

Eight Habits of Balanced Leaders

Leave your work on your table. It will be there waiting for you in the morning.

While I was facilitating a retreat for a group of 15 men at Tata Steel in Kolkata, all in their late 30s and 40s, all high-level executives and all high achievers, an interesting topic arose. One of the men asked for help dealing with his wife, who was complaining he worked too much. He wanted help in getting her to understand that she was being unreasonable since the reason he was always working was to provide for his family.

He got sympathy from several, but fortunately for him there were a couple of balanced leaders in the group who challenged him. They pointed out that his family needed more from him than to take care of them—that this family needed him to *be* with them. They told him quite frankly that his marriage was in trouble... and it wasn't up to his wife to change.

That was 20 years ago. Technology has made this an even bigger challenge today. With the advances in technology, you can always be connected to work, anytime, anywhere—and because you *can* be available, you are expected to be. Many people are uncomfortable turning off their mobile device even at a social gathering. And how many of us take a vacation without checking email?

This problem is not confined to over-achievers. For those who are struggling in this economy, working a lot of hours to make ends meet, or to find a job, or to build a new business, the pressure to focus on work can be intense and preoccupy much waking time.

Nor is this a problem just for men. In fact, it can be an even bigger issue for women who juggle multiple jobs both in and out of the house.

What are the consequences? Being “always on” keeps your work in the front of your mind and prevents you from being fully engaged in the present moment. There’s a lot you’re missing out on because your attention is focused elsewhere. You might discover you have lost connection with those you care about most, or never develop real connections in the first place. It’s not enough to just take vacations. It is possible to become mentally balanced, even in a world that demands you to be always available, but you must change your habits.

- 1. Change your mindset.** Identify what you consider “work,” and consider everything else “off.” “Off” can be when you’re with your family, at dinner with friends, or even taking a walk by yourself. During “off” time, don’t even think about work. Put your full attention on who you’re with and what you’re doing.
- 2. Set up a backup strategy.** Sometimes, things will just pop up even when you’re not thinking about work. So what do you do with the important ideas that pop up while you’re “off?” Do *not* pull out your mobile device and make a quick call or send a quick text. It’s guaranteed to pull you away from who you are with. Try to trust that if it’s important enough, the thought will reoccur. As a backup, keep a piece of paper or card in your wallet. If you get a brilliant idea that you can’t afford to forget, jot down a few key words... and then put it away.
- 3. Schedule “off” time.** Set and honor specific times that are dedicated to being with family or friends, and also being alone doing things you enjoy. Structure comes more easily for some than others. If you’re one of the people who doesn’t like structure, it’s even more important for you to do this, so you can be *intentional* about creating the life you really want.
- 4. Just say, “No.”** Let people know that you are changing your habits and are not going to respond to texts and email or answer your phone for work-related matters during personal time unless there is a true emergency. If they understand this ahead of time, most people will respect your boundaries. They will begin to schedule meetings during times you’re

available, and you will discover that many so-called emergencies are not as urgent as they seem at first.

5. **Pay attention to your breathing.** Focusing on your breathing brings your attention away from your thoughts and back to what is present. During “off time,” occasionally notice how you’re breathing. If your breath is rapid and located high in your chest, take a deep breath and exhale slowly. Spend a moment focused on your breathing until you are breathing slowly and from a deeper place, which is how we breathe when we are relaxed.
6. **Hang your work on a tree.** Here’s a way to mentally separate from work: On your way home from work, as you near your home, locate a tree or something you could hang a bag on. Imagine putting your work in a bag and hanging it in the tree. This idea came from one of the men in the retreat, who said he did that every night.
7. **Stop multitasking.** Many people view multitasking as an admirable skill. They think they get more accomplished. But studies have shown that you actually accomplish less and do it less well. The illusion of productivity comes at the expense of performance effectiveness. The less you multitask, the less you’ll be tempted to slip a little work in.
8. **Be clear about your priorities.** Create a clear vision for what you truly desire and what’s most important to you that explains where you’re going and what you value most. It’s tempting to say yes to every request, but that comes at a cost. If you know what your priorities are, it will help you know when to say yes and when to say no.

The bottom line is: Not only is life more enjoyable and rewarding when we are in balance, but we are also healthier. Give it a try. Leave your work on the table on your way home tonight. Guaranteed it will be there waiting for you in the morning.

Readers may please note that D. L. Shah Trust brings out two e-journals on a fortnightly basis. These are mailed to those persons or institutions who are desirous of receiving them: These two e-journals are:

1. Safety Info
2. Quality Info

If you or your friends or colleagues wish to receive these journals, you may send us an e-mail requesting for the same. There is no charge for these journals. Our e-mail address is:

dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in haritaneja@hotmail.com dlshahtrust@gmail.com

You can also access these journals on our website: www.dlshahtrust.org

<p>Sponsored by: D. L. Shah Trust For Applied Science, Technology, Arts & Philosophy Mumbai. email: dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in Ph: 022-22838890</p>	<p>Edited by Hari Taneja, Mumbai email: dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in</p>
--	--