



# Balance Work and Play

**CHALLENGE**  
Balance work  
time with  
recreation.

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read Balance Work and Play
2. To complete the Challenge, make time for recreation and physical activity on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep records of your completed Challenge, in case your organization requires documentation.

## The Balancing Act

You probably know a work-a-holic – someone who works 80 hours a week, and spends a lot of time commuting. He or she might be determined to climb the corporate ladder. But it can often take a toll on health and happiness. Finding a balance between work and play is important.

For example, Oprah Winfrey has spent decades in the spotlight as a talk-show host, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. And while she admittedly works a lot, she recognizes the importance of making time to play.

“If you neglect to recharge a battery, it dies,” Winfrey says. “And if you run full-speed ahead without stopping for water, you lose momentum to finish the race.”

Many working adults spend 8-10 hours a day sitting at a desk and commuting from home to the office. And while work is important, so are healthy recreational activities. It’s OK to work hard. But taking breaks and vacation will help improve your productivity. This month, find balance between work and play.

### The Problem with All Work and No Play

All that commute time to and from work, and hours spent sitting in your office chair can be hazardous to your health. And once the day is done, many people skip out on exercise and healthy recreational activities because they’re too tired. But there’s a problem with all work and no play.



A new study has found that spending a lot of time being sedentary increases your risk for serious health problems. The study included 4,000 people. None of them had diabetes or heart disease before the study. Researchers compared the number of hours spent watching television or in front of a computer screen each day to the prevalence of metabolic risk factors. They found that as the hours of screen time increased so did:

- ✓ Waist circumference
- ✓ Systolic blood pressure
- ✓ Blood sugar levels

Women also saw an increase in blood fat levels, and a decrease in HDL (good) cholesterol levels.

Each of these conditions greatly increases the risk of heart disease – and the only apparent cause was spending time in front of a television or computer. Spending the majority of your day sitting, isn’t exactly balanced. So you need to look for recreational activities you can enjoy that will help you be more active. And look for ways to reduce sitting time like taking a walk, picking up the mail, visiting the water cooler, or delivering a message to a co-worker in person.

### Stress Less. Live Longer.

When you’re stressed out and overworked, your health suffers. According to research, employees view their jobs as the leading source of stress in their lives. In the study, researchers found that work-related stress caused by tight deadlines, conflict, and high competition increased the risk of a heart attack by 80 percent over a 12-month period. Other studies show that stress at work can also lead to illness, injury, and other health problems. If your job stresses you out, work to find balance and keep your priorities straight. Talk to a counselor, supervisor, or your human resources director. It may save your life.

Every time  
sedentary  
people walk a  
mile, they add 21  
minutes to their life.

*National Recreation and  
Parks Association*

On average,  
every hour you  
spend exercising  
increases your life  
expectancy by  
two hours.

*– Harvard Alumni  
Study*

More —>



## Take a Break from Work

Most working adults are awake for about 16 hours a day or 112 hours a week. In that time, 40 to 60 hours are probably spent at work. If you factor in commute time, work may claim 50 to 70 hours, or more, of your life every week. Are you happy with your work-life balance? Maybe it's time to take a break from work. You may not be able to take a long vacation, but there are simple things you can do to recharge your batteries:

### At the Office

- Go for a walk with co-workers. And get to know each other, instead of talking about work.
- Organize a social activity with your co-workers like a picnic, movie, concert, or hike.
- Plan a service project to help a charity and get your co-workers involved.
- Participate in wellness activities and classes at work.
- Ride your bike or walk to work if you can.
- Redo your office with a stand-up desk.
- Deliver a message to a co-worker in person, not by email.



### On Your Own

- Take your pet for a walk.
- Plant a garden and maintain it.
- Go to a park once a week to walk or ride your bike.
- Learn T'ai Chi, Taekwondo, Pilates, or other exercise routines.
- Learn deep breathing and relaxation techniques.
- Join a walking, running, or cycling club to be more active and meet new friends.
- Set a wellness goal for yourself (exercise more, lose weight, eat healthier). Spend time working on your goal each day.
- Read a book or magazine while pedaling an exercise bike.
- Watch less TV.
- Get a massage.

### With Family and Friends

- Organize a walkathon with your school, church, or club, or in your neighborhood. Donate the proceeds to your favorite charity.
- Learn a new sport together like rock climbing, racquetball, or bowling.
- Do yard work for an elderly or ill friend or neighbor.
- Plan an active vacation that includes kayaking, backpacking, or cycling.
- Play a friendly game of soccer, volleyball, or basketball.
- Dress in bathing suits and wash the car – and expect a water fight.
- Chop wood. Build a campfire and sing your favorite songs.
- Play kid's games like kickball, hide-and-seek, and hopscotch. Or make up your own game.
- Organize a neighborhood block party.
- Host a picnic with games like Frisbee golf, old-fashioned sack or wheelbarrow races, or softball.

### 11 Reasons to Take a Vacation

[tinyurl.com/97mfjoh](http://tinyurl.com/97mfjoh)



## Play Time Promotes Good Health

Play time can promote good health and reduce the risk of premature death in the following ways:

- Reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke
- Helps people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Helps people build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces the risk of diabetes
- Reduces the risk of cancer
- Helps you relax
- Reduces depression, anxiety, and stress
- Improves your mood
- Increases life expectancy

Take a good look at your work-life balance. And if the thought makes you nervously laugh out loud, it's probably time to take a break.

Your work is important, but so is your life, your happiness, and your health.

### Are you a work-a-holic?

Take the quiz and find out at [tinyurl.com/bmbxf3j](http://tinyurl.com/bmbxf3j)

Sources:

*Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise.*

*National Recreation and Park Association.*

*Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*

*Journal of the American Medical Association*

*American Journal of Epidemiology.*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

*Harvard School of Public Health.*

*Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.*

*National Recreation and Parks Association*





# Balance Work and Play

**CHALLENGE**  
 Balance work  
 time with  
 recreation.

**Instructions**

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you participate in recreational and physical activities.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you made time for recreational and physical activities. To complete the Challenge, you must meet the goal on at least 22 days out of the month. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: <input type="text"/>							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	Weight & weekly summary
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I made time for recreation and physical activity

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

