

Sharpen Your Tightrope Walking Skills!

“What? I would never even consider walking on a tightrope,” you might say. But according to Dawn Klingensmith, feature writer for the Chicago Tribune, a tightrope walker’s balancing act has much to teach us about our own work-life balance. “From one end of the high wire to the other, the performer is never truly balanced but rather constantly adjusts to his true state, which is imbalance, in order not to fall.”

The term “work-life balance” first appeared in the 1980’s when organizations first noticed that the healthiest and most productive employees were individuals who had struck a balance between their work life and personal life. **Workaholics**, whose whole world revolved around their jobs, seemed susceptible to stress, illness and depression. The same was true for those consumed by family challenges. Ultimately, work performance suffered for both. The goal is to strike a healthy balance between work and life. When in balance, there can be a synergy between work and home life. For example, Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin Airlines, once noted that some of his best management ideas came from talking to his children about their experiences at school.

But achieving an acceptable work-life balance is not easy in today’s hectic world. Here are some suggestions:

- **Build downtime into your schedule.** When planning your day, don’t focus strictly on chores. Include some time for relaxation. This may take the form of a hobby or exercise.



- **Try to not take home work worries.** Are you able to leave your work-related concerns behind when you head for home? This is possible with some effort and will actually make you more effective in addressing these concerns when you return to work the next day refreshed and focused.
- **Monitor your “presentness.”** Do you find yourself in situations where you should be enjoying personal or family time but find it difficult to clear your mind of work-related situations or conflicts? Or do you find it difficult to concentrate at work because of home-related challenges? These are sure signs of a dangerous imbalance between your work and personal life. You may wish to contact an EAP counselor to explore solutions.
- **Share the load:** Even though we may feel we’re the only ones capable of managing family obligations, that is usually not the case. Enlist the help of other family members to assist with chores and household management.
- **Fully utilize your EAP tools:** By logging on to the EAP member site listed below, you can access a wealth of Work-Life resources. These include zip code sensitive listings for a wide variety of childcare and eldercare services.