THE AMBULANCE STAFF CHARITY

Caring for those who care for us

Finding the right work life balance

Helping others is a great thing to do and can make you feel positive and good about yourself. However, in order to help others, you need to look after yourself first.

Find your own balance

Balance is a personal thing and you must find your own equilibrium. It's up to you to prioritise, adjust and decide what you are, and are not prepared to do. Don't tell yourself *"I should be able to..."* and, most importantly, don't listen to anyone else telling you what you should or should not be able to do.

It's important to pay attention to your own needs and stay in touch with how you are feeling physically and emotionally. If you feel you're out of balance day in and day out, then you are!

Beware of adrenaline addiction

Adrenaline will keep you going, but it also keeps you in a state of readiness for danger. It's exciting, productive and it feels like energy, but it isn't and you can only run on it for a short time.

Too much adrenaline for too long can make you feel stressed and when your adrenaline runs out you may have no energy and feel anxious, depressed or even ill. It's very easy to keep pushing yourself and never give yourself time to come down, but sooner or later you're running on empty, unable to relax, sleeping badly and on a short fuse - these are the warning signs.

Beware of martyrdom addiction

"I've got so much to do. It's always me doing everything."

Does this sound familiar? Do you feel put upon and resentful while at the same time hogging all the work? If so, martyrdom could become an addiction for you which will push you to take on more, raise your stress levels and drain you physically and emotionally. Be aware of this and allow others help you by taking some of the weight off your shoulders.

Keep a weekend free

Try to keep one weekend every 4-6 weeks free from any commitments, plans, work or activities. This doesn't necessarily mean that you do nothing, but rather that you don't structure the time in advance and fill it with plans and to-do lists.

Ask for help

Asking for help is often the best way out of stressful situations and dilemmas. It's not so hard to do, and overall, people like to be asked. Common reasons for not asking for help are:

- pride in your work or not wanting to look as if you can't manage
- not wanting to bother anyone or be a nuisance
- perfectionism and lack of confidence

It's important to recognise when you need help and to understand why you don't ask for help. Don't leave it too long - the sooner you ask, the better.

Learn to choose 'good enough' over 'perfect'

When something needs to be done, ask yourself *"Is it important that the job is simply done, or that it's done perfectly?"* Nine times out of ten, the answer is that it needs to be done rather than done perfectly.

Learn to say no

Are you someone who tends to say 'yes' all the time which means you take on too much and get overloaded? If so, it's important to learn to say *"No, I'm sorry, I don't have time."* This doesn't mean you have to say no all the time or to say no to work within your job description, this is about the extra responsibilities you're asked to take on both at home and work.

Project in, project out

If you want to take on an extra responsibility or project but don't really have time for it, you need to review your commitments and get rid of another project or task to avoid taking too much on at once. If you're already overloaded even the most wonderful-looking project will become another chore in no time at all.

Do something for yourself once a week

Everyone has something they look forward to, so make time every week to do something you enjoy. This Is for you, not something you think will be good for you or things that your children or partner would enjoy, such as reading a novel in the bath or relaxing on the sofa with a glass of wine. Turn off your mobile, don't check your emails and ban social media. Stick to it and don't put it off.

Draw a line between work and home

If you're rushed and overloaded, it's very common to worry about things at home while at work and be preoccupied with work while you're at home! Try to get into the habit of downloading the things on your mind before you leave work.

List your worries or the things you need to do tomorrow in your diary, on you phone or simply on a piece of paper. While writing your list, try and keep your mind focused on the fact that this is the end of the work day. Finally close your diary, save your message or fold your piece of paper and leave it until tomorrow!