, colleagues, spouse, children, relatives, religious denomination, and so on.

### **Work Out No2:**

Make a second list, but on this list you write down ONLY your own needs. The list should look something like this: I need more free time to indulge in XYZ hobby; more freedom to do my work the way I want it; someone I could trust with my feelings; more help to raise my children; more time with my wife/ husband/ kids; more help with my work; more help with my household needs; and so on. Draw two large, same size circles (or you could use your computer for this purpose) and name them Circle No1 and Circle No2. Now divide Circle1 in so many pieces as you described in Work Out No 1. It should

look like a pie-chart. Take Circle No2 and now divide it according to what you want your life to be. Look at both the circles now, and decide what measures you need to take to ensure that you could reach to the point where you could lead the life you envisaged for yourself. Now, make a third list with all the things that you need to do to ensure that you would reach to that place where you could lead the life you want for yourself. Once you have set limits in areas that you feel are dragging you down, try to stick to it. It will not be easy - so do not think that these exercises would have you change your life overnight. It will be an uphill task, and you should be prepared to struggle for a while until you reach that perfect-balance point in your life.

### **Important: Set SMART Goals**

You need to set some SMART goals and then take it one step at a time.

SMART is an acronym for Specific - Measurable - Actionable - Relevant & Relevant - Time-bound. This means that your goals should: Have SPECIFIC outcome stated; you should know what you have planned to achieve and then break it into small goals. For example, you will start out with a statement like " I want to start painting." When this goal would have been achieved, you would have started painting. The goal you set should be measurable. In this case, let us start with ONE painting. Hence, the goal until now should look like this, " I want to start painting as a hobby. I need to start with at least one painting done." Plan the actionable steps. In order to move from the point where you are not painting to the point where you are painting, what do you need? You will need all such items that are normally used by one who paints. You will also need to take out time that would be



allocated for painting. Now, your goal would like this - " I want to start painting as a hobby. I need to start with at least one painting done on this Sunday." The goal should have a time schedule allotted to it. In the end, the goal should look like this, " I want to start painting as a hobby. I need to start with at least one painting done on this Sunday. I plan to have this painting completed within 4-6 Sundays." So, here you are. You have a plan to move from point A - where you are not painting as a hobby - to point B, where you are now painting regularly as a hobby. Within maximum 6 weeks from the day you started out to act on this goal, you will have ONE painting completed. Use this model and roll out. Have a time frame within which you have moved from Point A to Point B, where point A is where you are right now and point B is where you want to be. You want change? You need to take action; you need to take that action right now. The secret of successful people is simple - they act NOW. You want to achieve, start right NOW to move into that direction. Have a picture in your mind of what it should be and then fill it up with tiny actionable steps. Now walk the path and get there. That is all there is to it. Setting a goal and acting on it is not all that difficult. You will find it extremely rewarding when you would have achieved the goal you have set out to achieve within the time limit set. The trick is to start small and move on to bigger things gradually until you have a complete change of your lifestyle. Your ' Point A' in this case is the life you are leading where work overwhelms the family time. Your ' Point B' is where you would want to be, i. e. the person who has achieved the perfect balance between work and family life. So, to revise and ensure that you have internalized this process, let us revise what was learnt here: Set up clear and specific goals.

Envision how you want it to become. Set up indicators that you could measure at the end of each step you take. It is important that you enjoy the feeling that you have achieved something every time you complete a mini-step in your goal. Take action. Start NOW. Walk the path with baby steps; it is important that you do not feel stressed by the change; rather you feel good and motivated with every step that you take in the direction you want. Set a time limit. You cannot measure your achievement unless there is a time limit. Hence, your goals should have a set and non-negotiable time limit, so you know how much time you have to get there. By the time you reach the set time limit, you would have achieved the goal.

## **10 Myths That Work Against You - Beware**

You are the only one in this world who feels that he is paying too much attention to his work and too less to its family. There are, in fact, millions of people out there who suffer greatly because of this particular problem They want to change, but cannot and/ or will not because they believe in a few myths that holds them back. You need to know about these myths so you would not hold back from seeking avenue and methods to balance you're the time you spend at work and that you would like to spend on your life (family).

### **Myth 1: Success Means Mastering Multitasking**

There is a strong believe today among people in all professions and level of work that you cannot be called successful unless you master the art of multitasking. Nothing can be further from truth. You would think that multitasking means doing two or more tasks at the same time. However, this

is not so. What you are actually doing is switch quickly between any two or more tasks that you are trying to complete simultaneously. The human brain is meant to focus on one thing at a time, hence what actually happens when you multitask, is shifting your attention rapidly from one task to another. Normally this would that you are saving time and achieving much more in the give time. But this is not true. Since you are switching you attention, you actually shut off the attention you pay to one task and shift it to another. Every time you do this, there is a slight time gap where your brain reloads the information about task 1/ task2/ task 3 and so on. Hence, every time you switch between the tasks you chose to multitask, you are losing time. Hence, if you would do one task at a time, one AFTER the other and NOT one ALONG with the other, you would need much less time; you would complete that tasks and have a lot more time left on your hand, plus you will feel relaxed and comfortable and not fatigued and overcome as one feels after a busy day of multi-tasking. So, you want to work more and better avoid as much as possible multi-tasking. Try organizing your calendar to do one thing at a time. Give that one task that you take up your full attention and complete it before moving on to another. Do not check your emails or attend the phone while you are working. For email have 3-4 schedules per day to read and answer them; for telephone, have an answering machine connected so you could screen your calls and answer only those that just have to be answered. Make these few almost insignificant changes, and you will be amazed with how much work you are able to get done after this.

## **Myth 2: Pressure Helps You Work Better, Faster**

This one is a killer, because it is partially true. Pressure, imminent deadlines does make you work better. The heightened adrenalin does release the innermost reserves in you and unleashes your inner potential. It is true that in an heightened excited state you do more and do better. However, this state is definitely NOT one you would like to be every day, day after day, month after month. This is a state of stress; and the heightened senses are the result of the activation of the fight or flight syndrome. The pressure and/or imminent deadlines are interpreted by your mind as life-threatening situations - which often are, for if you miss on a deadline you might actually lose your job - and with it, comes plenty of trouble. When your mind and body perceives a survival threat, it declares a state of emergency where blood is pulled away (only minimum is left flowing) from all the non-vital organs and pumped into the vital organs such as brain, heart, lungs, kidneys and liver. The danger in the background pushes your mind and body into a heightened state of energy; as massive shots of adrenalin start being produced and released into to blood. You feel like you can jump over a building if you have to - at such times. Accordingly you work like 5 people put together and the job you do is WOW! Hence, it is good to be challenged by deadlines SOMETIMES for it does bring the best in you. The keyword here is ' sometimes'. If you are in that state 24x7, you are courting heavy trouble for your body cannot stay healthy for long in the fight-or-flight mode. Physiologically, when the blood is pulled away from the non-vital organs such as stomach, organs of the reproductive system, spleen, gall bladder, pancreas, eyes, skin and the like - if this is sustained over long periods,

these organs will start malfunctioning. Hence, you will develop problems with digestion, sexual function, eye sight, and so on. This explains why stressed people have so many issues with food, digestion, acidity and so on. They also are more often than not suffering from sexual dysfunction – decreased libido, infertility, erectile dysfunction and so on. In the long run, this heightened state of function would cost you very dearly. With the deterioration of non-vital organs comes the deterioration of the vital organs – because they are no longer supported optimally. This is where memory loss comes, heart problems, respiratory problems and so on.

### **Myth 3: If You Are Not Born With Creativity, You Can Never Have It**

Innovation is in high demand in every field. The higher you go in the hierarchy of an organization, the more important creativity and innovation becomes. Unfortunately, because people think this is a born-trait, they do not pay attention to the means that could cultivate and enhance it. Once again, as with all deep-rooted myths, this one too is based on a grain of truth. Yes, some people are born with it. But this is just as significant as you would say that some people are born with the gift of the gab. It does not mean the creativity cannot be enhanced at any time. The formal education system is designed in such a manner, that the mind does not pay too much attention on the creativity aspect. Soon, the logical part of the brain completely takes over and the creative part goes dormant. The keyword here is 'dormant' – which means it is NOT dead. Hence, it can be revived and built upon. Hence, if you are not among those whose creative juice flow at will, do not worry. You can – with a few exercises and effort – fire it into

full capacity at any age. There are many specifically designed exercises that will help you develop your creativity thinking skills. You could download a number of such exercises from the Net and keep practicing day after day. With every day that passes you will find that your creative side is growing. Here are a few easy, fast yet extremely powerful tips: Listen to symphony music. Dance freely to the music of your choice. Brainstorm often on any topic you prefer. Carry a small notepad with you all the time and jot down whatever at-that-time-brilliant idea you get. Less than 5-10% of these ideas are great in the real sense. But this is what can change the world. Learn ONE new word every day. Open the dictionary, pick up a word and thoroughly learn how to use it. At the end of the year you will have 365 new words in your vocabulary and your mind would be open to explore more. When faced by any problem, write it down and put it somewhere where you can see it 24x7. Your brain would find a solution for you; it will suddenly hit you from the blue. TV kills creativity; see it only for entertainment and fight addiction to watch it. Stay away from drugs. You might get a few creative streaks while on drugs; but the cost is way too high to pay. Read voraciously. Books force your brain to imagine as the words you are reading create realistic paintings of an imaginary world. Keep your brain active. Keep challenging it with trying to learn something new all the time. The more active your brain in, the more creative it will be. Doodle all the time. Have a pen and paper ready in front of you and keep doodling when you are on the phone or just listening to someone talking. Add something new to your routine or change it every once in a while. This will keep your brain active and promote creativity.

## **Myth 4: Longer Hours Means More Work Done**

One of the most destructive myths of all, this is the reason why most people - especially those who work in highly competitive field - are so excessively stressed. The truth is that putting in longer hours means you are using your time ineffectively. If you find that you are constantly working after hours, it is time to take a long look at your routine and make some drastic changes. You will need to identify those activities that drain your time and kill your efficiency. Eight hours per day is way more than enough to complete your tasks - provided you are using your time effectively and efficiently. To get you started, here is a list of top 10 times wasters. How many of these are on your daily routine? Pay attention to your schedule for a week, and you will clearly see all the time-wasters in your work. Eliminate these drainers, and you will find that an 8-hour day offers you plenty of time to complete your work without being stressed.

**Little Or No Planning.** You move through the day with no planning or time organization, you will end up running helter-skelter wasting more time than you spend on actual tasks at hand. Start your day with a simple, but comprehensive 'To Do' list, which you would have completed the night before. People who start the day writing a 'To do' list would agree that very often, this is one of the major time drain; you will find that half of the day is gone planning on what to put on that list. Best is to write down this list, just before you get turn in.

**Procrastination of difficult/least liked tasks.** There is an repulsive feeling generated when you think about difficult or unpleasant tasks and to avoid the feeling, you would normally put off the task for as long as you can. However, the feeling does not go anywhere, for at the back of your mind you know that sooner or later

you would have to do it. Hence, this thought and condition of mind would affect all the tasks you undertake until you complete this one task. The result is that you would lose your positive energy and in the process waste a much time going through the day with half-hearted effort. Instead, attack the task you hate the most first thing in the morning and do not stop to do anything else until it is over. The completion of this task and the relief that it would give you knowing that the worst is over would enhance the positive energy within and help you get through the day at a high pace and optimal efficiency. Interruptions by emails/ phone/ visits/ meetings/etc. Interruption of the phone and email constitute approx 80% of the deflected time when you are applying to completing a task. Every time you answer your phone or reply to an email, your mind disconnects from the task at hand and applies itself to the interruption. In other words, you can do a given task 80% faster if you cut off all the possible interruptions. There is a simple solution to this. Get organized and let the relevant people know about it. Announce to everyone the time you are available for discussions/ meetings. Put your telephone on answering machine so you would need to pick only those calls that really cannot wait. Have all your emails give automated response that you will check your email at XX time during working days, so people would know when to expect an answer. Discourage colleagues from strolling in your room for a chat or coffee break. Inability to delegate. You do not need to do everything yourself. You have to learn to delegate all those tasks that others can do as well if not better and relinquish control over the task. Delegation is the best way to cut the time and increase the efficiency of completing any given task as this will ensure that you remain focused on the matters that



require your specific talents and attention. It is easy to see how this would cut off the time of completion of your work and increase the overall efficiency. Meetings that are NOT necessary (often an email would do just as fine) - try to discourage a culture where everything requires a meeting to move forward. Meetings unless these are for overall direction and goal setting - which normally should be no often than once in 3 months, preferably once 6 months - are a horrid drain of time. Try using group emails or memos instead. Choose a way that would bring you the results in the fastest possible manner. Multi-tasking. You need to focus on what you are doing 100%. Only then you would be able to complete the task well and fast. Multi-tasking dilutes your focus and put is a start-restart mode where your brain would have to reload and reach to X-state every time you change your focus. This start-restart mode tires the brain and lack of focus prevents you from doing your best at whatever task you are taking up. Therefore, multi-tasking - while it is an excellent skill - drains away time and often even effectiveness of delivering any task. Do not multi-task; do not encourage others on your team to multi-task unless it is strictly necessary. Build awareness around you why multi-tasking is not desirableInability to say ' no'. You have to learn to say ' no' when you want to say ' no'. Do not take up X project because the boss requested you to do it; do not take up your colleagues work, because he requested you to fill in; do not do anything you do not want to do. Learn to say ' no' politely and firmly. This is an acquired skill, so you will need to constantly practice on the tone, choice of words, reason to decline and various ways to stressing that you are serious. Learning you say ' no' will free a huge chunk of your time. But once you do

it, you would not only be able to cover more but also much more efficiently. You would also improve on your relationships as saying 'no' would set things right and leave no space for ambiguity or strained feelings. Lack of exercise. You hear people saying all the time that they cannot exercise because they have no time; it is the other way round. You do not have time, because you are not exercising. Exercising triggers feel-good hormones in the brain and activates the body with positive energy. Put in a 30 minute brisk walk in the morning preferably - but it can be anytime you want - and see the difference this brings to your mind and efficiency. You have no time to do 'nothing' - this is not a typographical error. It was meant to read 'nothing'. Unless you have time to do nothing, you are NOT spending your time right. If you are organized well, and get to spend your time right you will have every day some time to do nothing. At the worst, you could have the 'nothing' to do over the weekend; but it is best if you do it every day. When you are busy throughout the day and you do not get any off time, your brain will be too busy to relax even at night. If you do not relax, you would not be able to work with your full efficiency the next day; and the vicious circle sets in. You have clutter all over - one major time drain - and mental drain as well - is clutter. Look around you - both at your work and at home - and if you find clutter, it is time you remove it all. Get rid of all the clutter around you and you will find things whenever you want immediately. Did you know that people spend 1/3rd of their working time searching for something? Imagine the time you could save by having things organized and neatly placed where they are supposed to be.

## **Myth 5: You Need To Put In More Hours If You Want To Get That Promotion**

There is a wrong assumption that you need to put in more hours of work to get noticed by your boss, so you would be nominated for that promotion. This is of course, one of the most popular myths that especially young people believe. The truth is different. It does not really matter how many hours you are putting in as much as what the outcome of your work is. In fact, if your boss is worth his salt, he will take the long hours as a sign of inefficiency rather than efficiency. You want to get that promotion it is time you worked smart. Ensure that you have clear-cut goals and that you achieve them. A few tips to get the attention of your boss and get nominated for your promotion: Work in a team and be a good worker. Give credit for the contribution of others to the boss. Volunteer for the jobs that no one would take up - but which are important for the organization and your boss. Always ensure that your boss is shown in the right light to his bosses and in general among the team and his peers. Never badmouth the boss. Things like these have a knack of coming around. Be dependable. In other words, if a job is given to you, your boss should be able to forget about it because he'd be confident that you would have it happen. Be friendly and help anyone who needs help around you. Of course, not at the cost of the quality of your work; but be friendly and approachable. Work hard, stay focused on your job and always under promise and over deliver. Show your boss you are interested to grow, to do more, to take on more responsibility.

## **Myth 6: Delegation Means You Are Losing Control On Your Task**

It is a myth that people who delegate work cannot do the work themselves. The truth is that they are smart enough not to waste their valuable time on tasks that other could do better. In this way, they could focus on the part of the task that would benefit most of their attention, experience and expertise. Delegation of work does not come easy so do not be hard on yourself when at first you find it difficult to let go of the total control you had on the job. To get into the habit, delegate small and unimportant tasks at first and gradually let go of control until you have retained with you only that task that no one but you would do best. Once you learned to delegate you would find that you can achieve more in less time and that the work you complete is of the highest of quality.

## **Myth 7: If You Relax At Work You Are Seen As Frivolous**

Many people tend to overdo it at work thinking that if they relax anytime and are seen relaxing, they would be taken as frivolous. It does not need to be that way. Of course, if every time someone is looking for you, you are found in the coffee lounge or gossiping with colleagues that would indeed become the impression. However, if you are paying attention to your work and are diligent with your responsibilities - it would actually be a good idea to take a few breaks from work during your work-day. Use these breaks to have coffee, talk to your colleagues, play a game on your computer - whatever relaxes you. Do not worry about anyone thinking you are wasting your time; people who work hard are spotted from afar. If you are serious about your work, your reputation will precede you.

### **Myth 8: Taking Work Home Will Help You Stay Ahead**

Nothing is accomplished by taking your work home other than missing out on quality time with your family. Yes, you would be able to complete that project – but at what cost? It is necessary for the brain to recharge itself and this it does when it is unwinding post work hours. When you carry your work at home, that is not the only thing you are carrying. You are also bringing all the tension and stress of the day back to your home. The result is that you would never get enough time to unwind and de-stress your mind. You would work late and go to bed thinking about work again. In the morning next day, instead of waking up fresh and happy you would feel groggy and exhausted. Keep this up and you will be fatigued all the time throughout the day. Your efficiency would actually come down and your health you would be affected as well – especially your heart. So, leave your work at your work place; keep your home and office permanently separate. If there is additional work – and there would be times when this would happen – stay back in the office and finish it. When you leave your office your mind should be free of office work.

### **Myth 9: The Job Always Comes First**

Yes, the job is a very important part of your life and it should have high priority in your life; but it definitely is not the No. 1 thing. The No. 1 thing is YOU; then comes, No. 2 YOUR FAMILY and on the far No. 3 is YOUR JOB. The person who puts the job first is in for some great disappointment for the job does not take care of you. You take care of the job. When you put yourself on No. 1, you would ensure that you are constantly improving yourself and preparing to move forward. You ensure that you stay healthy, happy and well

fit with the job you are delivering. You come always first; your health, your happiness, your comfort. From time to time, when it is required, you might compromise a little on these aspects for your job - but this would be an 'it happens sometimes' thing. Then, you have your family. You need to pay attention to your family, their needs, their feelings and especially their time with you. The job, should be the third on the list for this is the means that will keep your family and yourself happy and secure. Unless you have your priorities right, you would not be able to advance in your life, for the frustration of working too much and sacrificing your family to the altar of your job, would get to you sooner than later.

### **Myth 10: To Get Ahead You Have To Please Your Boss**

It is true that it is important that your boss like you and appreciates what you are doing. However, you definitely need not be a 'Yes man' to get ahead in life. Most bosses appreciate someone who can speak their mind; provided the opinion is given in moderation (not in a condescending way). Working hard is a better method to get ahead than polishing the apple. This means you need not say 'yes' to your boss for anything you do not want to do. Just learn to decline stuff politely. It is actually very important that you learn to "manage" your boss. In other words, learn to earn the respect of your boss - not be a slave who does whatever he says. The person who earns the boss' respect would be the one he would recommend for the promotion; the slave usually is passed up when the promotion comes up because the boss is too comfortable being pampered by this slave.

## **10 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK**

The main reason why most people put in longer hours at work is because they are worried that they are not doing enough. Do keep in mind that 8 hours are enough to do a great job - and that you need not take your work home to advance your career or to ensure that work is done. If you are doing that, you are not productive enough at your work place. Here are some great tips that will improve your productivity.

### **1. Have Scheduled Breaks**

It was mentioned earlier that taking breaks actually increases productivity at work. Your brain can do so much - even if you are super intelligent. That's why, it needs to recharge from time to time and this recharging is done through breaks. By " breaks" it does mean that you should get up from your seat and move about for a few minutes- though this is a good thing to do.

#### **Mind-Relaxation Break**

It could be just playing a game on your computer or mobile phone (ensure that there are no rules against this in your company). You could read a few pages of your favorite book, solve a crossword, have a cup of coffee/ fruit juice/ or just sip a glass of water, read a few jokes - do whatever relaxes you a bit and takes your mind off work.

#### **The 20 Minute Catnap - Your Secret Energizer**

If it is possible you could take a cat-nap of 20 minutes at lunch time. Twenty minutes is the exact duration which will actually charge you up for the rest of the day. Initially, you could set an alarm; after a while, your mind would be

programmed to sleep exactly 20 minutes. You will find that besides recharging your vigor, the catnap provides a host of health benefits such as lowers your stress levels, cholesterol and blood pressure and improves alertness and brain function. The best time to nap for early risers (larks) is between 1. 00 pm and 2. 00 pm; for late risers (owls) is between 2. 00 pm and 3. 00 pm. To ensure that you get the maximum benefit from this exercise, drink coffee just before you take the nap. The cup of coffee would take about 20 minutes to kick in – just in time for the time when you are waking up.

## **Yearly Family Vacation**

Do plan early for your yearly vacation. You may not go anywhere; you may like to use the off time to just stay at home with your family. Vacation time is a must-have at least once a year. To ensure that you do get your time off, talk it out with your boss and get his agreement for a mutually convenient time. Some bosses like it to grant leave when they are not around; others like the employees to be around to keep the office work running smooth when he is not there. Talking it out with your boss in advance would give you all the time in the world to ensure that by the time the vacation time comes up, all the important and urgent work is taken care of.

## **Flexi-timing Daily Offs**

Work it out with your boss to offer you time off when you need it, allowing you to make up for it with longer hours the next day. For example, if you want to have a relaxed lunch with your friend offer to put in 1-2 hours more that day evening or the next day. In this way, you need not take leave for



the whole day when you actually need 1-2 hours off. This will ensure that you do not feel guilty about asking off-time and allows you to take care of your more effectively. When your personal needs are resolved, you will find that you are more relaxed, happier and definitely more productive.

## **2. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate**

Communication is a great tool at work place and other places as well. At work however, it is extremely important that you communicate with everyone clearly and as often as it is required. To increase your productivity you need to communicate clearly to your boss, teammates and everyone else at work place. When you share your tasks with your team members ensure that everyone understands exactly what each one is supposed to do. Communicate with your boss about the progress of each given task. Some bosses like to know everything; they are micro managers. In such a case, you keep him updated as much as possible on all aspects of the job at hand. Otherwise, go to him only when you need special guidance/ permission or inform him about anything that required a change of plans. Communication at the work place does not mean ' talk about jobs' all the time.

Communication also means saying ' thank you', ' sorry', ' please help me' as and when required. In other words, you should build a great rapport with your colleagues so when time comes they will cooperate with you to get a job done, as you would with them. Productivity is often a definition that involved more than one person. The better you connect with your colleagues, the better your work will turn out.

### **3. Get Technology Savvy**

Technology can make your life very easy and definitely increase your productivity at work. Use all the technology you can in you day to day work. Invest in a great smart phone that can stay in synch with the office computer. Use your phone/ computer for personal memos that remind you about important ' to do' tasks. Learnt to use your computer to optimize the quality of your and make your day easier. Use all the software you need to keep you doing your work best, and use it well. Your phone and your computer are not just fancy gadgets; they are to be used to the maximum extent. If you are not computer savvy, take a course and get computer savvy. Learn all that is to learn about your smart phone and use them to make your work easier, faster and better. That is what these gadgets are for, by the way.