



# OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

## WORK LIFE BALANCE

## SKILLS

### LEARNING UNITS:



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## 1 INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

The challenges of work-life balance are huge these days. Work has become a big part of life, especially now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work made it even more difficult to separate work life and personal life. Today we live in a fast-paced society, filled with responsibilities and deadlines, and that is why work-life balance is so important.

Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal<sup>1</sup>. A lack of work-life balance becomes a problem, leads to stress, lower levels of productivity, overall sickness, burnout, depression, which is a problem for employees and organizations. And this is the reason why these learning units are of such importance; they will help to draw strategies on how to make work-life balance easier and give out some great mechanisms to cope with daily challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Work-life balance. (2002). The Word Spy. Retrieved January 30, 2003, from <http://www.wordspy.com/words/work-lifebalance.asp>



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## 2 LECTURE NOTES (10-15 pages)

During the sessions about work life balance five learning units will be presented: principles and processes of work-life balance; values of work-life balance culture; mindfulness-based strategies; flexibility culture; and the importance of clocking out.

All these units are to be presented via PowerPoint, it can be done remotely or in person, with a teacher.

Before starting all classes, a breath focus exercises will be done. This exercise allows your body to relax and focus better on the task you are about to do. It is a very simple procedure: sitting with the spine upright, exhale all the air in your lungs out through your mouth. Close your lips and use your nose to inhale slowly until your lungs are full. Hold the air in your lungs for a count of three to five seconds and then slowly release (Majsiak, 2019).

The first learning unit is about the principles and processes of work-life balance. There are three main topics to be discussed in this unit: the basic definition of work-life balance, work-life balance policies, and risks for work-related stress.

Work-life balance has numerous definitions, each author presents a slightly different one, but all very similar. The definition that we found to fit better is *work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal* (Work Life Balance, 2003). The work-life balance term is nothing new, back in 1872, in Toronto, Canada, when employees started to fight for shorter shifts, the so-called "Nine-Hour Movement". They would have ten-hour shifts, seven days a week, and, in order to have a more balanced life workers.

Having a break from work and an active life outside of work is important so people won't enter a burnout stage. Burnout is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a *syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed and can be characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and reduced professional efficacy* (WHO, 2019).

The impact of workers' health and safety on business-related outcomes, such as worker performance, productivity, and turnover, may help to demonstrate the importance of protecting and promoting worker health. The WHO and the International Labor Organization (ILO) have defined occupational health back in 1950: *The promotion and maintenance of the highest physical, mental and social well-being in all*



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*professions, looking for the prevention of health problems caused by working conditions, protection of workers regarding exposure to risks, and a work environment adapted to the worker (ILO/WHO, 1950).*

Work-life balance makes people more in control of their working and personal lives and that is what people want, as data shows, in a 2001 survey by the Radcliff Public Policy Center, 82% of men and 85% of women ages 20 to 39 placed family time at the top of their work/life priorities (Lockwood, 2003).

This directs to explain people's basic five-stage need model, Maslow (1943) built the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This hierarchy is seen as a pyramid, built by seven layers of basic needs and the base one needs to be solid so the next can thrive.

Visualizing it from the bottom of the pyramid upwards, it all starts with the physiological needs, these are the basic needs for water, food, oxygen, shelter, sleep, sex.

Then come the safety needs, these include being safe from potentially dangerous physical and psychological situations and events, also security of health, money, work, routine, and familiarity. The third layer of the pyramid is love and belonging, this means feeling part of a group, giving, and receiving trust, acceptance, affection, and love. The fourth layer of Maslow's Hierarchy is Esteem Needs which means feeling respect for others, family, socially and at work. The fifth layer is Cognitive Needs; these are the desire for knowledge and to understand. After this comes the Aesthetic Needs, this is the need for beauty, creativity, design, and art. And at the top of the pyramid comes Self-actualization, this is defined by reaching the full potential (McLeod, 2020).

Maslow's Hierarchy (1943) helps understand that work-life balance is something that a human being needs to thrive. This leads to the next topic to be discussed in the first unit, work-life balance policies. Maxwell (2005) came up with some: how long people work (flexibility in the number of hours worked); when people work (flexibility in the arrangement of hours); where people work (flexibility in the place of work); developing people through training so that they can manage the balance better; providing back-up support; and breaks from work.

Organizations should always follow through with their work-life balance policies because there are risks associated with the neglects of this balance. The risks associated are psychological and social problems such as mental health issues, cognitive dysfunctions and behavioral or social health problems; also, physical, and psychological problems such as cardiovascular problems and musculoskeletal disturbances must be considered.



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Bhende et. al (2020) found that the *quality of work-life (balance)* was found to be comprised for three dimensions: *freedom and recognition, reward, and grievance redress*. Meaning that employees need recognition for doing their jobs and do not like to be continuously monitored.

At the end of this first unit a question is proposed: What did you understand by the Maslow's Hierarchy? And one possible answer would be that the Maslow's Hierarchy defines what are the basic needs of a human being, from the most basic ones such as food, water, air, shelter, to self-actualization such as reaching full potential.

The second unit is about the values of work-life balance. This unit includes three main topics to be discussed: job-demands and resources theory (JDR), job satisfaction and engagement: how work-life balance affects it, and work-life balance: classic workplace vs. remote working.

The Job-Demand and Resources Theory (JDR) was developed by the researchers Arnold Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti in 2006. This theory focuses on Burnout and Engagement.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) explain that Burnout can be defined in three dimensions: *exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy*. Meanwhile, engagement is the opposite and positive pole of burnout. The authors define engagement as a *positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption*.

As the name of the theory points out, most jobs can be measured by two sets of variables: job-demands and job-resources. One the one hand, focusing on the bright side first, job-resources are *the aspects of work, physical, social, or environmental, that can contribute to: the individual is functional to achieve your work goals; reduce the requirements of the work and the physiological or psychological costs associated with job; and stimulate personal growth and development* (Demerouti et al., 2001, p.501). On the other hand, job demands are defined as *the aspects of work, physical or social or environmental, that require a continued physical or mental effort (throughout the time) and that are associated with physiological or psychological* (Demerouti et al., 2001, p.501).

Some examples of job resources are autonomy, learning and development in the workplace, new career opportunities, and good work relationships. On the other hand, some job demands are poor workplace relationships, heavy workload, time pressures and a stressful workplace environment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

This model can be illustrated by the figure presented on PowerPoint 2, where the energetic process (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) can be viewed, this is the process of job demands that represents something that is bad for one's health and will have negative results. It sums job demands and subtracts job



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resources that in turn burnout and less job engagement, this will bring health problems and a higher turnover intention.

The motivational process takes place through engagement with the organizational outcomes (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), this results in a lower intention to leave the organization.

In conclusion, there should be more job resources rather than job demands, because motivational results (job resources) are a positive outcome, contrary to the energetic process (job demands) that leads to bad health results.

After a better understanding of the JDR Theory, it is important to recognize how work-life balance affects job satisfaction and engagement. These are crucial factors for employee growth, learning, and development, but sometimes this is hard to attain.

Job resources are a lot of times annulling of job demands, meaning that when there is a high level of vigor, dedication, and absorption the person is happier at work. But this doesn't happen on its own, for it to materialize there needs to be work-life balance, so the employee has time to rest and refocus.

Workplaces are changing. One can work at a classic workplace, meaning an office, a school, a university, among others; or one can work from home. This transition was being done gradually, but in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit a lot of countries entered a strict lockdown where everyone could not leave their houses and just like that all jobs went from classic workplaces to remote working (working at home).

In each form of workplace there are pros and cons that should be assessed, but in both there should be a great level of work-life balance.

In a classic workplace environment, there is usually a fixed or semi-fixed schedule and there's social interaction, we see each other face to face, and this is an important aspect because verbal and non-verbal behaviors are vital to successful understanding among people. Also, we always have someone around that lets us know what we must do. Also, in this classic form of workplace, often people don't go home at proper hours and have a big load of work. That can be bad and can lead to distress and burnout.

There has been a lot of recent research about remote workplaces, and it has some benefits and some troubles. A lot of people enjoy it because they don't have to commute to work and waste long hours of their day and can do the same thing from wherever they want.



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But in remote work there is often a blur on the boundaries between work and family roles (Charalampous et al., 2019; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) also there are some other problems such as social isolation, professional isolation, and a negative impact on performance.

Work-life balance helps with these situations. An employee must set boundaries between his/her social life and work. Only that way there can be a minimization of work-related stress and lower the chances of burnout.

The social part may lack at work but there are activities that can be done like « happy hour » with colleagues via videoconference or game night in the same way.

It is hard to have a perfect work-life balance, but one should try and establish a balance that meets their personal needs and expectations and be able to adjust to all moments of life. It should always be kept in mind that organization and focus are the priorities for work-life balance, and this is the kind of work culture that we should reinforce.

At the end of unit 2, an exercise is proposed: - How does WLB affect job satisfaction and engagement? A possible answer to this question would be: Job satisfaction and engagement are crucial factors for employee growth, learning, and development; they're attained by having more job resources than job demands, such as encouraging more sharing of tasks with other colleagues, supportive leadership, team development.

The third unit addresses mindfulness-based strategies. The topics to be discussed are the following: what does mindfulness mean; mindfulness-based strategies stress reduction vs. mindfulness-based cognitive therapy; and mindfulness-based practices for professionals.

First of all, the concept of mindfulness should be explained. It is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing (Mindful Staff, 2020).

As explained earlier, burnout is a big problem in today's society. It is a syndrome resulting from exposure to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job with key symptoms including overwhelming exhaustion (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; in Nguyen et al. 2019). Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992; Paulson, Davidson, Jha, & Kabat-Zinn, 2013) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) (Kuyken et al., 2016; Teasdale, Segal, & Williams, 1995) are therapies that have shown to reduce stress and depression and be effective in reducing burnout. This is a formal training program.

MBSR and MBCT are expensive therapies and sometimes time consuming. Usually, the people who suffer from burnout don't have time for time consuming activities. So, this program can be adapted to an



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online model. It provides more privacy, and people can do it when even they have time, at their own pace, and from the comfort of home.

Some mindfulness-based practices for professionals that are free and easy to do without others' help are: the five senses exercise, body scan, self-compassion pause and breath focus (as explained earlier). These are just some examples of many mindfulness-based exercises that exist.

The five senses exercise is a grounding exercise that can help with one's anxiety and as the name says, it has five stages where you work your five senses. To start you must pay full attention to your breathing, breathe slowly and deeply, so you can find yourself in a calm state.

After that first part of the exercise, you start the five stages (Smith, S., 2018):

- First acknowledge five things you see around you, it can be the ceiling, your phone, anything in your surroundings.
- Acknowledge four things you can touch around you, it can be your own skin, your hair, your desk, among others.
- Then acknowledge three things you can hear, this can be an external sound, for example your own breathing, the birds outside, the sound of your hand going through your skin, a clock ticking, among others.
- Acknowledge two things you can smell, maybe you can smell the ink of the printer in your office, the trees outside.
- Acknowledge one thing you can taste, think what your mouth tastes like: toothpaste used in the morning or at night are good sources, coffee, gum.

When completed, the five stages exercise, you should feel calm and ready to continue your day, now better focused on your daily tasks.

The body scan exercise is done to release tension your body is holding. It's done by getting in a comfortable position, preferably lying down. Focus on your breathing, flowing in and out, so you get to a more relaxed and focused state. After that, unlock your body members, starting from the top and acknowledging them. When you are fully relaxed and have released all the tension, you are ready to carry on with the rest of the day (Regents of the University of Minnesota and Life Science Foundation, 2009).

Self-compassion pause is a powerful tool you can use to improve your well-being, and confidence. Take moments of your day, especially when you're feeling stressed to do this. It is easy to reach up and touch your heart, take a few deep breaths. Acknowledge that you are suffering and offer yourself phrases



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of compassion as you would to someone you care for, for example: "May I love and accept myself as I am" or "I am worthy".

At the end of unit 3, it is suggested to answer the following question: Why are Mindfulness exercises so important? A possible answer would be that these simple exercises and practices will help in the long run to control anxiety, to reduce muscle tension, focus better on work, reduce symptoms of depression and burnout, they help to feel more in control and situated, with the mind and body. And this is how we close unit 3.

The fourth unit is about flexibility culture. There are three main topics to be discussed: why should routines be flexible and open to change; flexibility to maintain a balance; and why organizations should have flexibility policies.

Flexibility in working environments is perceived as a program that reduces workload, better schedules that accommodate employees' personal lives (Wynn & Rao, 2019). This influences employees' motivation and performance, it's a big component of work-life balance.

Being exposed to a flexible working situation also develops other useful skills such as not having rigid thoughts, meaning the employees can be accessed easily as they are ready to receive and implement change. This is linked to the capacity of adjusting to new circumstances the employees might face. Adjustability comes in hand with problem solving, an important skill that refers to handling and solving difficult and unexpected situations.

To maintain a balanced life, routines should not be rigid and unchangeable, they must be flexible. There are five factors that have to be juggled carefully, it's known as the five balls juggling analogy. The five balls represent: work, family, health, friends, and spirit (Mondal, Gangopadhyay, & Director, 2018). A person will need all five to be healthy, physically, and mentally.

There are some problems with flexibility, they come along with the way our society works. A lot of people don't take advantage of the flexibility policies their organization has. That happened because there is a cultural stigma where people prioritize work over family (WYNN & RAO, 2019).

For the longest time, if someone would show up to work sick, it meant that they were a hard worker and wouldn't take a day off for anything, because work comes before all other responsibilities (Acker 1990; Williams 2000; Davies and Frink 2014). This way of acting has been changing over the last decades because there is a bigger sense of balance. With COVID-19 this stigma is changing even more, because if someone shows up to work sick it would be a huge disrespect for others.

Employees also struggle with the use of flexibility policies because of the consistent negative effect of flexibility policy effect on wage growth (Glass 2004), promotions, and performance evaluations



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(Wharton, Chivers, and Blair-Loy 2008). This is of course related to the cultural stigma of the “ideal worker” norm (WYNN & RAO, 2019).

This is a problem of today and must be solved. A solution to it is building a culture of flexibility and health in the workplace. There should be organizational leadership commitment and supportive organizational policies and practices (including accountability and training, management and employee engagement, benefits, and incentives to support workplace health promotion and protection) (Sorensen et al. 2019).

Employees should be able to prioritize and take advantage of the regulations that help with work-life balance. And for that I suggest three policies to keep in mind:

- Computer at work saves and shuts down at leaving hours;
- People who don't work more than the daily 8h and just on weekdays will have some sort of benefits;
- Parents or someone who has the responsibility for the care of a child of school age or under should have a reduced schedule without losing the opportunity of a future promotion and other career expectations.

Concluding Unit 4, it is suggested to answer the following question: How to improve my company's flexibility? And to answer this question one should present three examples of policies such as the ones presented in the previous paragraph.

Flexibility policies are needed to have a better balance in life, our world is increasingly demanding, and we need to make time for everything that fulfills us.

Unit 5 is about the importance of clocking-out. The topics to be discussed are: remote working and being able to stop answering work at non-working hours, time management, and the limitation of working hours and performance relation.

Remote working has seen a big expansion in the last years, this is due to an explosion in the technological means available to individuals and employed by organizations (Ter Hoeven & Van Zoonen, 2015). There has been a fast development in the technological and the communication field.

But being a remote worker does not necessarily mean that they have a better work-life balance. Evidence has shown that sometimes it is the opposite, some e-workers might overwork to reciprocate the permissible flexibility (Charalampous et al., 2019), and it can sometimes become hard to set clear boundaries between work and personal life.

Anoye and Kouamé (2018) defined as the main challenges in remote working the following:



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- Communication – it is harder to communicate without having the human face to face interaction, there is no emotion without seeing the other person.
- Geography and isolation – people may be in different time zones which makes working as a team harder; also, the lack of affective and social support is detrimental for a higher work engagement, the lack of it increases emotional exhaustion levels (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012; in Charalampous et al., 2019).
- Technology – it's always being outdated which means that there has to be constant training to always be on top of the new software.
- Security – online breaches are possible, and they can compromise the privacy of the organization data and of its clients and employees.
- Motivation – self-motivation is an important skill for e-workers, since they are at a location that is not a physical office with others pressuring to get the work done, if someone cannot self-motivate, it can lead to a bad work performance, and that can be harmful for the organization (Charalampous et al., 2019).
- Relationships – e-workers find it harder to meet their colleagues, and gain a trusting relationship with them, this can be challenging when working with other people. Also, relationships are essential to feel more committed to the organization (Charalampous et al., 2019), as social beings we need connection.

Remote working can become more damaging to individuals since they seem to work even more because they are not able to dismiss work out of the legal eight working hours. We are a living and always-on culture. If increased flexibility has been good for workers in the pandemic era, it has also meant that we've had fewer and fewer chances to disconnect (Henshall 2021).

It is hard to disconnect because we all have phones and they're always sending us notifications, we can turn them off, but few do and we always have the urge to check what is going on for fear of missing out on something important, even if we don't do it consciously.

Controlling the overwork of employees is hard to regulate. It is hard because some companies benefit from it in the short-run and it is something personal, so it's hard to regulate without entering the personal sphere of employees. This a new work-from-home era (Henshall 2021), and legislation must be made because people are not very good at managing their work-life and personal life boundaries, and that is harmful in the long-run because as humans there is the need for a work life balance. As I mentioned before, in Unit four, there are five components that we can't neglect in life, these are work, family, health, friends, and spirit, and a person will need all five to be healthy, physically, and mentally.



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There are already some organizations that are regulating employees' work, "Volkswagen, [...] non-management employees reportedly cannot access their email on their smartphones between 1815 and 0700" (Henshall, 2021). This is an effective initiative that could be applied more often.

This theme is directly linked to time management. Time management is essential, employees need to develop strategies to maximize time to achieve personal and organizational goals (Farrell 2017).

It is a challenge to manage time effectively, especially when working with other people. It's very common to get an email asking to do something basically at the end of the working day. This is due to poor management and lack of consideration, respect for other people's time is critical for an organization, it *builds a culture that everyone is important in the organization and that time is realized as a commodity* (Farrell 2017).

Time management is related to a planning process, we should organize individual and organizational priorities and make planning part of the day-to-day basis. When we pinpoint our priorities and organize our time around them, time management is usually much more effective.

An element of time management is communication, if effective communication is used employees will not waste time doing unnecessary things and can use that time to do productive tasks. It's important to outline what is vital, and once again, planning, can help communicate more efficiently.

Time management leads to the last topic of this Unit 5, limitation of working hours and performance relation. Working hours should be limited to the 8h working day, and for that good time management is essential. If people work hard during their working hours they should not have to check in work after/before that.

There should be a positive leadership that supports its employees and is a role model (Bass & Avolio 1995). We live in a VUCA world, this acronym means: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity; faced with VUCA world we live in, the leaders must be aware of the goals to reach and how to achieve them. As a role model, leaders being online conveys the false perception that the leader is always available for the team, however, it is not true. Promoting total availability is to increase a culture of abusive leadership so it is necessary to create boundaries.

Limitation of working hours helps having a more balanced life, because of that employee satisfaction will be higher and consequently job performance will be better too (Bhende et al., 2020).

At the end of unit 5, it is indicated to answer the following question: Strategies to improve my daily time management. And a possible answer to this question is: make a to-do list do you mark your priorities, and make sure that to-do list has time for you to take care of your social and personal life, and say "no" to what you can't do so you don't overwork. It is all about planning and setting priorities.



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Some other tips for Time Management are the use of a planner, to plan your days ahead so you know what you have to do and can properly manage everything and set priorities straight. In hand with the planner comes the establishment of personal deadlines, that will help keep everything you do on track, so you don't accumulate work and chores and become overwhelmed. Another great tip is take breaks! Between tasks we should take breaks to allow ourselves to breath and clear our head for a bit.

Finally a last tip based on the SMART model. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based. This model was originally outlined by George T. Doran in 1981 as the five essential criteria for time management (Ogbeivi 2017), to make sure your goals are clear and reachable. For a goal to be specific you have to be able to answer the following questions: What, Why, Who, Where and Which. For your goal to be Measurable you must address questions like "How will I accomplish this?". For the goal to be Achievable, your goal has to be realistic, think about the limitations like time and financial factors. Your goal must be Relevant; it has to matter otherwise it can get lost in the million things you have to do. At last, your goal has to be Time-Based, this means you should have a deadline to focus on, and it may help to have even smaller deadlines before the big goal.

To conclude, after these five units you should be able to manage your work-life balance better. This can be a complex process, but it is possible to have a balanced life. It is important to set boundaries and organize and plan, as far as possible, our personal and work life. Work-life balance is still a field with a lot to explore, there was a greater intensification of this subject during the last years, especially, during the pandemic context.



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### 3 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (5-10)

**Content:** Principles and processes of Work-life balance.

**Question:** What is the basic definition of work-life balance?

**Answer:** The best-known theories of motivation stem from the assumption that man works to satisfy his needs. Goods that meet needs are often part of the outside world. Work engagement, however, comes from the man himself.

**Content:** Values of work-life balance culture and JD-R.

**Question:** Why is J-DR model so important to explain work-life balance?

**Answer:** According to the model, there is an energetic process that represents something that is bad for one's health and will have negative results (i.e., high job demands and low job resources) that in turn burnout and less job engagement.

The motivational process takes place through engagement with the organizational outcomes (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), this results in a lower intention to leave the organization. In conclusion, there should be more job resources rather than job demands, because motivational results (job resources) are a positive outcome, contrary to the energetic process (job demands) that leads to bad health results.

**Content:** Values of work-life balance culture

**Question:** Relate the Maslow's Hierarchy with work-life balance

**Answer:** Maslow's Hierarchy (1943) helps understand that work-life balance is something that a human being needs to thrive

**Content:** Mindfulness-based strategies.

**Question:** Provide examples of some good mindfulness-based stress reduction exercises?



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**Answer:** Examples of mindfulness-based practices are: the five senses exercise, body scan, self-compassion pause and breath focus

**Content:** Flexibility culture.

**Question:** Provide best practices needed to build a culture of flexibility and health in the workplace

**Answer:** Organizational leadership commitment and supportive organizational policies and practices (including accountability and training, management and employee engagement, benefits, and incentives to support workplace health promotion and protection). Moreover, three policies should be developed: i) Computer at work saves and shuts down at leaving hours; ii) People who don't work more than the daily 8h and just on weekdays will have some sort of benefits; iii) Parents or someone who have the responsibility for the care of a child of school age or under should have a reduced schedule without losing the opportunity of a future promotion and other career expectations.

**Content:** Time management

**Question:** Why is time management so important? Please mention a few strategies

**Answer:** i) organize individual and organizational priorities; ii) make planning part of the day-to-day basis; iii) pinpoint priorities and organize time around them; iv) develop effective communication; v) avoid doing unnecessary things and can use that time to do productive tasks; vi) working hours should be limited to the 8h working day.



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## 4 CASE STUDIES (2 case studies)

### 4.1 CASE STUDY 1

#### TITLE: George Smith Life Battles

George Smith is an IT technician who joined a North American multinational in 2015. He started as an intern and was identified as a high potential asset. Since 2016, he has been working remotely from home and his supervisors, from an early stage, have given him the most challenging projects to respond to the requests of the best customers. Software development has always been one of George's dreams, but when in 2019 he decided to get married and raise a family, other dreams began to take over his life. Basically, he realized that his role as a husband, in sharing domestic tasks, and as a father of a 7-month-old baby girl, is a tremendous challenge. The house's mortgage is quite high and weighs heavily on the young couple's family budget, so George feels he must learn a lot on the company to achieve increasingly ambitious goals and thus earn a lot more money to pay the hefty installments to the bank.

Managers understand George's determination to earn more money, so they are always demanding more. Co-workers are feeling some envy of George. Many of them stopped talking to him. When he must work as a team, he feels that he has to take on all the responsibilities. This leaves you on your toes at the end of the day. When he turns off the computer at the office, he feels he has to help with the housework and support his wife who also works remotely from home. Having a baby doesn't make your life easier either, as he feels he can't keep up with his daughter's growth as he would like. This is an important phase in a baby's growth that he doesn't want to miss.

With all this, in recent months he began to develop more aggressive behavior towards his co-workers and his wife at home. After each aggressive behavior, he develops feelings of guilt, because his peers and his wife are not to blame for the demands, he makes on himself. With all this, you have been developing negative thoughts and a lot of anxiety. Managers and colleagues found that their performance is no longer the same. They're worried about George. His wife wonders if he really needs help. In a first consultation with a psychologist, he was diagnosed with burnout and generalized anxiety disorder.

#### LEARNING UNIT:

- Values of WLB Culture

#### TOPIC:

- JDR and job satisfaction and engagement: how Work-life balance affects it

#### COMPETENCES:

- Lead and supervise basic procedures of recruitment and selection



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## INSTRUCTIONS:

- A total of two participants do Case study 1.

## DURATION:

- Understand what the problem is and relate the JDR model with the case – 30 minutes.
- Discuss what are the possible causes of low WLB and relate with the case – 30 minutes
- Compare the given problems with your problems on your day-to-day job – 30 minutes
- Discuss how to increase Georges resources and reduce the demands – 15 minutes

## PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

- Completed Values of work-life balance culture unit.

## RECOMMENDED LITERATURE:

- PowerPoints
- References used for the PowerPoints

## PRESENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

George Smith is an IT technician who joined a North American multinational in 2015. He started as an intern and was identified as a high potential asset. Software development has always been one of George's dreams, but realized that his role as a husband, in sharing domestic tasks, and as a father of a 7-month-old baby girl, is a tremendous challenge.

## PROBLEM:

The house's mortgage is quite high and weighs heavily on the young couple's family budget, so George feels he must learn a lot on the company to achieve increasingly ambitious goals and thus earn a lot more money to pay the hefty installments to the bank. In recent months he began to develop more aggressive behavior towards his co-workers and his wife at home. Managers and colleagues found that their performance is no longer the same. In a consultation with a psychologist, he was diagnosed with burnout and generalized anxiety

## TASK 1:

- Identify, on Case study 1, situations that reveal difficulties in finding a balance between family and work. 15 minutes.

## TASK 2:

- According to the case, what are the possible consequences of a low level of WLB while working remotely for your company? 15 minutes

## TASK 3:



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- How can the J-DR model be used by human resource managers to increase WLB in your company? 15 minutes.

## 4.2 CASE STUDY 2

### TITLE: The Importance of Effective Time Management

Mary Lewis Spencer is the typical businesswoman who is always available to help. She never says no to a request from his boss or co-workers. She has taken on several challenges within the company and is responsible for managing the accounts of several important clients. In addition, she holds various management positions at Bank CSPI, a leading entity in the Swiss financial sector with branches spread over 78 countries. Mary also coordinates the commercial area in Asia and Africa. This increased responsibility, in a rapidly expanding area of the globe, brought her a recognition within the company that he had never had before. Mary appears to have an appropriate profile to assume a reference position on the board of the Zurich-based company in 2 or 3 years. With the pandemic she needed to develop all the work remotely, and everything became more complicated.

Not everything in Mary's life is positive. Dedication to CSPI led Mary to give up family and social life. In fact, it's rare to have a few days when turning off the computer in the office of her luxurious apartment on Vendraft Str, one of the wealthiest parts of Zurich, she cries because her social life is really very poor. It boils down to a few brief phone calls to mom and dad when the latter is available to answer. Mary is 38 years old and has never built a solid relationship to one day think about getting married, getting together or even having a child. With age, physical problems began to appear with an increase in problems related to low back pain and an increase in blood pressure and diabetes associated with the high number of hours sitting at the computer and the daily consumption of fast food and packaged food that you buy in a supermarket nearby.

#### LEARNING UNIT:

- Importance of clocking-out

#### TOPIC:

- Time Management

#### GOAL:

- Better time management

#### COMPETENCES:

- Manage time effectively

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

- A total of two participants do Case study 2.



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#### DURATION:

- What is Time Management - 10 min.
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation of the solution to the problem – 30min
- Show the presentation of the solution to your other colleagues – 10min
- Discussion how hard it can get to manage time properly – 30min

#### PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

- Completed presentation.

#### RECOMMENDED LITERATURE:

- PowerPoints
- References used for the PowerPoints

### PRESENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mary Lewis Spencer is the typical businesswoman who is always available to help. She has taken on several challenges within the company and is responsible for managing the accounts of several important clients and holds various management positions at Bank CSPI.

#### PROBLEM:

Dedication to CSPI led Mary to give up family and social life. Mary is 38 years old and has never built a solid relationship to one day think about getting married, getting together or even having a child. With age, physical problems began to appear with an increase in problems related to low back pain and an increase in blood pressure and diabetes associated with the high number of hours sitting at the computer and the daily consumption of fast food and packaged food that you buy in a supermarket nearby.

#### TASK 1:

- How do you characterize May Spencer's time management process? Make a reflection, in group, about your time management strategies. What should be avoided and improved? 30 minutes.

#### TASK 2:

- Base on the case study, mention 2 or 3 good mindfulness-based stress reduction exercises that could be implemented by managers and employees. 15 minutes.

#### TASK 3:



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- What could you suggest increasing flexibility in teleworking and thus promote greater WLB in your company? 15 minutes.



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## 5 Case Studies Answers Sheet

### 5.1 Case-study 1

#### TASK 1:

##### Answer:

- “When in 2019 he decided to get married and raise a family, other dreams began to take over his life”; “Having a baby doesn't make your life easier either, as he feels he can't keep up with his daughter's growth as he would like. This is an important phase in a baby's growth that he doesn't want to miss.”

#### TASK 2:

##### Answer:

- Feelings of guilt, aggressiveness, which may be associated with clinical conditions of generalized anxiety and depression motivated by occupational burnout.

#### TASK 3:

##### Answer:

- Increase available resources (e.g., encourage more sharing of tasks with other colleagues, supportive leadership, team development) and reduce demands (e.g., reduce working hours in the company, not authorize work outside working hours, decrease the difficulty level of the task and amount of work).

### 5.2 Case-study 2

#### TASK 1:

##### Answer:

- Mary Spencer must rethink her priorities and learn to say “no” within the company. She must choose which positions she really wants to take and make choices that could be difficult. With that, she should devote more time to her family and personal life.

#### TASK 2:

##### Answer:



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- Some mindfulness-based practices for professionals, that are free and easy to do without others help are: the five senses exercise, body scan, self-compassion pause and breath focus (as explained earlier). These are just some examples of many mindfulness-based exercises that exist.

### TASK 3:

#### Answer:

Anoye and Kouamé (2018) defined as the main challenges in remote working the following:

- Communication – it is harder to communicate without having the human face to face interaction, there is no emotion without seeing the other person.
- Geography and isolation – people may be in different time zones which makes working as a team harder; also, the lack of affective and social support is detrimental for a higher work engagement, the lack of it increases emotional exhaustion levels (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012; in Charalampous et al., 2019).
- Technology – it's always being outdated which means that there has to be constant training to always be on top of the new software.
- Security – online breaches are possible, and they can compromise the privacy of the organization data and of its clients and employees.
- Motivation – self-motivation is an important skill for e-workers, since they are at a location that is not a physical office with others pressuring to get the work done, if someone cannot self-motivate, it can lead to a bad work performance, and that can be harmful for the organization (Charalampous et al., 2019).
- Relationships – e-workers find it harder to meet their colleagues, and gain a trusting relationship with them, this can be challenging when working with other people. Also, relationships are essential to feel more committed to the organization (Charalampous et al., 2019), as social beings we need connection.



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## 6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (10-20 QUESTIONS)

**Instruction:** Please indicate the most accurate answer.

**Q1: Does the employer charge a remote worker in the same way as if he did not work remotely?**

- A: Yes, because there is no difference between remote work and regular work.
- B: No, someone who works at the office should be paid more because they work more.
- C: No, someone who works remotely should be paid more because they work more.
- D: No, they should charge a remote worker a little more to cover for electricity and other house expenses.**

**Q2: Does WLB include the juggle of 5 things?**

- A: No.
- B: Yes, it includes juggling work, family, health, friends, and spirit.**
- C: Yes, it includes juggling work, family, health, friends, and privacy.
- D: No, it includes juggling work, family, health.

**Q3: Are flexible routines at work something positive?**

- A: No, routines should be rigid and unchangeable.
- B: Yes, because they make people more creative.
- C: Yes, routines should be flexible and open to change.**
- D: No, because they make people prone to laziness.

**Q4: What's the definition of WLB?**

- A: Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal.**
- B: Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium.



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C: Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of a person's job are low and there is a bigger focus on personal life.

D: Work-life balance is the impact of workers health and safety on business-related outcomes, such as worker performance, productivity, and turnover, may help to demonstrate the importance of protecting and promoting worker health.

**Q5: Looking at Maslow's Hierarchy of needs what is the most basic need and what is the most superficial?**

A: At the bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs are safety needs and at the very top are self-actualization.

**B: At the bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs are physiological needs and at the very top are self-actualization needs.**

C: At the bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs are self-actualization needs and at the very top are physiological needs.

D: At the bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs are love and belonging needs and at the very top are physiological needs.

**Q6: What does the JD-R Theory focus on?**

A: Productivity and Burnout.

B: Engagement and Depression.

**C: Burnout and Engagement.**

D: Burnout and Depression.

**Q7: How is Engagement defined according to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004)?**

A: Engagement is defined as "*emotional exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficiency.*"

B: Engagement is defined as having autonomy, learning and development, new opportunities for career advancement, good work relationships.

**C: Engagement is defined as "*a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.*"**



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D: Engagement is defined as “a positive work-related state of mind”

**Q8: What are the senses used in the Five Senses Exercise?**

A: Sense of space, touch, hearing, smell, and taste.

B: Awareness, mindfulness, vision, hearing, smell.

C: Sense of space, touch, vision, hearing, smell.

**D: Vision, touch, hearing, smell, and taste.**

**Q9: Is flexibility good for WLB?**

A: No.

**B: Yes, for example, people who invested more time on family rather than work experienced a higher level of quality of life.**

C: Yes.

D: No, for example, people who invested more time on family rather than work experienced a lower level of quality of life.

**Q10: What is a good flexibility policy?**

**A: People who don't work more than the daily 8h and just on weekdays will have some sort of benefits**

B: Only work 4 days a week but have a 20% pay cut.

C: Paying people extra to work on weekends.

D: It's okay to work over hours if you didn't have time to finish everything at working hours.

**Q11: What are the main challenges of remote working, according to Anoye and Kouamé (2018)?**

A: Communication, isolation, technology, transportation, housing situation, relationships.

B: Communication, technology, housing situation, motivation.

**C: Communication, geography and isolation, technology, motivation, relationships.**



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D: Communication, geography and isolation, technology, motivation, health.

Q12: Is remote working always better for WLB and flexibility?

A: No, because we live in a “always-on” era so there are fewer chances to disconnect, and there is lack of legislation to protect workers from overworking.

**B: It can be better because one can manage their schedules easily.**

C: Yes, because they can just disconnect out of working hours.

D: Yes.

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