**Work life Balance**

I belong to the corporate world. A software engineer by profession and a mother of two. In many of my social interactions, a common topic that comes up is about work-life balance. I observe this to be a common challenge for all working professionals. I salute those who are able to manage their personal and professional life with equal panache. When I try to think about it, appears as simple as:

1. Prioritizing activities in my day to life
2. Multitasking
3. Change your priorities of the day based on situation

However when we do a reality check, it is not that simple. Most of us have the inherent guilt that we are unable to spend quality time with family. When we get to spend time with the family, we keep on thinking about the escalation that could have happened in my absence. We have let our professional lives mix with our personal lives and have extended the boundaries far enough to make our work life **“imbalanced”** rather than “**balanced**”. This is an infinite loop of guilt and we ourselves need to make a sincere attempt to come out of it.

I came across this speech excerpt of Brian Dyson, President & CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises at Georgia Tech 172nd Commencement Address Sept. 6, 1996 and found this very impressive:

“Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends and spirit … and you’re keeping all of these in the air.

You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends and spirit – are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for Balance in your life….”

I participated in a classroom session of Steven Covey’s 7 Habit and learnt about lifestyle or work-life management of some successful people in the industry. I have tried to learn a lesson or two, which I have shared in this write up.

In our attempt to improve our work-life balance, we can try to inculcate certain discipline within us:

1. Start your day early. Early to bed and early to rise makes us healthy, wealthy and wise. We are all aware of this adage & this brings discipline to our lives. Exercising before getting to work gives us the energy we need for the day
2. Segregate personal time in your calendar amidst your work schedule. You might be the CEO of a company and flooded with appointments, but do not forget the special slots for your family. If required block them on your calendar so that you do not have any overlaps. I always feel attending my child’s concert at school, vacation with family should not be compromised at the cost of my work
3. At the beginning of your work day, check all your mails & prioritize your activities. Do not check your mails by pressing the refresh button. I had attended a session of “Steven Covey’s 7 Habits”, where the instructor had shared this particular point. I realized that I do this more often than I expected and must avoid this.
4. Delegate non-priority work in your schedule with a day end follow up
5. Keep a slot for yourself, a “Me” time where you spend your time reading or self-learning. Block it in your calendar and do not let anyone interrupt you during this. You could do a 45 – 60 minutes slot daily except when you are offsite or in day long conferences
6. A lot of companies today are introducing a “No Meeting Day” or “No Meeting hour”. You could have a Friday as a “No Meeting Day” or a 11AM- 1PM on Monday, Wednesday, Friday as “No Meeting hour”. This can be utilized for yourself and to address your own backlog items
7. Practice a hobby that you love doing. You can do it over the weekend or in the evening. You can for example hit the gym, do gardening, play with your kids or cook for your friends joining you for dinner

Working towards a better life is a personal choice. Each of us will have our unique way of doing this. Others can share examples and quote incidents from their’ lives, but at the end we need to think what best would work for us. While all of us are working towards a successful career path, remember that the backbone of our lives is our family. If we have a good family & social life, if our health is good, success would follow suit.

1. Most importantly learn to say “NO”. Pick & choose what you want to do and what you don’t. Do not say yes to everything as a goodwill gesture. While you are doing good to others, you need to be good to yourself as well.