



Catholic Education Office
Archdiocese of Melbourne

SUPPORTING WOMEN *in their*
Leadership Journeys

RESOURCE **3** GUIDE

Work–Life Balance

- 3.1 Balancing Act
 - 3.2 Working Smarter
 - 3.3 Time Out
-

Work to live, not live to work.

*You are not your body. But you are living in a body.
You are not your mind. But you have a mind. So it's
best to understand how to manage it for best results!
And understanding the power of habits can help a lot!*

TRINIDAD HUNT, INSPIRING LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN PROGRAM

3.1 Balancing Act

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Research and feedback from women in leadership programs indicates that women considering leadership are concerned about work-life balance. In such instances, women need to plan for their increased leadership responsibilities and learn to allocate their energy across home and work domains:

Women seem to be able to lead well when their responsibilities at home and in the office are in some kind of balance. Achieving such balance allows women leaders to channel their energies effectively in both spheres (Grogan and Shakeshaft 2011, p. 24).

There are three different components of work-life balance explored in this Resource Guide – achieving balance across the areas of our lives, being smart about the way we use time, and taking time out to recharge.

After comprehensive research, Rath and Harter (2010) identified five essential elements of wellbeing – Career, Social, Financial, Physical and Community. They found that while 66 per cent of people are doing well in at least one of these areas, just seven per cent are thriving in all five. Struggling in any one of these domains damages our wellbeing. Although each of these areas is in our control, our short-term decisions often override what is best for our long-term wellbeing.

Robbins (2006) says people can work smarter by changing speed, increasing focus and organising things to do in parallel. Most people work longer to be more productive, but Robbins suggests we can work faster by eliminating distractions. He recommends working in parallel on tasks so that when one task is at a point where we are waiting on something, we can shift to the other. Robbins challenges the notion of multi-tasking, which he claims makes us feel busy and productive but does not achieve progress on any one task.

Barsh, Cranston and Craske (2008) claim that work-life balance is a myth. They talk about *managing energy*. They believe that women need to balance their energy

flows by basing their priorities on the activities that energise them at work and home and by actively managing their resources to avoid dipping into reserves.

THE WOMEN SAY

The *Round Table Forum* participants were asked: Can you balance family and work? How do you maintain family relationships? Many believed that they should be role models in all areas, including a role model for work-life balance, and they offered a range of responses for achieving work-life balance:

- Have discussions with family before applying for principalship or leadership positions. Explain what the role will entail regarding time commitment. It is important that the family supports your decision.
- Take regular holidays with husband/family.
- Do not to send/answer parent emails at weekends. Let staff know you don't expect them to answer your emails 24/7 and that weekends are downtime as much as possible.
- Schedule in social events (non work-related) at weekends.
- Take one day at a time.

Four comparative models to identify and assess balanced living

Model 1: Time Management Essentials <i>Lloyd 2004</i>	Model 2: Life Aspects www.achieve-goal-setting-success.com website	Model 3: Wheel of Life <i>Mind Tools</i> website	Model 4: Life Vision: Wheel Domains <i>Hunt 2012</i>
Physical	Health and Wellbeing	Health and Fitness	Physical
Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual	Spiritual
Financial	Finance	Money, Finance	Financial
Relational	Family	Partner, Love, Relationship	Family
Occupational	Career	Career, Business, Work	Profession
Social	Friendship	Family, Friends, Social Relationships	Relationships
Personal	Personal		Social/Emotional
Educational		Growth, Learning	Mental/Learning/Education
	Recreation	Fun	
	Community	Community	
	Household	Home, Physical Environment	



3.2 Working Smarter

SHARING THE LEARNING

There are different domains or areas of life and living that require balance. A comparison of four different models of life domains is presented in the table opposite below and can be used to identify and assess balanced living.

After choosing a model that you can relate to, identify what you want to achieve in each of the life areas. Assess whether you are achieving a balance across the various areas, and if there is an area being neglected.

Keep in mind that balance may not be about allocating equal amounts of time to each area, but making sure you find time for each area across the week, month and year. It may mean prioritising which area is most important at a particular time.

Decide on the area you should focus on right now and document how you will allocate time to this focus area.

Other resources

- '[Working Smarter](#)' material on pages 3–5 has information on prioritising time.
- The [Mind Tools](#) website has a number of resources that enable users to map balance across the facets of their lives and to develop goals for achieving a more balanced life.
- The official book site for [Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements](#) provides an assessment tool that measures five core elements of wellbeing that are within our control, so that participants can take steps to improve each of the five elements.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

In situations where women have greater domestic responsibility and are involved more heavily in the care of family members, time management is essential to achieve work–life balance.

Lloyd (2004) suggests that our value system and the choices that we make impact on how well we manage our time. It is important to take responsibility for our use of time or we can get caught up in a cycle of over-commitment, resenting the pressure caused by the demands on our time.

Sometimes it is important to ask: is time the problem, or am I the problem? Macdonald (2003) suggests that if we are not in control of our time, it gets seized by other-than-best demands. He explains that unseized time:

- flows towards weak areas
- is influenced by dominant people in our world
- surrenders to the demands of all emergencies
- focuses on things that will bring the most immediate and greatest praise.

Lloyd (2004) looks at establishing priorities, dealing with interruptions, learning to say no, and making conscious choices about the use of time. She explores the notion of mastering time and using it wisely:

... time management is life management, discerning priorities, having the right perspective, claiming responsibility for our time, accepting interruptions as opportunities, learning when to delegate and when to say no, and feeling good about the choices we have made (p. 119).

THE WOMEN SAY

The *Round Table Forum* participants provided suggestions for working smarter in relation to time management. Suggestions included:

- Work out how much you are willing to give to the job and write this down. Make simple rules, such as never working past a set time, or always leaving on time on a particular evening.
- Plan how are you going to limit what you attend – can you alternate with other leaders?
- Make a commitment with another staff member who will keep you accountable to leaving early.
- Try to set a deadline for leaving at the end of the day.
- Be clear to the school community about what you are willing to give to the position.
- Remember who controls the diary.
- Discuss the sharing of roles with your deputy principal (e.g. attending working bees).
- Try to involve the Leadership Team more in attending extra school commitments, although this can be difficult if the past principal has done it all himself/herself.
- Check in with your colleagues as to how they manage their time.
- Speak with male principals, as they sometimes see and manage things differently regarding 'working smarter'.

The *Round Table Forum* participants also sought assistance from others to make the job easier for them:

- Principal Consultants in CEOM regional offices
- CEOM personnel
- professional associations for principals and deputy principals
- other collegial networks.

SHARING THE LEARNING

To start working smarter, Clark (2004) recommends that you undertake an audit of your time and how it is prioritised over a week. Categorise how you have spent your time on different types of activities (administration, planning, meetings) or in the different facets of your life (home, leisure). Are you happy with the balance across the week and across the types of activities?

Lists, schedules and systems for completing tasks can help prevent us getting side-tracked and help us remain focused on our priorities. Ramona Creel, an organisation expert, provides advice on creating a to-do list on her website (see [Appendix](#)).

Lloyd (2004) imparts six principles of using time wisely:

- **Budget time.** Plan ahead of time how your time is going to be allotted.
- **Plan.** Identify priorities for work and home to create a sense of direction and accomplishment.
- **Make a to-do list.** Categorise the list into A = must do, B = should do, and C = could do.
- **Get started.** Review your list each day and move tasks to a new list, omitting things that can be left undone.
- **Create a weekly schedule.** Block out time for big tasks, perhaps at the same time each day or on certain days of the week.
- **Personalise the scheduling system.** Use a streamlined system that works for you and provides a balance of long- and short-term planning.

It is important to differentiate between what is important and what is urgent in order to use time wisely. Covey included a Time Management Matrix (reproduced below) in the co-authored work, *First Things First* (Covey et al. 2003) and in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey 2004). Important activities lead to the achievement of goals, while urgent activities demand immediate attention and are often linked to someone else's goal. There is a continuum of importance



and urgency within and between the quadrants of the matrix developed by Covey.

Kathy Paauw draws on Covey's work and suggests having a weekly administrative tasks meeting with yourself ([Paauwerfully Organised](#) website, n.d.). After itemising tasks for your to-do list the matrix can be used to rate their importance and their level of urgency. This can help you prepare for the week ahead. Covey recommends that our attention should be focused on items in Quadrant I and II and we should avoid items in Quadrant III and IV (Covey et al. 2003).

There are times during the day when you may not be using your time to your best advantage. These include when you:

- complete a task or are at a natural transition
- need a break from the task-at-hand
- have been interrupted by someone
- have to decide between two projects
- feel distracted
- are procrastinating
- are running out of energy.

A constructive management strategy for using time to your best advantage is to ask: what is the best use of my time, right now? Sometimes this may be a simple task or something that will provide a quick win. Robbins (2006) advises that it is good to have tasks that can be done when we are caught waiting. These are opportunities to plan for the week, read emails, pay bills online, etc.

Saying 'no'

Another strategy for working smarter is learning to say 'no'. Some women find saying 'yes' to requests, demands and interruptions easier and more comfortable than saying 'no'. If this is the case, the underlying motives for being a yes person need to be determined (e.g. feeling indispensable, needing to be liked, needing to be flattered, not letting people down, avoiding confrontation).

Women need strategies for saying 'no', particularly if they are high achieving and productive. First, you need to determine what saying 'yes' will cost in terms of time, effort and progress towards your goals. Will it lead to over-commitment, distraction from important tasks, feelings of resentment, inability to complete the request, or someone else missing out on the task?

Some useful strategies are:

- Ask for time to check your calendar and schedule to see how the request fits in with your other plans. This will give you a chance to take time before responding.
- Make sure people know your time demands. Sharing calendars in a work environment helps with this, but family and friends may also need to know.
- Respect your own time and the time of others. You are accountable for how you use the time you have available.
- Encourage others to solve their own problems – coaching skills are important here.
- Don't offer excuses for saying 'no' – just say you are unable to commit time to the request.
- Thank people for asking you and provide suggestions for alternative avenues, if appropriate.
- Be clear about your goals and priorities.
- Find a way to say 'no' that feels comfortable to you, and practise it. Be clear, kind and tactful.

Delegating

Delegation is a strategy for managing time and one that fits with notions of distributive or collective leadership. When you delegate a task, it keeps moving while you work on something else.

Saying 'no' and delegating can be closely linked. If you decide to say 'no' to a request, delegating may be a good solution. Like the ability to say 'no', the underlying motives for not delegating should be identified. The table below summarises these possible motives and some alternative perspectives and solutions.

For delegation to be successful, take time to explain to and instruct the delegate and follow up so both of you can benefit. Make sure the delegate has the time, tools and resources to be successful. This is an important strategy for women in leadership, as it is through being the delegate that many have said that they have appreciated the opportunity to grow and develop in their leadership. Delegating is time consuming but saves time in the long term. Plan for tasks that can be delegated, especially tasks that do not need your level of expertise.

Motive	Alternative perspectives and solutions
No-one else will do it	No-one else will do it if you don't ask them. Learn to ask for help. When it is not your personal responsibility or related to your goals, delegate
No-one does it as well as me	Make sure you clearly explain what you need, then leave it up to the delegate to undertake the task in her/his own way.
I will lose control or authority	Allow others to have authority. Then leave it up to them to get the task done.
I might not be needed any more. They might do it better.	Everyone benefits from the progress of individual team members.
It shows I 'can't do it all'	It is important to ask for help when you need it. Delegate if the task is beyond your capabilities.
I don't want to impose on others	There may be others who could complete the task with greater ease and more efficiency.
It takes time to show others how to do the task well	Training is a crucial part of delegating. Provide information and support, be available for questions, and provide praise and credit.

Adapted from 5 Leadership Essentials for Women (Clark 2004, p. 151–153)

3.3 Time-out

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

The practice of taking time out is the result of a conscious decision to do so. If you are managing time efficiently, you will build in time for yourself. You owe it to your work colleagues, families and other significant people in your life to take time out in order to function at your best.

It is in taking the time for a daily quiet time, periodic get-aways for planning and renewal, and regular time-off for leisure and relaxation that we find the needed direction and strength for the journey ahead (Clark 2004, p. 136).

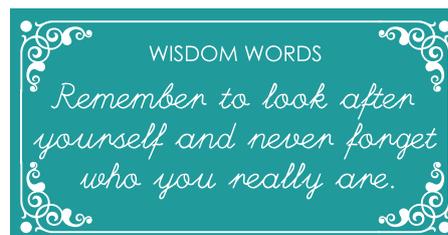
A useful tactic is to identify the conditions and situations that replenish your energy. Time out can mean taking time away from the job, ensuring you allocate time in your schedule to do things you find enjoyable, fulfilling or relaxing, and participating in activities that help you to relax or de-stress, such as meditation or yoga.

Pratt (2010, p. 34) reflects on taking time out from her leadership role:

Apart from the ability to prioritise, you also need a good sense of humour, a supportive partner and a strong work ethic. I have found that a glass of wine, a bubble bath and a locked door have helped too!

An important practice for wellbeing is *centering*, or meditation. Centering can help to strengthen the neural networks of joy, contentment, caring and compassion, as well as stimulate deep states of insight and expanded awareness. Centering the brain can evoke calmness, increase positive emotion, improve ability to deal with pain and illness, increase empathy, and reduce fatigue. Meditating reduces the electrical current in the brain (Alpha level) and this promotes intuition, creativity, clarity and inspirational thoughts.

The way we manage the transition between work and home can positively or negatively impact on our relationships and sense of wellbeing. Fraser (2012) calls this transition the *third space*.



He conducted research with small business owners and found that only a small percentage came home in a good mood, with a positive mindset and exhibiting constructive behaviour. Fraser developed a technique to overcome this trend, which is outlined in 'Sharing the learning' (below).

THE WOMEN SAY

The *Round Table Forum* participants talked about the dilemma they faced when the opportunities arose for time-out. Many felt a sense of guilt. They also observed that many of their male colleagues had a more positive attitude to taking time out – they appeared to be more comfortable about participating in activities that enabled them to de-stress and recharge.

There was recognition amongst the *Round Table Forum* participants that women need to see taking time out as part of the normal practice for women in leadership. Also, by having a healthier attitude to taking time out, they could be better role models to other women leaders and women aspiring to leadership (see [Resource Guide 5.2, 'Being a role model'](#)).

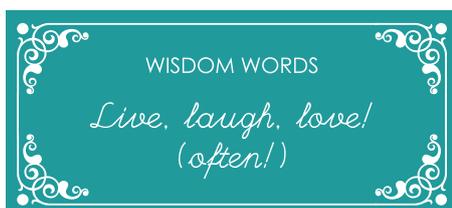
When asked what strategies they employ to ensure their wellbeing was being nurtured, the *Round Table Forum* participants shared these ideas:



- Try to compartmentalise things. I have a mental image of a box where I put work and then I open the home box at home.
- Laugh often! A sense of humour is essential. Try to see the funny side of things and be prepared to laugh at yourself and admit your mistakes.
- Have a dog to talk to – it doesn't talk back! Walk the dog.
- Go to the movies. Go alone for time-out.
- Meditate at school and home.
- Phone a friend for support.
- Take up Pilates, which is great for the mind, as well as the body, or take up walking and other forms of exercise.
- Take regular holidays.
- Have a glass of wine at the end of the week.



Participants in the Round Table Forum were introduced to Hunt's *Minute Meditations*. The meditations enable people to be present in the moment when communicating with others and when there is a need to create mental space prior to facing a difficult situation. The various forms of mediation are explained below and are also accessible from Trinidad Hunt's website under '[Minute Meditations](#)'.



SHARING THE LEARNING

Hunt's *Minute Meditations* comprise the following forms and strategies:

- The **One Minute Meditation**. This enables a person to become still, present and centred and to move into a situation with a clearer mind. Spend one minute inhaling and exhaling deeply and slowly. On the *in* breath say the words 'Be Still' and on the *out* breath say 'Let Go'. This helps to shift awareness, energise a person's

presence in the moment and change all the moments that follow.

- The **Thirty-Second Doorway to Your Day**. This takes advantage of time-wasting events that make people feel frustrated, such as waiting for the lift to arrive. Take a deep breath and imagine a thirty-second doorway to your day. Use the time to visualise a positive doorway to your activities that day.
- The **Spotlight Meditation**. This is used for those times when people are in a hurry and are stuck at traffic lights. Remind yourself to go into an 'attitude of gratitude'. Turn around the potential frustration and give gratitude for the moment of peace, a pause in the fast movement of life.

Fraser (2012) found that if people engaged in three simple activities on the way home from work, they increased their happiness at home by 41 per cent.

1. **Reflect** – on the day and focus on what has been achieved and gone well. This increases positive emotion and puts people in a growth mindset.
2. **Rest** – allocate time to turn off the brain and be calm and present. This reduces the level of negative neuro-transmitters and allows the brain chemistry to support more constructive behaviours.
3. **Reset** – be clear about your intentions for home and the exact behaviour you want to exhibit when you go through the door. This is the most important step in achieving good interactions in the home.

It is beneficial to end each workday by reviewing the to-do list and prioritising tasks for the next day (see 3.2 '[Working Smarter](#)' on page 3). The more routine tasks should be left to the end of the day to help you wind down. Follow Fraser's advice about using travel time to switch off from work and prepare for family/home. Travel time can also be used to listen to music, or for reading.

Some women may find that a simple habit, such as changing out of work clothes, is the cue for confirming that work has finished. Doing something physical, such as going for a walk or to the gym, can provide time to shift focus and create a transition.

Ideally, you should not bring work home, but if this is impossible you need to negotiate with your families or household members about how long you will spend on it and what type of space you need to complete it. This may mean working for a set time, only on certain evenings, or at a time when children are in bed. If you need time alone when you get home, discuss this with family and/or household members so that they do not mistake this for disinterest in themselves.

ECCLESIASTES 3:1–2

Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses. There is a time to be born and a time to die. There is a time to plant and a time to pull up plants.

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Appendix

CREATING A TO-DO LIST THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Six Reasons to Keep a To-Do List

- can help you take control of your time
- gives a one-glance look at everything you want to accomplish
- minimises mind-clutter by keeping track of odds and ends
- improves your memory by writing everything down
- frees up mental 'RAM' by emptying your brain of trivial items
- helps you prioritise your activities.

Building a Master To-Do List

- keep a notepad nearby so you can enter items as they occur to you
- empty all of the to-dos in your head onto a piece of paper
- don't worry about priority, importance, or time frame for completing
- this is your 'master to-do list'
- don't try to tackle all the items on this list
- you will build your 'daily to-do list' from your master list.

Categorizing and Prioritising

- break your master list into meaningful categories by activity
- home maintenance, work, calls, errands, to buy, etc.
- break large projects into smaller individual tasks
- assign a letter code to each item on the list
- 'A' = must do, 'B' = should do, 'C' = could do
- prioritise items in each category by letter – A then B then C
- limit your daily list to no more than 10 items you hope to complete.

Daily To-Do List

- limit your daily list to no more than 10 items you hope to complete
- include no more than two large or difficult tasks
- your daily list includes appointments and commitments to others
- also include A items off of your master list
- if you have time, fill in the gaps with some B and C items
- leave room for urgent items that just pop up.

Developing a 'Not-To-Do' List

- not every item on your to-do list has to be done
- the key to productivity is awareness of how you spend your time
- what you do, how long it takes, and what benefit you get
- create a log tracking your activities for a week
- evaluate the time investment time versus 'payoff' for each activity
- how much benefit or enjoyment are you getting from each activity?
- keep high-payoff and enjoyable activities on your to-do list
- ask yourself if low-payoff activities need to be done at all
- if they do need to be done, do they have to be done by you?
- if they need to be done by you, could they be simplified?

How to Tackle Your List

- tasks should be completed in order of importance
- unless they have a specific time frame (like a meeting or class)
- is this the best possible use of your time at the exact moment?

- your goal is to complete all of your A items first
- then finish as many B and C items in the time available
- be realistic about how much you can accomplish in a day
- create an agenda for your daily task list
- schedule times for completing specific activities whenever possible
- if you didn't complete a task, you had too many items on your list
- move unfinished items to another day and re-evaluate the priority.

Making Sure Your Actions Items Get Done

- if you procrastinate, create artificial deadlines to finish early
- know your work style (long stretches or short bursts)
- understand your high and low energy periods – plan your to-dos accordingly
- make liberal use of memory joggers – alarms, sticky notes, etc.

Other Alternatives to Doing It All Yourself

- get your family to take on household responsibilities from your list
- ask a co-worker for assistance with routine business tasks
- ... and offer to help out the next time that co-worker needs a break!
- make use of support staff – admin clerks, assistants, etc.
- outsource jobs to an independent contractor or freelancer
- develop a local co-op for sharing time-consuming domestic chores
- set up an informal chore swap with a neighbour.